



Unheard Unseen

**Marginalised women in fragile
and conflict-affected states**

A Global Agenda for Action
for 2020 and Beyond



**WOMEN FOR WOMEN
INTERNATIONAL**

In support of Generation Equality



Abbreviations


CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected States
GAPS	Gender Action for Peace and Security Network
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWoW	New Way of Working
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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Executive summary

2020 is being hailed as one of the biggest years for gender equality and women's rights, with an unprecedented number of global gatherings and political milestones, bringing much-needed focus on bolder and transformative actions that challenge the status quo and deliver on commitments for all women.

Women for Women International knows through its work over the past 26 years with marginalised women in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) that they have been left behind in the progress and ambitions of world leaders' commitments. As a result, the international community is losing out on the contributions of over 200 million women who are unable to fulfil their potential as a result of chronic poverty, violence, and multiple forms of discrimination deeply rooted in patriarchal gender norms.



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2020 must be the beginning of a new era for global action to scale up gender equality and women's rights in FCAS. An imperative must be to change the narrative from "women as victims and passive beneficiaries" to "women as agents of change and influencers at the local, national and global levels". This new narrative must start with giving women the space to be viewed and heard as leaders, and to set their own agendas. Meaningful participation, inclusion and political representation of women are some of the most powerful indicators of gender equality.

Women for Women International sees itself as playing a part in changing the narrative. In support of the 2020 political moment and mobilisation, including the UN Women-led Generation Equality Campaign, we are therefore presenting our global Agenda for Action for marginalised women in FCAS.

'Unheard. Unseen.' considers the key challenges that are halting progress for marginalised women in FCAS. We know that actions need to be taken at all levels, but this report focuses and identifies five Action Areas and broad recommendations that must be prioritised by global leaders; governments as implementer of global agendas, donor governments, multi-lateral institutions, such as UN agencies – especially UN Women as the UN institutional agency on gender equality – international organisations and other donors committed to the global agendas in 2020 and beyond.

The report is purposefully focused on high-level actions and commitments, not on country-specific requirements. It understands where recommendations are general, more concrete targets will need to be developed over the course of 2020 as part of the various review processes.

At the heart of our analysis of the reasons why the various international agreements being reviewed this year have continued to fail the most marginalised women in FCAS are four factors: the failure to understand and account for different forms of marginalisation, insufficient political will, insufficient targeted financing, and the lack of coordination across the triple nexus - the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors.

Women for Women International sees in our daily work how the siloed ways of working are affecting women and women's organisations in FCAS. Rather than agendas focusing on how to ensure that we address the needs of women in FCAS, how to ensure that their rights are upheld and that they are leaders of decisions about their lives, we find that women and women's organisations are having to shape their lives and realities according to the international agendas and requirements. This needs to change. It will require clear commitment politically and financially.

We must mobilise a significant increase in resources to ensure that the already-existing commitments will start to deliver for women in FCAS. Both the implementation of the global agendas as well as the mobilising of resources will require a concerted effort from a wide range of actors across many different sectors. We will need to find new ways of collaborating, where we each play to our strengths and we are committed to the greater vision of achieving gender equality and women's rights across the triple nexus.

Whilst we outline what broad actions we expect others to take, we also commit to our own actions. We will support the delivery of this global and multi-stakeholder Agenda for Action through partnerships across policy and programmes, including the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Network, the Girls Not Brides Partnership, the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, the Partnership for Economic Inclusion, and the UNHCR-hosted Poverty Alleviation Coalition.



Photo: © Serrah Galos

OUR COMMITMENTS

ACTION AREA 1 - Make women visible

- We will continue to influence the inclusion and recognition of the specific needs and priorities of marginalised women in FCAS through our active role in a number of strategic policy and programmatic partnerships.
- We will highlight the reality of our programmatic impact for marginalised women by continuing to strengthen the quality of our monitoring and evaluation data for learning and evidence building, and make this publicly available. We will also work closely with other civil society organisations to share our data and encourage them to contribute their own unofficial data for publication and dissemination.
- We will pilot approaches that meet the needs of specific subgroups of marginalised women in different countries, including adolescent girls playing the roles of women (mothers/wives), displaced women and women living with disabilities. We will also further our advocacy and policy agenda on the specific needs of these sub-groups of women.

ACTION AREA 2 - Increase coordination to address women's realities

- We will step up our role as a policy convenor to bring together influential partners to advocate for a more gender-focused and women's rights-based approach across the triple nexus – the humanitarian, development and peace and security sectors.
- We will step up our global engagement with like-minded organisations to share our learnings and learn from others, and to explore opportunities for partnerships across sectors to scale up our reach and impact.

ACTION AREA 3 - Listen to women

- We will further strengthen mechanisms for the participation of marginalised women in our own programme development, delivery and monitoring, particularly women with disabilities.
- We will accelerate the investment in and innovation of our Change Agents Programme to provide more women with skills, knowledge and support to use their unique leadership, resilience and experience to create change in their communities and beyond.
- We will ensure that all global and in-country colleagues and partners are supported to understand the critical role of women as contributors to our programmatic work, not passive beneficiaries.

ACTION AREA 4 - Prioritise ending violence against women

- We will strengthen and improve our programmatic work on violence against women prevention and response, including through the introduction of referral action plans, and the expansion of our Men's Engagement Programme to all of our countries of operation.
- We will continue to ally with organisations campaigning and advocating to end violence against women and girls, with a specific focus on the need for a holistic and survivor-centred approach and increase in funding.

ACTION AREA 5 - Invest in women's economic power

- We will increase our investment in women's social and economic power, expanding market access and increasingly working to address the structural barriers to women's access to and control over resources and assets.

Action areas and summary of recommendations

We know actions will need to be taken at all levels.

These recommendations focus on global leaders: governments as implementers of global agendas, donor governments, multi-lateral institutions, and other donors supporting the global agendas across the triple nexus. Many of these recommendations cover broad areas where more specific targets will need to be developed throughout 2020 as part of the various review processes.

ACTION AREA 1 - Make women visible



Include and prioritise the specific needs of marginalised women in FCAS in the development, delivery and monitoring of global agendas across the triple nexus.

- UN agencies, governments and donors should demonstrate increased leadership to ensure that marginalised women in FCAS are no longer left behind in the delivery of global agendas across the triple nexus.
- UN agencies, governments and donors should strengthen the visibility of marginalised women in FCAS and ensure that gender norms are specifically addressed in relevant national action plans, and progress and monitoring reports coherently across the triple nexus.
- UN Women should use its institutional leadership and unique mandate to champion and secure the inclusion of marginalised women in FCAS in global agendas and processes across the triple nexus.

ACTION AREA 2 - Increase coordination to address women's realities



Put gender equality and women's rights at the centre of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus.

- UN agencies, donors, governments and international organisations should take tangible steps to ensure that women's rights and gender equality are at the centre of the nexus partnerships.
- UN agencies, governments, donors and international organisations should foster greater coordination and collaboration, as well as joint monitoring and reporting between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.
- UN Women should take a key role in strengthening a gender-based and women's rights approach to the triple nexus.

ACTION AREA 3 - Listen to women



Systematically ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised women and their local organisations in policy processes that affect them across the triple nexus.

- UN agencies, governments, donors and international organisations across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors should take the necessary steps to ensure the meaningful political participation and representation of marginalised women and local women's organisations at all levels of policy-making.
- UN agencies, governments and donors should prioritise strengthening the capacity of marginalised women and local women's organisations to access and effectively influence global, national and local policy processes that affect them.
- UN Women should be at the forefront of a push for the systemic participation of marginalised women and local women's organisations in policy and decision-making processes.

ACTION AREA 4 - Prioritise ending violence against women



Prioritise, fund and deliver a survivor-centred approach to all forms of violence against marginalised women in FCAS across all sectors.

- UN agencies, governments and donors should make preventing and addressing VAW in FCAS a global imperative across sectors for the next decade.
- Governments, UN and international organisations across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors should embed a truly survivor-centred approach throughout the planning, delivery and monitoring of prevention and responses to VAW in FCAS.
- UN Women should call on UN leadership, donors and governments to take tangible actions on GBV prevention and responses.

ACTION AREA 5 - Invest in women's economic power



Invest in women's economic power programming in FCAS.

- UN agencies, governments and donors should demonstrate commitment to building the socio-economic power of marginalised women in FCAS.
- Governments, donors and international organisations across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors should fund and prioritise women's economic power programmes as an imperative to deliver on global agendas and achieve gender equality.
- UN Women should champion and promote increased understanding of the importance of gender-transformative approaches to women's economic power in FCAS.



Introduction

Who we are

Women for Women International has been working with the poorest and hardest-to-reach marginalised women in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) for over 26 years. The socially and economically excluded women we work with face multiple forms of discrimination. They may be survivors of genocide and sexual violence; they are often displaced and denied rights to health, education, to land and to political participation.

We have pioneered gender-transformative approaches in the most difficult contexts. Our holistic and integrated programme strengthens the most marginalised women's socio-economic power, including in the places of greatest need, where violence against women and poverty are at their worst. Working with powerholders and influencers at all levels, we focus our resources on breaking down the systemic and normative barriers that impact marginalised women's most fundamental rights, and where conflict and instability often mean that women's socio-economic power is not seen as a priority.

Women for Women International was founded to support the most marginalised women in FCAS to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their home and community and connect to networks for support. Since then, we have helped over half a

million women. We currently implement our programme directly and/or work in partnership with local organisations in the following countries: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, DRC, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Throughout this report, we highlight different aspects of our work, we share evidence of the data we are collecting, we shine a light on our complementary programme components, such as our men's engagement programme and we highlight areas of innovation and learning.

25 years since Beijing

The world is very different than it was 25 years ago, when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women; 20 years ago, when the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was passed; 10 years ago, when UN Women was created; or even five years ago when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was agreed upon.

There is an unprecedented state of fragility and conflict in the world. Since 2010, the number of major violent conflicts has tripled, and their footprints have expanded, with an 11 per cent increase in the number of locations impacted globally.¹ Crises have also become protracted and deep-rooted, with countries in a state of war for decades. And women are paying the price: half of the now-71 million forcibly displaced people worldwide – the largest number ever recorded – are women.² In some crisis settings, more than 70 per cent of women have experienced violence.³

Economic inequality is on the increase, with a growing global trend towards extreme wealth and income concentration that has significantly strengthened the economic and political power of the richest – overwhelmingly men. The world's richest one per cent have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people.⁴ Conflict magnifies pre-existing gender inequalities

and compounds women's economic marginalisation, with marginalised women in FCAS being the worst off.

Finally, there has been a pushback on women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, as well as increased violence against women human rights defenders and activists, and women running for political office. There has also been a downward trend in gender provisions in peace agreements.⁵

Why this report?

A striking feature of the past 25 years has been the lack of prioritisation of the specific needs and rights of the most marginalised women in FCAS by the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors.

While the world has achieved critical wins for women, millions of women living in some of the most dangerous places in the world are being held back, and have yet to see and experience the positive impact of progress.⁶ The unique role and contributions of women in achieving changes that will benefit us all have been recognised and articulated in global gender equality and women's rights frameworks and agendas, and in policy commitments and declarations. This rhetoric still needs to turn into reality for the most marginalised women in FCAS.

We know from our work with marginalised women that they are resourceful, resilient and that they are agents of change. We know that with the right support – financial and technical – they can thrive. We see this every day – positive change and progress does happen, including in places of war. It happens behind the scenes, driven by women who take action, speak out and create change. At a time when world leaders are pushing for accelerated action on gender equality, investing in marginalised women in FCAS is essential for realising the vision of leaving no one behind – a commitment at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and creating lasting peace.

The challenge is great – but so is the opportunity

2020 is being hailed as a pivotal year for gender equality and women's rights, with a number of political milestones and events taking place, including the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the 10th anniversary of UN Women, the UN institutional leader on gender equality and empowerment.

2020

Key Gender Equality and Women's Rights Moments

25 years of the Beijing Platform for Action

To mark the anniversary of the visionary agenda created in 1995 at the largest-ever gathering of gender equality and women's rights advocates, the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will hold a dedicated session on Beijing +25 in March 2020, which will focus on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.



Generation Equality Forum

The Generation Equality Forum, a series of civil society-centred, multi-stakeholder global gatherings, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, will take place from May and July 2020. It aims to provide a collective agenda-setting space for urgent action and accountability on gender equality, and to celebrate the power of women's rights activism, feminist solidarity and youth leadership.

A key objective of the Forum is the setting up of Action Coalitions, which will seek to develop a set of concrete, ambitious and transformative actions for Coalition members (civil society and private sector organisations, as well as Member States) to take between 2020 and 2025 to achieve progress towards gender equality. The six thematic areas for the Action Coalitions are: gender-based violence; economic justice and rights; bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; feminist action for climate justice; technology and innovation for gender equality; and feminist movements and leadership.

20th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security agenda

2020 sees the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which established a powerful normative framework to ensure women's needs, voices and perspectives are included in efforts to prevent, resolve and recover from conflict and build sustainable peace.



5 years of the Sustainable Development Goals

2020 marks the five-year milestone into the 15-year global agenda that puts gender equality at the heart of sustainable development, with 2020-2030 being termed a 'Decade of Action'.



10th anniversary of UN Women

2020 also marks ten years since the establishment of UN Women as the global champion for the empowerment of women and girls.

A Global Agenda for Action for Marginalised Women in FCAS

This report, released on the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, is Women for Women International's rallying call and global agenda for action for international actors across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors.

The report builds on our programmatic experience, the first-hand perspectives and opinions of marginalised women, and existing evidence and analysis. It first considers the specific vulnerability factors and needs of marginalised women, and why they are at the greatest risk of being left behind in the delivery of global agendas and frameworks. It then identifies "Action Areas" and articulates the key challenges that are holding back progress for marginalised women in FCAS. Finally, it sets out key recommendations to address those challenges. We know that action is required at all levels, but this report focuses on global actors: donor governments, multi-lateral institutions, UN agencies – especially UN Women as the UN institutional leader on gender equality, other donors and international organisations. Under each Action Area, we make our own commitments towards supporting the delivery of this global and multi-stakeholder Agenda for Action.

"I am hoping that in the next 5 years we see a woman becoming a governor in Plateau State, to hold women's hands to different offices. I also hope that a woman becomes the vice president, if we cannot get the president. It's a little by little."

Aisha, Jos East, Nigeria

Who are the most marginalised women in FCAS?

Globally, 264 million women live in the 36 countries classified as fragile and conflict-affected by the World Bank.⁷ These women are disproportionately represented amongst the poorest and most marginalised populations,⁸ and most are differentially affected and impacted by conflict and fragility.⁹

The worst places in the world to be a woman are all affected by conflict, and have the greatest gender inequalities, with Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Iraq and DRC topping the list of the worst performers for women's equality in the most recent Index on Women, Peace and Security.¹⁰

Conflict and fragility further embed deeply-rooted patriarchal norms that affect women's most fundamental rights. Marginalised women in FCAS face intersecting forms of discrimination and violence on the grounds of their gender and other factors, including disability and displacement status, which leads to poor access to economic opportunities, low social status and little influence within their household and communities.

"I want women to change, let it be known that women are also capable of doing things. Women should know their rights and understand that they are an integral part of the society. A woman has the right to become a governor; she has the right to become a president; she has the right to speak up. A woman has that right."

Hannatu, Riyom, Nigeria

What does Women for Women International mean by 'marginalised women'?

There is no official definition or indicators of "marginalisation" for women living in FCAS, but at the core of marginalisation lies entrenched discrimination, social exclusion and poverty, which prevent individuals or groups from fully participating in social, economic and political life. Women for Women International aims to identify and target the most marginalised women in FCAS, using criteria and guiding principles in the selection of our countries of operation, the communities we select, and the women we enrol in our programme. We use a number of demographic, social, economic, legal and political factors to determine where to work. We also select women for our programme based on context-specific selection criteria to ensure that we are effectively targeting ultra-poor and vulnerable women to enrol. We use four vulnerability factors:

1 Women who are or have been affected by conflict or country instability

This includes being a survivor of violence or currently experiencing violence; being displaced or having recently returned; or being the head of the household.

2 Social exclusion

This is based on women showing signs of malnutrition or poor hygiene, poorer-than-average living conditions; or being subject to restrictive traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and/or cutting, forced or early marriage or restricted freedom of movement.

3 Extreme poverty

This includes women who are unemployed and have no means of earning an income except from high-risk or unsafe occupations; who are responsible for dependents; children who are out of school; and women who are illiterate.

4 Disability

Physical, mental health, and development-related disabilities are integrated into our programming, monitoring and evaluation, and outreach efforts.



Photo: © Millie Harvey

Although we do not ask women about their religious beliefs or ethnicity, these additional vulnerabilities are included in our programme development and implementation. We adapt our approach to reflect the local context, and use our work to bridge divides – for example, bringing together predominantly Christian herders and Muslim pastoralists in Nigeria.

Women for Women International's work with displaced women

Women for Women International works with thousands of displaced women through our programmes in Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, South Sudan, and Northern Nigeria, helping them through our one-year programme rebuild their confidence, livelihoods, and connections to ensure they have support once they've returned or settled in communities. We also support women who are still at the acute stages of conflict, not yet able to permanently settle, as we did in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh, and Yemen. In Yemen, where 76 per cent of displaced people are women and children, we partnered with Yemen Women's Union.

We supported them in their work to raise awareness of gender-based violence and provide psychological support for women who have experienced it, providing a space and group for them to share experiences and recover together. In Bangladesh, we worked with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to respond to the crisis that has led to over 700,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar since 2017. Through our partnership, we supported Rohingya women and girls with training in useful skills that would enable them to start small businesses or find paid work. We also engaged with local leaders to build awareness of the positive impact of investing in women's and girls' job skills for the future of the Rohingya communities.

Action Area 1

Include and prioritise the specific needs of marginalised women in FCAS in the development, delivery and monitoring of global agendas across the triple nexus

For example:

- Out of the [Agenda for Humanity's](#) 3,700 individual and joint commitments made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, explicit reference to “marginalised women” was only made by two stakeholders.¹⁴ And whilst the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) seeks to address the specific needs of “women at risk”, it fails to explicitly recognise the need to address intersecting forms of discrimination facing women migrants and refugees.¹⁵
- Whilst the [SDGs](#) contain a standalone gender equality goal (Goal 5) and have gender-specific indicators, none of them specifically relate to marginalised women in FCAS, including displaced women.¹⁶
- Marginalised women in FCAS are also very rarely explicitly considered and mentioned in the [Women, Peace and Security Agenda \(WPS\)](#), including its cornerstone document, UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 (2000). The only rare exception can be found in the UNSC Resolution 2122 (2013), which provides the first – and only – reference to “disadvantaged women and girls”.¹⁷



The unique and complex needs of marginalised women in FCAS are invisible in the multiple global agendas, frameworks and processes that concern them

In spite of comprehensive normative frameworks, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which identifies women and armed conflict as one of twelve critical areas of concern, as well as multiple declarations and commitments to “leave no one behind”, efforts to consider the specific needs, experiences and realities of marginalised women in FCAS remain insufficient. The homogenisation of “women” as a single group perpetuates the false notion that all women are affected by external factors and their environment the same way.¹³ The lack of an intersectional approach means that marginalised women in FCAS are largely invisible in the global policies that govern the world’s humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action, compounded by the lack of coordination across the triple nexus.

Marginalised women in FCAS are at greatest risk of being left behind

The intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities experienced by marginalised women in FCAS put them particularly at risk of being left the furthest behind in the implementation of the 2030 Leave No One Behind agenda. Because they are harder to reach, and harder to account for, they are often overlooked in development, humanitarian and peacebuilding policies and programmes.

Using the UNDP Leave No One Behind Framework for Implementation¹¹ – which sets out who is being left behind and why – we have illustrated how the poorest and most marginalised women in FCAS sit at the very centre of the intersecting factors that increase a person’s risk of being left behind.

“I want the next generation of women to not have the fear and shyness that I had and they have the opportunity to do better than we have, to know their rights.”

Justine, Luchhiga, DRC

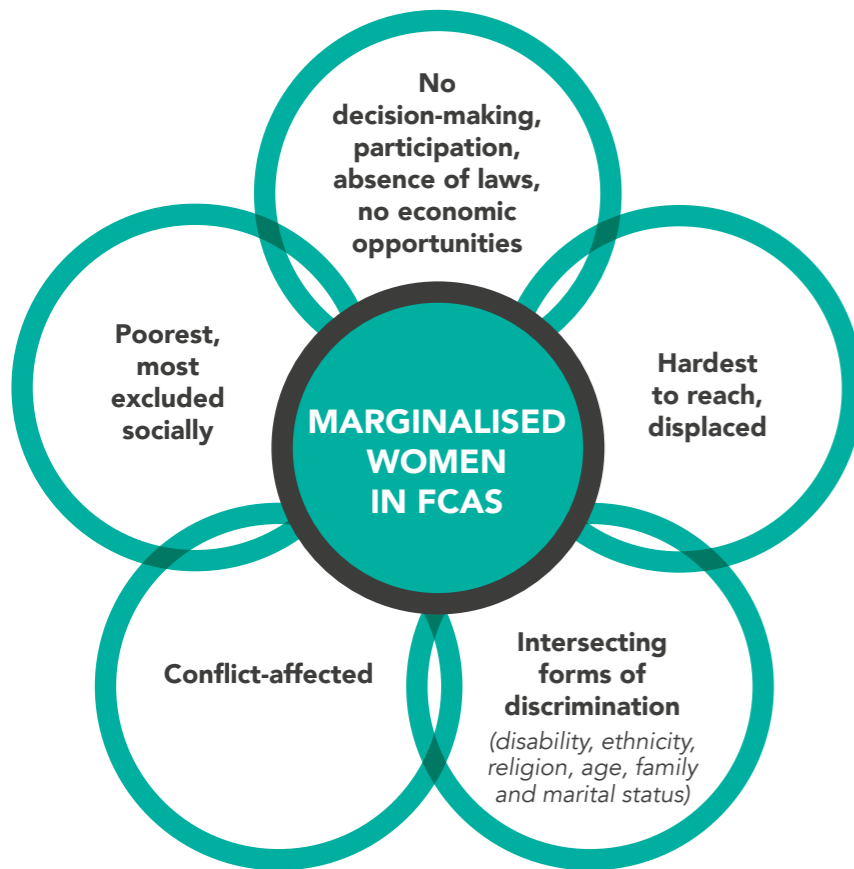


Figure 1: Marginalised women in FCAS sit at the intersection of factors that increase the likelihood of being left behind.

Adapted from UNDP (2018)¹²

The success of the world’s global agendas, including Leave No One Behind, needs to be measured by whether the lives of the most marginalised women in FCAS are improving. If not, we will have collectively failed.

Hundreds of millions of women living in FCAS cannot wait any longer. We believe five key areas need to be actioned if we are to successfully deliver on our commitments.

In some cases, women in FCAS are not considered in “gender-blind” policy frameworks.

For example:

- Women, including marginalised women, are largely absent from Humanitarian Needs Overviews¹⁸ and many humanitarian needs assessments do not include a “gender lens”.¹⁹ This in turn impacts the consideration of gender equality issues in humanitarian response plans and makes the prioritisation of marginalised women impossible.
- Target 6.2 of the SDGs regarding access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene calls for “special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations”, but the indicator to monitor this target does not explicitly refer to the specific needs of women and girls.
- Between 1990 and the end of 2018, only 353 of 1,789 agreements relating to more than 150 peace processes included provisions addressing women, girls or gender.²⁰

Marginalised women are unaccounted for

The inadequacy of current data collection methodologies, along with the challenges of gathering data in the most difficult contexts, means that marginalised women in FCAS are not captured in monitoring and progress reports.

This is mainly due to four reasons:

- 1 Governments primarily focus on national averages for monitoring progress, and do not use disaggregated data beyond a focus on sex. Marginalised women who often live in the hardest-to-reach areas in FCAS are not counted in the data, and their experiences of marginalisation and exclusion not captured.²¹ The use of national averages also fails to provide an accurate picture of progress, as it does not make visible the wide gaps between women even within the same country.²²
- 2 Conflict increases challenges in getting data. Equal Measures 2030 acknowledged this gap in their 2019 report.²³ In 2017, the High-Level Political Forum’s report on SDG 5 also noted the lack of data on prevalence of violence resulting from intersecting forms of discrimination such as disability and age.²⁴
- 3 The use and compilation of data from other sources such as NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) remain ad hoc, with no official process to contribute to the “progress picture”.
- 4 The lack of coordination across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors also means that data collected by different agencies is not included and opportunities for strengthening data collection and the inclusion of marginalised women are missed.

Women for Women International Data



Organisations like Women for Women International are providing data that can and should inform the analysis on progress towards the SDGs, but there is currently no official and formalised process to contribute this unofficial data.

Our data is focused exclusively on marginalised women in FCAS. We collect baseline data from about a third of women participants as they enrol in our year-long programme and from the same women as they graduate. As part of our advocacy and accountability to the women we work with, we situate this data within the framework of the SDGs to highlight the impact of our programme against the relevant SDGs and the progress made for women.

Our data reports progress using quantitative indicators such as daily earnings, but it also captures less tangible – but equally important – data centred around women’s agency. For example, in relation to Goal 1, 17 per cent of women graduates in our programme in Afghanistan reported earning over \$1.90 a day, compared to only 5 per cent at enrolment. For progress on Gender Equality Goal 5, our data showed a 105 per cent increase in perceived self-efficacy among women participants in our programme in Nigeria.²⁵

Out of sight – out of mind

This invisibility of marginalised women in FCAS in key global agendas and frameworks and data collection processes results in marginalised women being largely excluded from and unaccounted for in implementation and review processes. These include Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)²⁶ which, except for a very few, have not specifically identified the most marginalised women as most at risk of being left behind. The Synthesis of VNRs in 2018 noted that whilst **“many reviews outlined the challenges women and girls face in general terms, only a few focused on measures to reach the most disadvantaged or marginalised among them.”**²⁷



What needs to happen to include and prioritise the specific needs of marginalised women in FCAS in the development, delivery and monitoring of global agendas?

UN agencies, governments and donors should demonstrate increased leadership to ensure that marginalised women in FCAS are no longer left behind in the delivery of global agendas.

They should:

- Use the 2020 global policy moments to identify and acknowledge women in FCAS as one of the groups being left furthest behind in the implementation of the world's agendas and make specific commitments to meet their needs.
- Include marginalised women in FCAS as part of the “Decade of Action”, by ensuring explicit consideration of marginalised women's needs and priorities in SDG action plans, VNRs, and as part of the global annual review of collective progress at the High-Level Political Forum and SDG Summit.
- Prioritise and ensure the visibility of marginalised women in all National Action Plans (NAPs) in 2020 and beyond.
- Make marginalised women in FCAS an institutional priority in their strategies' objectives and results.

UN agencies, governments and donors should strengthen the visibility of marginalised women in FCAS and ensure that gender norms are specifically addressed in relevant national action plans, and progress and monitoring reports coherently across the triple nexus.

They should:

- Commit to developing indicators and targets for marginalised women in FCAS – including displaced women – across relevant frameworks. Qualitative indicators should be incorporated in recognition that tracking progress towards gender equality in part requires measuring changes in perceptions, attitudes and social norms.
- Develop a formal and systematic process and mechanism at the international level for the inclusion of unofficial data sources in reporting. They should encourage civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders implementing programmes on women in FCAS to collect, publish and submit disaggregated data to formal processes and gender data initiatives such as UN Women's Thematic Area Dashboards.²⁸
- Sign up to the Inclusive Data Charter²⁹ and include specific commitments on marginalised women in FCAS in their Charter's action plans.

UN Women should use its institutional leadership and unique mandate to champion and secure the inclusion of marginalised women in FCAS in global agendas and processes across the triple nexus.

UN Women should:

- Ensure the inclusion of women in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts in mobilisation towards and realisation of Generation Equality, including the Action Coalitions.
- Convene a session on “Accelerating action for marginalised women in FCAS” as part of the 2020 High-Level Political Form's (HLPF) theme – “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.
- Develop a mechanism for unofficial data to be submitted by civil society organisations for inclusion on its Women Count hub.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will increase our influence on the inclusion and recognition of the specific needs and priorities of marginalised women in FCAS through our active role in a number of existing and new strategic policy and programmatic partnerships.
- We will highlight the reality of our programmatic impact for marginalised women by continuing to strengthen the quality of our monitoring and evaluation data for learning and evidence-building, and making this data publicly available. We will also work closely with other civil society organisations to share our data and encourage them to contribute their own unofficial data publication and dissemination.
- We will pilot approaches that meet the needs of specific sub-groups of marginalised women in different countries, including adolescent girls performing the roles of women, displaced women and women living with disabilities.



Photo: © Serrah Galos



Action Area 2

Put gender and women's rights at the centre of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding triple nexus

No rights – this is the reality for marginalised women in FCAS

Women's experiences of poverty, violence and discrimination in conflict are deeply rooted in patriarchal social norms and conservative political systems. Pre-existing patterns of exclusion and marginalisation worsen during and remain long after a crisis, particularly in ever-increasing protracted conflicts.³⁰

Some of the countries that Women for Women International works in have been affected by conflict for decades – 35 years in the case of Afghanistan. Displacement has also become more common, with an unprecedented 70.8 million people displaced at the end of 2018,³¹ the majority of whom are children and women who have been living in camps and emergency situations for decades. This means that whilst protecting the rights of women and meeting their immediate and basic needs in crisis is critical, and should remain at the core of humanitarian action, this approach on its own cannot respond to the longer-term and complex needs of marginalised women.

Women's rights and gender equality frameworks and agendas

There is a wide range of international legal instruments and policy frameworks that drive and govern – explicitly or implicitly – governments' actions on marginalised women in FCAS.

These include:

- The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)³² and its General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations.³³
- The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,³⁴ which specifically addressed the effects of conflict on women – including displaced and refugee women – for the first time. It provides the most comprehensive and transformational roadmap for gender equality and empowerment.
- The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda (UNSC Resolution 1325 and others)³⁵ which formalises women's participation as an imperative to creating lasting peace.

- The 2030 Agenda, which emphasises the Beijing Declaration's commitments and pledges to "leave no one behind", and has been described as "a major milestone in the struggle towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls".³⁶
- The Agenda for Humanity, which includes the empowerment of women and girls as one of its seven strategic and normative transformations.³⁷
- The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's set of commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of crisis-affected women and girls.³⁸
- The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which includes gender, age, disability and diversity considerations and addresses women's empowerment.³⁹
- The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in emergencies, which provides commitments articulated through a roadmap, and specifically focuses on women and girls in crises.⁴⁰
- The 2020 "Generation Equality Action Coalitions" will set out immediate actions to deliver on key priorities for women and girls for the next five years,⁴¹ which include gender-based violence, economic justice and rights, women's leadership, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.⁴²

It is the collective responsibility of members of the international community to ensure that the principles in these agreements are upheld and achieved. Yet, as considered in Action Area 1 of this report, these normative frameworks, commitments and other political declarations do not explicitly consider the needs of marginalised women.

The international community's way of working does not reflect women's realities on the ground

Key challenges that directly impact marginalised women in FCAS stem from insufficient coordination and collaboration between sectors, and the gender-blind approach to emerging nexus partnerships. Despite the now well-established complementarity and connections between the humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and human rights agendas, a siloed and fragmented way of working continues to predominate in the implementation of what should be deeply connected, complementary and mutually reinforcing global agendas, frameworks and processes.

The implementation of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding policy and programming is driven by a crowded ecosystem of actors with different aims, principles, priorities and funding streams – but increasingly overlapping mandates. Complex systems and fragmented interventions operate simultaneously over different temporal scales, without coordinated efforts to recognise and tackle the structural factors and power imbalances underlying gender inequality.⁴³

This fragmentation is compounded by the lack of a rights-based approach across the "triple nexus", which would emphasise the intrinsic importance of women's experiences and rights in FCAS.

Women for Women International's analysis of emerging nexus partnerships did not find strong evidence of a rights-based approach or prioritisation of gender equality. As a result, despite marginalised women in FCAS sitting at the intersection of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action, they continue to fall through the cracks.



Examples of insufficient coordination and collaboration between sectors and a lack of a gender and rights focus include:

- The absence of peacebuilding in the majority of “triple nexus” conversations and initiatives. For example, the New Way of Working (NWoW) in times of crisis, which places “collective outcomes” over several years at its centre, does not currently include peacebuilding actors. Collective outcomes in existing NWoW countries also do not include any gender-specific results,⁴⁴ in spite of NWoW’s collective outcomes being framed as “instalments” towards the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in protracted crisis contexts.⁴⁵
- The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative,⁴⁶ which also relies on the identification of collective outcomes, does not explicitly reference gender equality or the needs of marginalised groups in its current framework.
- UNSC Resolution 2242 (2015) – one of the WPS Resolutions – is the only one to make a reference to the emphasis placed on gender equality in the SDGs. No Women, Peace and Security resolutions reference SDG 5 or SDG 16. Neither do they highlight the importance of the SDGs for peace and security or vice versa.
- There is no formal international process or mechanism to improve institutional coordination and collaboration between the three sectors in the implementation of global policies and processes. No concrete steps have been taken by the HLPF or the UNSC to move from commitments to tangible steps to further the linkages and coordination between the SDGs and the WPS agenda.
- Whilst the Global Compact on Refugees aims to bring together development and humanitarian agendas and align with Agenda 2030, it does not set out specific objectives, indicators and targets to measure improvements among populations in FCAS, including marginalised women.⁴⁷

Truly symptomatic of the deeply embedded siloed way of working is the insufficient coordination within frameworks themselves. For example, whilst the 2030 Agenda is a universal agenda which specifically requires policy coherence across the goals – and despite the fact that SDG 5 and SDG 16 are strongly and mutually connected – there has been very little collaboration and coordination between actors primarily operating within the spheres of these two goals.

Gender equality (and therefore the connection between SDG 5 and the other goals), which has been referred to as cross-cutting in the SDGs, is also missing from most of the discussions and actions on other SDGs. It also does not currently feature as an integrated issue at the HLPF’s annual thematic reviews.

Opportunities for progress?

A number of donors and UN agencies have been piloting nexus partnerships to test out new ways of working that focus on joint programming and collaboration, including the NWoW.⁴⁸ UN Women’s recent decision to merge its humanitarian and women, peace and security departments is also a positive step towards moving away from a sector-specific structure. The OECD’S recommendation on the Humanitarian - Development - Peace Nexus provides much-needed guidance on the integration of a gender lens to the triple nexus, which should be used to inform or revise the focus of ongoing and future partnerships.⁴⁹

The document recommends:

- Conducting joint risk-informed, gender-sensitive analysis of root causes and structural drivers of conflict.
- Actively supporting the principles of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including through ensuring a focus on gender equality and women’s leadership across humanitarian, development, and peace actions as essential elements in achieving sustainable progress.
- Ensuring that humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions are designed and delivered in a gender-sensitive way, based on a suitable gender analysis and on an informed understanding of the risks of exploitation, abuse, and “do no harm”.
- Providing opportunities for affected populations to identify their immediate needs and articulate the risks, vulnerabilities and unmet needs that affect them and their efforts to become more resilient – in particular for excluded or marginalised members of the community.

Women for Women International’s advocacy on improving gender-focused synergies across the triple nexus

Women for Women International has been a critical actor in discussions on how to improve coordination and collaboration and bring a gender-based and women’s rights approach to the triple nexus. We have consistently worked in collaboration with others across the various spheres. For example, in the UK, we host the GAPS (Gender Action for Peace and Security) Network and we are members of the Gender and Development Network (GADN), while in the US we are members of the Big Ideas for Women and Girls Coalition. We ensure that we contribute our experience of working with the most marginalised women in countries affected by conflict to international networks and actors across the triple nexus.

In September 2019, we convened a high-level policy panel on the fringes of UNGA – bringing together the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Women Deliver, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and Women Now for Development – which specifically considered how to increase the synergies across the triple nexus to deliver for women and girls in FCAS. This policy dialogue generated reflections on accelerating the implementation of existing commitments to deliver for women and girls, including the need to facilitate women’s meaningful participation to strengthen linkages between agendas, understand the reality of their experiences and realise their vision for systems change across the board.

Calls for a feminist approach at the centre of the triple nexus

Over the past few years, the need for a feminist-centred approach to foreign policy has been increasingly considered, providing a unique opportunity to bring the three sectors – humanitarian, development and peacebuilding – together under a feminist and rights-based approach. Several donor countries have shown leadership on a feminist approach to foreign aid or foreign policy, including Sweden, Canada, and most recently Mexico, whose policy was described as a “gold standard” by the International Center for Research on Women.⁵⁰

All feminist foreign policies have roots in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UNSC Resolution 1325 and other international frameworks and agreements that focus on raising the status of women and mainstreaming gender. Several humanitarian actors have also called for a “feminist humanitarian system”⁵¹ as a solution to the fragmented and siloed ways of working in humanitarian contexts.

These developments are positive steps towards securing a unifying, coherent, rights-based and system-wide feminist approach across the triple nexus.⁵² However, a collective understanding and common principles of a “feminist approach to policy” are still missing, along with clear guidance to develop, operationalise and ensure accountability.

Recommendations



What needs to happen to put gender and women’s rights at the centre of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus?

UN agencies, donors, governments and international organisations should take tangible steps to ensure that women’s rights and gender equality are at the centre of the nexus partnerships.

They should:

- Commit to developing common principles of a feminist approach to policy and produce clear indicators of what intersectional feminist humanitarian, development and peacebuilding policy and programming looks like, which can then be operationalised through specific feminist foreign policies and strategies.
- Ensure that the Action Coalitions include a rights-based and cross-sectoral approach in their membership, objectives and blueprint development and implementation.

UN agencies, governments, donors and international organisations should foster greater coordination and collaboration, as well as joint monitoring and reporting between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.

They should:

- Ensure that UN and donor-led nexus partnerships in FCAS – including the NWoW – explicitly address the specific immediate and longer-term needs and vulnerabilities of marginalised women in their collective outcomes, and that those outcomes are fully aligned with SDG 5 and SDG 16 as well as the WPS agenda.
- Ensure that annual Universal Periodic Reviews, progress reports on the CEDAW and other cross-sectoral review and reporting processes consider the SDGs and WPS.

UN Women should take a key role in strengthening a gender-based and women’s rights approach to the triple nexus.

UN Women should:

- Lead and coordinate a review of the global governance architecture on gender equality in FCAS.
- Take the lead in developing guidelines for gender-centred nexus partnerships which would set out clear indicators for all nexus partnerships to measure progress against.
- Ensure that its next Strategic Plan includes an outcome area that is specifically focused on ensuring a cohesive, inclusive and gender-focused approach across the triple nexus.
- Advocate for UN agencies and UN Member States to adopt an explicit women’s rights-centred approach to policy that adheres to agreed-upon “common principles” across sectors.
- Build on the recent restructure of the humanitarian and WPS departments to improve coordination and joint planning and delivery with the development department.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will step up our role as a policy convenor to bring together influential partners to advocate for a more gender-focused and women’s rights-based approach across the humanitarian, development, and peace and security sectors.
- We will step up our global engagement with like-minded organisations to share our learnings and learn from others, and to explore opportunities for partnerships across sectors to scale up our reach and impact.



Action Area 3

Systematically ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised women and their local organisations in policy processes that affect them across the triple nexus

The voices of marginalised women in FCAS are not being heard in agendas and processes that affect them

The importance of women's political participation is widely recognised and explicitly stated in a number of frameworks and commitments.

For example:

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action asserts women's participation as fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.
- SDG Target 5.5 specifically focuses on women's full and effective participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making. SDG Target 16.7 further calls for responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.
- UNSC Resolution 1325 stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security, and calls for increased participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making.⁵³

- The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit outcomes include a commitment to empowering women and girls as "agents of change and leaders".⁵⁴ The Grand Bargain⁵⁵ has a "Participation Revolution" workstream that focuses on ensuring the inclusion of people affected by humanitarian crises and their communities in decision-making. The Grand Bargain also commits signatories to ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable groups – considering gender, age, ethnicity, language and special needs – are heard and acted upon.
- The Global Compact on Refugees includes promoting the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls, and supporting the institutional capacity and participation of women's organisations.
- The G7's 2018 Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action⁵⁶ also reiterated the importance of increasing women's participation in humanitarian and conflict settings.

However, women's political participation remains insufficient at all levels. Social, political and legal factors – including deep-rooted and discriminatory gender norms, customary laws, and deeply entrenched unequal power relations at all levels act as significant barriers to women's political participation. Women's political agency therefore depends on changes at multiple levels across the social, legal and political arenas.

Consultations conducted in 2019 by the UK Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Network and its members, including Women for Women International, found that marginalised women in FCAS are consistently being denied the right to participate, and concluded that greater efforts to ensure the engagement of women in peacebuilding processes should be made.⁵⁷ For example, in the DRC, consultation participants noted that the implementation of their second

NAP should demonstrate greater political will by the government of the DRC to involve women with a strategic approach to women's meaningful participation.⁵⁸

CARE and Action Aid's 2018 report on the Grand Bargain noted that the Grand Bargain's commitment on participation has yet to materialise in the field.⁵⁹

Progress is too slow. A 2015 report on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted the gaps in ensuring the participation and voice of the most marginalised women in key decision-making.⁶⁰ Five years later these gaps have not been sufficiently addressed. A 2015 global review of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 equally found that the international community is still failing to effectively support women's political participation in FCAS.⁶¹



Photo: © Esther Nsapu

Women as Change Agents – Experiences from Women for Women International Programmes

“During the Change Agent programme, I learnt many subjects about women’s rights, violence against women, advocacy [and] problem analysis at the community level. We now have an action plan that we made based on women problem analysis, and for implementation of it we had several advocacy meetings with high officials. After communicating with them, we were able to solve mine and other women’s problems.”

Maliha, Kapisa, Afghanistan

Over the past 25 years, Women for Women International has been training, supporting and mentoring women to bring about change in their communities, and to engage in local politics.

We have been training women as advocates through our Change Agents programme implemented since 2017 in Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, Kosovo, and Nigeria. The grassroots advocacy programme is tailored according to local context and focuses on strengthening women’s leadership and advocacy skills. It aims to influence change beyond communities by connecting different groups of Change Agents, creating networks that effect change on a wider scale and engage with women’s rights groups and civil society. Change Agents have been instrumental in securing changes in their communities, including around marriage registrations, access to maternal health services, and peace dialogues.⁶²

Women graduates from our core programme have also successfully engaged in local politics, with some running for office. One of the first female mayors in a province in Bosnia was one of Women for Women International’s graduates, as is one of the first female provincial governors in Afghanistan.⁶³ Hundreds of our graduates have been elected to local offices across the countries where we operate.

“We had a meeting with the first lady of Afghanistan and raised the voices of marginalised women with national officials. Following the meeting and the commitments made by the first lady, I am a member of the Peace Mothers committee and have attended workshops about peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The first lady has also invited Change Agents to national meetings involving women in peace processes.”

Lutfia, Kapisa, Afghanistan

Lack of funding for local women’s organisations

Local women’s organisations play a vital role in spearheading change for the most marginalised women. They do so by providing them with direct support services. They are also key drivers of policy and legal change for women’s rights and are often pioneers in developing and implementing innovative programmes to advance gender equality and secure sustainable changes for marginalised women. Finally, they are best placed to channel or amplify the needs and demands of marginalised women in local, national and global processes. The need for women’s organisations to be considered as critical political players in gender equality and peacebuilding was highlighted across the GAPS consultations countries,⁶⁴ and by a larger number of stakeholders across the humanitarian, development and peace sectors.⁶⁵ Yet, the political participation of local women’s organisations remains inadequate in decision-making in policy and programming across the implementation of all agendas and frameworks.

A critical factor that limits the meaningful participation of women’s organisations is the chronic lack of funding. In 2015–2016, total aid to women’s institutions and organisations (governmental and non-governmental) was US \$464 million. US \$225 million of this went specifically to non-governmental institutions, and only \$38 million went directly to women’s organisations based in developing countries.⁶⁶ In 2018, despite the Grand Bargain funding target of 25 per cent to local and national responders by 2020, only around 14 per cent of finance went to local actors either directly or through partners,⁶⁷ and no data on the percentage going specifically to women’s organisations was available.

When funding does reach local women’s organisations, it is typically small-scale and short-term,⁶⁸ as donors remain reluctant to provide longer-term and flexible funding to local organisations due to perceived contextual, institutional and reputational risks.

Donors often impose inflexible and rigid requirements, which further limit local women’s organisations’ ability to get funding.

The need to apply a stronger gender lens to the localisation agenda

Funding of women’s organisations is a core element of a gender-focused localisation agenda. But despite commitments made over the last few years, it has yet to be translated into action.⁶⁹ Localisation is at the heart of the Grand Bargain, which established it as a key normative principle of humanitarian action⁷⁰ and contains a specific localisation workstream. However, the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change make no specific references to women’s organisations. As a result, they are not prioritised as critical actors in the delivery of the humanitarian agenda.⁷¹ The localisation agenda on WPS and the SDGs also remains limited.

The challenges facing women’s organisations in FCAS in the localisation agenda include: limited engagement and influence in policy-making spaces and planning processes; structural barriers to accessing resources and decision-making spaces; international NGOs and donors shaping decisions about capacity strengthening without proper consultation or understanding of women’s organisations’ needs; and humanitarian actors’ internal organisation and culture – including funding mechanisms and procedures.⁷² Despite progress largely driven by NGOs, local women’s organisations and women responders continue to be largely overlooked and continue to struggle for resources, recognition and support.⁷³ The lack of coordination between the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors is also reflected in the localisation policy discourse, with guidance being focused on each sector separately, and tools largely focused on the humanitarian agenda.

The participation of marginalised women and local organisations that work and support them must become a reality if policies are to meet the needs and reflect the realities of those women.

Beyond Consultations Tool

Women for Women International was a lead partner of the Beyond Consultations project led by the UK Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Network. The project produced the Beyond Consultations tool, aimed at decision-makers, international NGOs and CSOs, and women's organisations in FCAS. The tool is designed to support actors to move towards more meaningful engagement with women in FCAS in response to feedback that many consultation exercises tend to be extractive, tokenistic, and disempowering.

The tool enables a self-assessment of current consultation practices and provides a best practice framework to ensure that women and women's organisations are fully engaged in decision-making processes. It should be used as early as possible during the planning and design phase of engagement, and regularly revisited throughout the participation activity and its evaluation.⁷⁴



Recommendations



What needs to happen to systematically ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised women and their local organisations in policy processes that affect them?

UN agencies, governments, donors and international organisations across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors should take the necessary steps to ensure the meaningful political participation and representation of marginalised women and local women's organisations at all levels of policy-making.

They should:

- Establish appropriate and adequate mechanisms, using the Beyond Consultations Tool, to ensure that marginalised women in FCAS – including displaced women – are able to meaningfully participate in all relevant policy fora and meetings (including all of the 2020 moments) and ensure that they are given the opportunity, space and support to host, lead and contribute to discussions at high-level political and policy events.

- Ensure that effective support for women's political influence is combined with a range of integrated and holistic approaches, including working with men and customary institutions - that address both the practical and structural barriers to women's decision-making and leadership.

UN agencies, governments and donors should prioritise strengthening the capacity of marginalised women and local women's organisations to access and effectively influence global, national and local policy processes that affect them.

They should:

- Deliver on their Grand Bargain commitment of 25 per cent of funding by 2021 with at least one-third going specifically to local women's organisations. The funding should be flexible, accessible and long-term to enable organisations to implement sustainable work according to their self-defined priorities.
- Ensure that all National Action Plans are funded with some budget allocated to participation of marginalised women and local women's organisations in peacebuilding activities.
- Include gender-centred localisation outcomes, targets and indicators on marginalised women and ensure local women's organisations' meaningful participation, funding, capacity-strengthening and access to decision-making spaces.

UN Women should be at the forefront of a push for the systematic participation of marginalised women and local women's organisations in policy and decision-making processes.

UN Women should:

- Champion and facilitate the participation of marginalised women from FCAS in all relevant international policy fora and meetings, and ensure that they are given the opportunity, space and support to host, lead and contribute to discussions, including as part of the 2020 key political moments.
- Put local women's organisations' engagement and influence in policy processes at the core of its next strategy by allocating dedicated funding to their participation.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will further strengthen mechanisms for the participation of marginalised women in our own programme development, delivery and monitoring, particularly women with disabilities.
- We will accelerate the investment in and innovation of our Change Agents Programme to provide more women with skills, knowledge and support to use their unique leadership, resilience and experience to secure change in their communities and beyond.
- We will ensure that all global and in-country colleagues and partners are supported to understand the critical role of women as contributors to our programmatic work.



Action Area 4

Prioritise, fund and deliver a survivor-centred approach to all forms of violence against women in FCAS across all sectors

Violence against women is a daily and long-term reality for marginalised women in FCAS

Violence against women (VAW) is endemic in FCAS. The poorest and most marginalised women are at the highest risk of experiencing violence as a direct result of insecurity, instability and war.⁷⁵

Crises exacerbate existing and long-standing gender inequalities and their impact on women. Whilst opportunistic and targeted sexual violence against women is generated by an increase in crises themselves, it is now well-evidenced that intimate partner violence (IPV) is often the most common form of violence experienced in conflict and post-conflict settings.

For example, a large-scale research study on the prevalence of violence against women and girls in South Sudan found that the most common form of violence reported was abuse within the home, committed by husbands or partners.⁷⁶ Data from our own programmes show the prevalence of violence inside the home: fifty-seven per cent of women we work with in DRC reported spousal violence, 52 per cent in Afghanistan and 54 per cent of women from our programme in Nigeria.

Gender-based violence and violence against women

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex or gender identity and includes: physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; taking away someone's right to make decisions; and economic deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life.

Violence against women (VAW) is the most prevalent form of gender-based violence and is directed at women because they are women. It relates to how women are seen and treated in their societies. VAW refers to both the use of violence (physical) and threat of violence (emotional). It undermines the mental and physical health of women and girls, violates their human rights and has a negative impact on long-term peace and stability.⁷⁷ VAW has different forms, including: intimate partner violence; sexual violence; economic violence; and harmful traditional practices such as early marriage or forced marriage of girls, and female genital mutilation.

Rhetoric and commitments on ending all forms of violence have not translated into reality

VAW and its complex, long-lasting and multi-dimensional consequences undermine the achievement of women's rights and the successful delivery of the SDGs⁷⁸ and WPS agenda.⁷⁹ Addressing all forms of violence should therefore be an imperative across the triple nexus for all development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors.

There is an extensive normative framework underpinning the effort to end VAW, most notably the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was the first international instrument explicitly addressing violence against women, as well as General Recommendations 12 and 19 of CEDAW.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was instrumental in establishing violence against women as a global priority and, more recently, the SDGs included specific targets on ending violence against women and girls.

Over the past 25 years, there have been numerous global resolutions and political declarations on ending all forms of VAW including in FCAS, as well as initiatives aimed at galvanising momentum and greater leadership and action – including increased resources – to prevent and respond to VAW in humanitarian and conflict settings.



These include the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies; the 2015 IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action; and the 2016 Real-Time Accountability Partnership on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, which developed the GBV Accountability Framework, aiming to transform the way GBV is addressed by humanitarian actors.

While these are significant milestones, the current response to VAW remains inadequate and falls short of the needs and realities on the ground:

- VAW prevention and response are not prioritised in emergencies and in peacebuilding efforts,⁸⁰ and rhetoric is often narrowly confined to sexual violence. IPV tends to be neglected in VAW responses in emergencies, protracted crises and post-conflict settings, despite its well-evidenced prevalence.
- GBV prevention and response remain driven and dictated by the aid community and not by survivors and women who are at risk of experiencing GBV.
- Despite evidence on the impact of community-wide VAW programmes that focus on changing attitudes, behaviour and social norms in FCAS by engaging with men and community and religious leaders, VAW prevention efforts remain largely confined to service delivery and do not include a holistic and inclusive approach that engages community power holders and influencers.
- Capacity and expertise are insufficient to address the needs of and to reach the most marginalised and vulnerable women, and local women's organisations are not consulted and engaged in needs assessments, planning and implementation of VAW prevention and response.

- The overall policy and programming focus remains framed within a sole humanitarian angle, without the inclusion of a development and peacebuilding perspective, providing another example of the sectors' siloed ways of working.

GBV Funding Gap⁸¹

VAW prevention and response is chronically and drastically under-funded. A report released by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) found that funding allocated specifically to GBV in emergencies between 2016 and 2018 amounted to a mere 0.12 per cent of the total US \$41.5 billion allocated globally for humanitarian response. Despite the urgent needs of millions of women and girls affected by violence, it also found that funding requests do not match the scale of the problem.

An analysis of the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan for Nigeria in the aftermath of the kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls by Boko Haram found that only US \$6 million was requested for GBV programming out of a total request of US \$248 million – or 2.4 per cent of the total request. Only US \$726,507 was received.

The May 2019 Oslo Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crisis – the first ever pledging conference on GBV – resulted in pledges of over US \$360 million.⁸² This was a positive step towards acknowledging the funding gap, but will require sustained political leadership and a shift in the current prioritisation of GBV funding.

How Women for Women International addresses violence against women

Women for Women International's holistic programme strengthens marginalised women's financial independence, health, social connections and agency – critical factors that both reduce women's vulnerability to violence, and enhance their resilience and ability to cope with its consequences, including stigma and social exclusion – all of which create further barriers to women's empowerment and compound the risk of further abuse. An integrated and survivor-centred approach – which emphasises women's economic power as well as norm change – is needed to break this vicious cycle. This is a model we have pioneered over the past 26 years to help survivors heal, thrive and take ownership of their futures, within the most challenging conflict settings.

Our combined social and economic empowerment curriculum includes knowledge-building on VAW, which focuses on addressing its root causes – the norms, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that permit or perpetuate VAW, which are often internalised by women. Women learn about how societal and cultural traditions can lead to harmful practices, how to identify different forms of VAW, and common and damaging myths associated with it. We do not ask women directly about their experiences of sexual violence, due to the sensitivities around identifying survivors and risks of reprisals or stigma. We provide survivors with safe spaces to discuss their experiences and guarantees of confidentiality to disclose abuse and support them to determine their own course of action. This may involve referrals to medical, psychological and/or legal services provided by specialist local partners.

We also work with men and the broader community to tackle the causes and drivers of VAW. Changing the harmful traditional norms and unequal power dynamics that perpetuate VAW, and further isolate and re-victimise survivors, is a collective effort which needs to happen at multiple levels – from the household to local, national and global advocacy.

“Today I find myself in a family; the women in the group are like my sisters – we share so much. I am no longer the single mother from rape, isolated and rejected.”

Jeanine, DRC

Recent unprecedented developments set the tone for 2020

“There has been a change in the way the community addresses rape. My neighbour’s daughter was raped and people said we should let it go due to the stigma she will face when she grows up; no one will marry her. The case was hushed away. After we got this training, there was another girl, a 4-year-old was raped by a 35-year-old. We went and saw her, we took her to the maternity, they quickly took samples and evidence. Then he was arrested. We supported the parents and encouraged them through the legal proceedings. He has been sentenced to 23 years in prison.”

Maryam, Jos East, Nigeria

2019 saw unprecedented attention given to VAW and GBV in conflict with several global policy events on addressing GBV in humanitarian settings. Under the leadership of the UN Security Council and several donor governments, there was strong collective advocacy on the issue alongside increased evidence on what works to prevent and address GBV, including through the DFID-funded research programme which published its final findings that year.

The Oslo Conference⁸³ was an important milestone both in terms of organisation and outcomes. For the first time, strengthening GBV prevention and response was defined as a priority, alongside a survivor-centred approach. The conference also gave visibility and recognition to the key role of national and local organisations, including local women’s organisations. Several hundred commitments were made in relation to standards and legal GBV frameworks, operational support, prevention and response services, leadership and coordination, and others specific to country contexts and areas of work. Focus was given to implementation of legal frameworks and strategies, as well as an increase in operational support to ensure that survivor-centred services and care are available in all crises.⁸⁴

These initiatives have contributed to greater visibility and understanding of violence against women in FCAS. Global gatherings and events in 2020 provide a unique opportunity to build on these milestones, taking concrete and unprecedented action to address the current gaps in the responses to VAW – including lack of funding – and make violence a key priority across sectors.

Women for Women International’s Men’s Engagement Programme (MEP)

Women for Women International has been pioneering culturally-specific men’s engagement programmes in every country where we operate since 2002, reaching 30,000 men to date. In order to see long-lasting change for women, we engage men both at the household level as well as men who exert strong influence over social norms and practices within the wider community, such as religious, military and civil society leaders.

The MEP training is tailored to local context and aims to raise men’s understanding of and attitudes towards violence against women, the value of women’s work, girls’ education, and women’s participation in community activities. To ensure community involvement and buy-in for the programme, we use a cascading ‘training of trainers’ approach, whereby the men we train are equipped to train others and to use their positions of influence to advocate for gender equality within their communities.

Examples of local advocacy activities involving MEP graduates working in partnership with the women we work with include community dialogues – forums where community members and leaders come together to discuss specific gender-related issues and agree on solutions. Another way in which we actively engage a broader network of men and women in the communities where we work is through couples’ dialogues; where couples who may be experiencing domestic problems related to gender inequality or violence in the home are brought together by trainers to discuss these issues.

Across our men’s engagement activities in Afghanistan, DRC and Nigeria, men were 80 per cent more active in supporting women’s rights at graduation compared to enrolment. We see an average increase of 50 per cent in men’s knowledge scores between enrolment and graduation. An external evaluation showed a 10-fold increase in men disagreeing with justifications for violence against women – from just 6 per cent to 60 per cent.

“I regret all the years I was like a lion, drinking and beating my wife and not taking care of our family. I have asked her to forgive all the bad things I did to her. Now we talk, share and live in peace.”

MEP graduate, DRC



What needs to happen to prioritise, fund and deliver a survivor-centred approach to all forms of violence against marginalised women in FCAS across all sectors?

UN agencies, governments and donors should make preventing and addressing VAW in FCAS a global imperative across sectors for the next decade.

They should:

- Include explicit reference to tackling all forms of VAW in all 2020 outcome statements and renewed commitments.
- Commit to at least doubling the level of long-term funding addressing VAW and, at the follow up Oslo Conference on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in September 2020, ensure that investment matches need with concrete targets.
- Ensure that the next Call to Action Roadmap, due to be developed in 2020, includes specific outcomes around targeting all forms of GBV, and improved coordination and collaboration with development and peacebuilding actors in the field.

UN agencies, governments and international organisations across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors should embed a truly survivor-centred approach throughout the planning, delivery and monitoring of prevention and responses to VAW in FCAS.

They should:

- Invest in programmes that seek to tackle the root causes of VAW in all its forms. The focus should be on tackling structural inequalities through a holistic and comprehensive approach that includes enabling women's leadership and advocacy, and engaging men and boys and community leaders and influencers.
- Prioritise partnerships with local women's rights organisations providing services to survivors. These should include sexual and reproductive services, access to justice, psycho-social support, the creation of safe spaces, and community sensitisation and mobilisation to challenge stigma and discrimination.

UN Women should call on UN leadership, donors and governments to take tangible actions to GBV prevention and responses.

UN Women should:

- Call on the UN Secretary General to expand the mandate of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to cover all forms of gender-based violence in fragile and conflict states to better reflect the scope and realities of women living in those settings, and increase their visibility and data in the Special Representatives' reports, statements and missions.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will strengthen and improve our programmatic work on violence against women prevention and response, including through the introduction of referral action plans, and the progressive expansion of our Men's Engagement Programme to all communities where we operate.
- We will continue to ally with organisations campaigning and advocating to end violence against women and girls, with a specific focus on the need for a holistic and survivor-centred approach and increase in funding.



Photo: © Emily Kinskey

Action Area 5

Invest in marginalised women's economic power programming in FCAS



Women in FCAS are the most affected by poverty and the most economically marginalised

Seventy-two per cent of all people living in extreme poverty reside in fragile states, and 85 percent of the world's poorest are predicted to be living in fragile contexts by 2030.⁸⁵

Poverty places significant burdens on women. Women are poorer and more hungry than men across the world;⁸⁶ this is even more evident in FCAS. Women are more likely than men to live in the poorest households in 41 out of 75 countries – with 28 (or 68 per cent) of those countries being fragile or conflict-affected.⁸⁷

Women's poverty in FCAS is intrinsically linked to and mutually compounded by deep-rooted gender norms that dictate and influence women's freedom of movement, their access to education and learning opportunities, their ability to make choices and decisions in the household including around asset ownership, and their knowledge and awareness of their rights. Additional constraints associated with conflict, fragility and violence which affect marginalised women arise from weak economic, political and security environments, as well as low government capacities.⁸⁸

Poverty and violence

Poor and marginalised women in FCAS are more vulnerable to VAW because they often live in dangerous conditions and are exposed to violence on a daily basis – for example when travelling long distances to fetch water or firewood in isolated areas or walking to get some food.

Poverty puts extra pressure on the household, and may lead to drinking, frustration and anger; it is therefore a key contributor to violence. Financial pressure, chronic food insecurity and unemployment often lead to intimate partner violence and the adoption of negative coping strategies, including the early marriage of girls, or women and girls having to engage in dangerous work exposing them to sexual exploitation, including trafficking.⁸⁹

Marginalised women's economic power in FCAS is not prioritised

Despite the impact of conflict and fragility on women's economic power and the importance of women's economic power for poverty reduction, commitments and responses to date have been insufficient to make a difference to marginalised women's lives.

Women's economic rights are enshrined – although not explicitly – in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the CEDAW. Several International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions also relate to women's rights in the workplace, including the 2019 Convention and Recommendation to "Combat Violence and Harassment at Work";⁹⁰ the first-ever global agreement on violence in the workplace.

Women's economic empowerment was first considered 25 years ago in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which identified women and the economy as a critical area of concern. It has long been a rallying call for women's rights advocates, but it is only in the last five years that it has entered the mainstream global policy agenda.

For example:

- The UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment contributed to generating increased momentum. A Group of Champions on Women's Economic Empowerment was established to ensure that the work of the High-Level Panel is taken forward through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to champion women's economic empowerment in their countries, as well as regionally and globally.⁹¹
- Women's economic empowerment was first identified as a top G7 development priority in 2015, and in 2017 the G7 adopted a Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment, and committed to advancing gender equality, including through increasing women's participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making and eliminating violence against women.⁹² In 2019, the G7 adopted the Declaration on Gender Equality,⁹³ which recognises the central role of women's economic empowerment in the realisation of women's rights and equality with men.

What is “Women’s economic power”?

Women for Women International defines “women’s economic power” as women’s ability to freely decide how to engage in economic life and how money and other assets are saved, spent, sold or invested. Whilst women’s labour participation, paid work employment, earnings and savings are important indicators of economic power, increased decision-making in the household, ownership and control over income and assets, and reported increased levels of confidence are important indicators of change in women’s economic power. Women’s agency is therefore at the centre of our programmes’ outcomes.⁹⁴

Despite the growing importance of the agenda, women’s economic power in fragile and conflict-affected states remains confined to rhetoric. Compounded by the lack of cross-sectoral approaches and joint analysis on the ground, women’s economic power programming is often perceived as a “development” intervention which requires a certain level of stability and safety.⁹⁵ Arguably, the absence of specific references to marginalised women and women in FCAS in the SDGs, including SDG 8, further reinforces the perception of women’s economic power as a development issue.



Photo: © Ryan Carter

The Graduation Approach

Current policy and lack of prioritisation of, and investment in, women’s economic power in FCAS contrasts with the success of longer-term programming delivered in more stable settings. This includes the ultra-poor graduation model – an integrated set of interventions aimed at moving extremely poor individuals out of poverty and into economically sustainable livelihoods within a specified time (18 to 36 months). A typical graduation out of poverty approach combines elements of social protection, livelihood development and access to finance.

The graduation programme is costly on a per-household basis (with an average cost of US \$1,148, although it varies between settings) but highly cost-effective, with a return on investment of 133–433 per cent.⁹⁶ It has also been proven to secure income gains, increased savings, greater food security, and improved physical and mental health for graduates.

First labelled as an “ultra-poor graduation model” by BRAC in 2002, this approach has recently proliferated, with over 100 models currently being implemented across the world by over 70 organisations. An increasing number are working to implement the model in fragile and conflict-affected states. Seventy-nine per cent include women’s empowerment as a specific aim. Women are also one of the main targets of graduation programmes.

An increasing number of graduation programmes are specifically targeting refugees and internally displaced populations, coinciding with stronger recognition of the need to enable refugees to work in their host countries – a requirement explicitly set out in the Global Compact on Refugees – as a way to combine the development needs of host communities and countries with the humanitarian needs of refugees.⁹⁷ The World Bank and DFID have also adopted this model as good practice.

However, over recent years, there have been discussions amongst policy-makers and practitioners, including UNHCR, on making the graduation approach more gender transformative.

Women for Women International has been actively engaging with graduation actors, using its experience implementing a gender-transformative programme in conflict-affected states for over 25 years to bring its expertise and learnings to the discussions.

We believe that adopting a gendered graduation approach will drive progress for women’s economic power. We specifically focus on ensuring that we improve women’s incomes and market access. Through our work we place the importance of gender equality on an equal footing with poverty reduction and we offer the graduation community a tried-and-tested programmatic approach that focuses on shifts in social power and extensive experience with development-oriented approaches in conflict-affected environments.

Global policy on women's economic power does not adequately address structural barriers

Donors' commitments to, initiatives on, and investments in women's economic power have been insufficient to address the structural barriers that drive women's economic marginalisation, social exclusion and chronic poverty.⁹⁸

- Economic power is commonly perceived to be about earning and saving money or owning assets. The socio-cultural and political factors that constrain women's agency, and impact their ability to freely decide how to engage in economic life and how money and other assets are saved, spent, sold or invested, is frequently neglected.
- There is a lack of strong multi-sectoral approaches to women's economic power, with GBV prevention and mitigation measures and objectives largely missing from women's economic power interventions; for example, through the lack of GBV risks analysis and lack of engagement with men.
- Women's engagement in employment is often equated with empowerment. However, women's work in conflict can be a necessity or temporary coping mechanism to meet household needs, rather than a genuine sign of progress.
- A focus on employment in the formal sector leaves out millions of women – primarily those living in chronic poverty and in FCAS – whose work is often limited to unpaid household chores and childcare. These women are left without protection and exposed to unsafe and dangerous working conditions in the informal and unregulated sector.
- There are gaps between short-term humanitarian responses in FCAS – which aim to meet the immediate needs of women and are limited by short funding cycles – and interventions that focus on long-term and sustainable engagement and change traditionally brought by development actors.

Women's economic power programming funding gap

Women's economic power is under-resourced in FCAS, with only a minuscule amount of funding going towards the economic empowerment of chronically poor women in FCAS.

Only one per cent of total bilateral aid to the economic and productive sectors had gender equality and women's empowerment as the principal or primary outcome in 2015–2016, an actual decrease from the previous year.⁹⁹

In 2016, the OECD noted that:

"There is no greater financial priority being placed on this [women's economic empowerment for achieving gender equality and sustainable development] today than in 2007. The share of gender-focused aid to the economic and productive sectors is still stuck at 24% – exactly the same proportion as in 2007."¹⁰⁰

The gaps in the current responses are further compounded by:

- A focus on outcomes that do not reflect or are not adapted to the specific realities and contexts marginalised women in FCAS live in. For example, SDG 8 promotes economic growth, full employment, and decent work for all and includes a target to achieve equal pay for work of equal value by 2030, which is not adapted to the current realities and context of marginalised women in FCAS. As noted by the IRC, the G7 Development Finance Institutions "2 X Challenge – Financing for Women"¹⁰¹ that aims to mobilise US \$3 billion by 2020 in investment for women, relies on indicators (e.g., roles on boards and consumption, product needs) that are not enablers of women's economic power in FCAS, and do not include any investment criteria that focus on changes in gender norms, discriminatory policies and legislation, or VAW prevention.¹⁰²
- The lack of participation of marginalised women and local women's organisations in policy and programming, as highlighted in Action Area 3 of this report.
- The lack of coordination between and within agendas and frameworks; for example, the lack of synergies around actions under SDG 1 and SDG 5, and the siloed and gender-blind approach across sectors, as considered in Action Area 2 of this report.
- Digital transformation that can exacerbate inequalities, especially when addressing gaps and the needs of the most marginalised; for example, in contexts where gender inequality is particularly entrenched, and where digital technology is not adapted or accessible to marginalised women living in FCAS.
- The rates of financial inclusion – which is important to women's economic power – are systematically lower in FCAS, with women not having money or decision-making power to have a bank account, or access to savings and credit.

In addition, women experience other exclusion factors including illiteracy, distance, and lack of trust as key obstacles to account ownership.⁹⁸

"After the programme, I know that I am a human being and have the same rights like the men in the family and community and I can be free. I have the right to choose, I have rights for work and property and when I advocate for others, I try my best to help women solve their problems."

Lutfia, Kapisa, Afghanistan

Adopting a gender-transformative approach to women's economic power – Women for Women International's Gender Graduation Programme

Whilst graduation models largely focus on women (and tend to benefit women), most do not adopt a gender-transformative approach. The primary focus is usually economic impact, largely neglecting to consider social and gender norms, and unequal power relations – the root causes of gender inequalities. Women's agency, for example, is rarely considered in traditional graduation models, which also largely focus on quantitative indicators.

The graduation models have traditionally set a threshold for graduation that does not consider the differences between communities and contexts, and only use an income-related threshold as the main criteria for graduation, as opposed to a set of criteria that take non-economic related indicators into consideration for graduation eligibility.

Very often the poorest women are illiterate,¹⁰³ which makes it difficult to get accurate data on income and savings. However, this is changing with organisations like Concern Worldwide, BOMA, Trickle Up, Village Enterprise, and Fundacion Capital putting more emphasis on including a gender lens in their existing graduation programmes, with support of donors such as the IDRC.

Context-specific and targeted bundles of interventions that include a strong focus on changing power dynamics in the household and address intersecting forms of discrimination and economic marginalisation are needed to ensure that women's economic empowerment is attainable and sustainable. Women for Women International implements a Gendered Graduation Approach that provides extremely poor and socially marginalised women in FCAS with a 12-month bundled intervention that emphasises both social empowerment to help women overcome barriers to inclusion, and economic pathways to increase food security, income, savings and resilience to shocks.

Our approach is designed specifically for marginalised women living in FCAS. It is tailored to the needs of women living in FCAS who have been largely left out of the educational system and may struggle with numeracy and literacy. The programme creates gender transformation at the individual and household levels, with its benefits transferring into communities through a change in gender and social norms and practices (see box below).

How is Women for Women International's approach gender transformative?

Five components for effectively supporting women's economic power in conflict:

- 1 Targeting women. Ensure that ultra-poor communities are reached and that there is inclusivity in the selection of participants to engage the most vulnerable and marginalised women survivors of conflict.
- 2 Training on rights, gender and health – including the value of women's work; health and wellness; gender equality, rights and decision-making; conflict, violence and peacebuilding; women's solidarity and networking; and leadership, citizenship and advocating for change.
- 3 Economic knowledge and skills, including numeracy; household financial planning; savings channels; goal-setting; business planning; and negotiation, leadership and effective communication.
- 4 Supporting social networks and connections through safe women-only spaces and sessions delivered in a group setting, bringing together groups of 25 women throughout the 12 months of the programme.
- 5 Tackling discriminatory gender norms by working with men – including community leaders and influencers – and transforming negative masculinity norms.

Women for Women International's Gendered Graduation Approach has a significant impact on improving the poorest marginalised women's socio-economic power, including in the most difficult contexts.

An impact evaluation of Women for Women International's graduation approach in Afghanistan highlighted the successful results of combined social and economic investment in marginalised women. The study found that there was a significant impact on women's social and economic well-being a year after graduating from the core gender graduation programme.¹⁰⁴ In particular, compared to women who did not receive the intervention, women in the programme were nearly twice as likely to be earning money and seven times more likely to have savings. Women in the programme also experienced improved gender attitudes, increased freedom to travel and improved decision-making.

“Before, in my house, the way we shared chores was based on gender and we always assumed the girl child is not entitled to any inheritance so we only put it in the boy's name. After the training, I came back and told my husband that we are cheating our daughter because we should be treating our children equally because everyone has a right to inheritance. My husband agreed and we sat with our children and apologised to them. We told them that we were not supposed to do what we did and we also want them, when they grow up, not to show differences.”

Polina, Pankshin, Nigeria

Efforts to encourage and enable sustainable women's economic power require a transformative, holistic and integrated approach that recognises intersecting inequalities and goes beyond a solely economic focus to include non-economic outcomes. Action must also focus on the women most at risk of being left behind, notably marginalised women in FCAS.

The increasing attention and recognition of a feminist approach to women's empowerment and gender equality provide a unique opportunity to catalyse a gender-transformative approach aimed at the poorest and most marginalised women in FCAS.



What needs to happen to invest in and for marginalised women’s economic power through a gender-transformative approach and increased funding?

UN agencies, governments and donors should demonstrate commitment to building the socio-economic power of marginalised women in FCAS.

They should:

- Include gender-transformative programming in FCAS as a critical approach for the delivery of the SDGs, including SDG 1, SDG 5 and SDG 8, in the high-level review meeting of the SDGs in September 2020, and any political declaration and outcome arising from the Heads of State Review Meeting.
- Make explicit commitments to invest in context-specific gender-transformative women’s economic empowerment programmes that focus on integrated interventions in FCAS. Addressing gender norms and the structural barriers to women’s economic power should be prioritised in these commitments, and in collective outcomes for nexus partnerships.
- Ensure that women’s economic power in FCAS is explicitly identified as a priority in the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights’ blueprint, and that linkages are made with the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence, including in the Coalitions’ time-bound commitments.

Governments, donors and international organisations across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors should fund and prioritise women’s economic power programmes as an imperative to deliver on global agendas and achieve gender equality.

They should:

- Ensure adequate funding for dedicated programmes, with gender equality in the economic and productive sectors reaching at least 10 per cent by 2025.
- Identify women’s economic power in FCAS as a key common priority in the implementation and reviews of global agendas, including VNRs and NAPs.
- Include changes in women’s agency and decision-making power alongside income-focused outcomes and indicators in their strategies and policies.
- Explicitly consider and mainstream VAW prevention and the importance of transforming harmful gender norms across economic power programming.
- Collectively promote and support legislative change enabling women’s participation in the economy.



Photo: © Serrah Galos

UN Women should champion and promote increased understanding of the importance of gender-transformative approaches to women’s economic power in FCAS.

UN Women should:

- Advocate for a specific focus on women’s economic power in FCAS to the Group of Champions of Women’s Economic Empowerment and encourage the inclusion of representatives from FCAS among the Champions.
- Explicitly include marginalised women in FCAS in its work on women’s economic power, including in its role and contributions to global policy throughout 2020 and beyond.
- Convene a multi-stakeholder meeting with a view to establishing an Expert Working Group on women’s economic power in FCAS that supports a gender-transformative approach to economic programmes across key agendas and frameworks.
- Create a Thematic Dashboard on women’s economic empowerment to complement the existing dashboards on VAW and WPS.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will increase our investment in women’s social and economic power, expand market access and increasingly work (through change agents) to address the structural barriers to women’s access to and control over resources and assets.
- We will step up our engagement in key graduation partnerships and initiatives, including the World Bank-hosted Partnership for Economic Inclusion, contributing our expertise on gender and FCAS and facilitating lesson-learning and sharing to further advance progress towards a gender-transformative graduation approach in FCAS.

Conclusion

Over 200 million women are being left behind and are being denied the right to fulfil their potential and to engage and contribute to decision-making fora and processes that affect them. 2020 provides an unprecedented and unmissable opportunity to define an ambitious and forward-thinking agenda that challenges the status quo.

This report has clearly outlined five critical areas for action to ensure that:

- 1 The most marginalised women's needs are visible across the triple nexus
- 2 Women's rights are addressed and invested in across the triple nexus
- 3 Women are included and actively participate in defining agendas for change across the triple nexus
- 4 Violence against women is addressed as one of the greatest challenges for meeting global agendas across the triple nexus
- 5 Women's economic power is adequately addressed and invested in across the triple nexus

During 2020, as part of the various review processes, we, as the international community, need to set more specific targets to ensure that these recommendations are met.

Above all we must be guided by these overarching commitments:

We ensure marginalised women in FCAS are not left behind

We commit to a substantial increase in resources

We garner political will for the implementation of existing global agendas

We coordinate across the triple nexus

We look forward to working together to take this Agenda for Action forward in 2020 and beyond, so that the needs and rights of marginalised women in FCAS are recognised, addressed and realised.

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