



# UN WOMEN IN CRISIS AND EMERGENCY CONTEXTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



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MAIN ACTIONS, GOOD PRACTICES  
AND LESSONS LEARNED

UN WOMEN IN CRISIS AND  
EMERGENCY CONTEXTS  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN



**UN WOMEN**  
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# INITIALS AND ACRONYMS

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CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
GenCap	Gender Standby Capacity Project	UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
IASC <sup>1</sup>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	UNETE	United Nations Emergency Team
IOM	International Organization for Migration	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
LAC	Latin American and the Caribbean	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
MINSA	Ministerio de Salud	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MIRA	Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment	UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	UNS	United Nations system
PAHO/WHO	Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
PDNA	Post-disaster needs assessment	WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
UN	United Nations Organization		
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women		

# 1. PRESENTATION

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions of the world with the highest exposure to disasters, with the Caribbean facing increased risks given its geography. This combines with the region's high vulnerability to climate change. The high rates of violence in the region are equally alarming, with women and girls being the most frequent victims. Humanitarian crises, regardless of the cause, affect women, men, girls and boys differently. Women and girls are the most vulnerable to suffering the negative effects of humanitarian crises. For this reason, one essential requirement for effective humanitarian response is that the specific and differentiated needs of the population be considered, including women's and girls'. Women and girls are also agents of change and can play a critical role in community resilience.

In this context, and in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Women promotes the effective positioning of women and girls as subjects of rights, ensuring equality between men and women as partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian action. This includes: providing specialized knowledge on inclusion of gender equality in humanitarian coordination mechanisms; ensuring that women and girls have access to information, skills and resources to secure livelihoods opportunities in humanitarian contexts; and gathering and using data disaggregated by sex. In these response and recovery efforts, women's organizations play an essential leadership role. Thanks to these efforts, more women play a central role, and are more fully served, in the humanitarian response. To strengthen these actions, we must extract the good practices and the lessons learned from different emergency situations in the region in order, on the basis of experience, to bolster the procedures for organizational response to emergency situations.

In addition, efficient action requires joint work between the different stakeholders involved in minimizing the consequences of humanitarian crises. Evidence of this is provided by the success of the actions promoted by UN Women in cooperation with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in response to the armed conflict in Colombia; the joint efforts with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and UNFPA to strengthen the social fabric in Brazil vis-à-vis the Zika epidemic; the partnership of UN Women with the United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and with the Standing Commission on Contingencies (COPECO) to raise awareness on the issue and mainstream the gender perspective into the national risk reduction strategy in Honduras; the cooperation between UN Women and UNFPA to coordinate the response to gender violence and the partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to introduce the gender perspective in early recovery efforts following the 2016 earthquake in Ecuador; the cooperation with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) to incorporate the gender perspective in the mapping of the different social actors affected by the forest fire in Chile; as well as the partnership with UNICEF, through which gender equality was included in the humanitarian response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. Currently, UN Women, in conjunction with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and UNISDR, is initiating a regional disaster management program that offers a multi-faceted approach for consistently addressing gender inequality in risk management and disaster response work.

These are but a few examples of how, through partnerships, UN Women bolsters the performance of

its work and plays a decisive role in implementing humanitarian response with a gender perspective. With the future crises, epidemics and disasters linked to climate change in our region, we must broaden the use of data disaggregated by sex in post-crisis needs assessments. It is also essential to empower women and girls as change agents, placing them at the centre of any response, given that they are key actors both for strengthening resilience to risk disaster as well as for

devising and monitoring public policy and regulatory frameworks. These efforts are essential for progressing toward the achievement of the SDGs and toward a 50-50 planet by 2030.

***Luiza Carvalho***

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian crises caused by disasters and catastrophes, health emergencies or complex emergencies, including armed conflict, are not gender-neutral, and they affect men and women, girls and boys, differently. According to United Nations reports, 60% of maternal deaths occur in humanitarian emergency situations, and all forms of violence against women and girls peak in situations of disaster and conflict<sup>2</sup>.

Although the objective of humanitarian assistance is to help all persons affected by an emergency and satisfy their needs, the specific needs, resilience and response capacities of different population groups are not always taken into account. Women, as well as girls, boys, the elderly and persons with disabilities generally have less access to goods and resources during crises. During these situations, women and girls are more vulnerable to extreme hardship, such as increased violence and insecurity, restricted mobility, as well as having additional care, domestic and livelihood responsibilities. This is in addition to their scarce participation, influence and representation in decision-making on the type of assistance and protection they need during a crisis, exposing them to adverse effects and increasing their vulnerability.

And just as crises are not gender-neutral, effective humanitarian responses should be sensitive to gender issues. Taking this reality into account, some specialized agencies have recognized the importance

of mainstreaming the gender perspective into humanitarian action, in order for it to be more effective, have a greater impact during their operations and have greater benefits for the different population groups affected by the emergency. This entails working proactively with humanitarian agents to ensure that their emergency response plans properly integrate gender equality and women's empowerment; that women and girls are consulted so as to understand and address their needs and vulnerabilities; that gender is mainstreamed into humanitarian assessments, reporting and monitoring tools; and that gender experts are included in humanitarian crisis response teams<sup>3</sup>.

Hence, UN Women is committed to ensuring equality between women and men in their capacity as partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian action, guided by a series of international commitments<sup>4</sup> defined in UN Women's humanitarian strategy for 2014-2017<sup>5,6</sup>. Through leadership and inter-agency coordination, UN Women supports other United Nations agencies in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian actions. Likewise, it provides technical and financial assistance for the Member States to implement policies and commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian actions. It also supports the voices, the actions and the capacity of civil society women's organizations and national mechanisms for the advancement of women in humanitarian efforts.

### 3. BACKGROUND

In comparison with those of other regions, the humanitarian response needs of the Latin America and the Caribbean may go unnoticed in global discussions because most of the countries of the region are classified as medium/high income countries and are presumed to have comparatively solid institutional crisis- and emergency-response capacities and mechanisms.

The region continually faces emergencies of a diverse nature (natural disasters, armed conflict, health epidemics) that make it highly vulnerable. Consequently, it is necessary to demonstrate how emergencies impact women in the exercise of their rights and affect their quality of life and lifestyle. It is also necessary to show how humanitarian response actions take into account the specific needs of women and girls affected as well as their function as persons holding rights and their participation in determining the type of assistance and protection they need during a crisis in accordance with their needs.

Following the Regional Consultation processes<sup>7</sup> on Gender Equality for Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>8,9</sup> as well as the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul 2016, a series of concrete, long-term recommendations on gender equality in situations of humanitarian action were established, in response, *inter alia*, to the need to: (i) incorporate a more inclusive view of gender, based on respect for human rights, in humanitarian action; (ii) ensure women's participation in policy- and decision-making and local empowerment, thus emphasizing the concept of co-responsibility, in which the persons affected are seen as active, critical partners in the search for effective solutions rather than passive recipients; (iii) bolster women's participation in humanitarian-action response, communication and coordination mechanisms, both regionally and locally; (iv) have data broken down by sex and age and for

the construction of relevant indicators for the topic as essential tools for improving measuring systems and the transparency of actions, making it possible to provide guidance on planning systems and ensure that women's and girls' needs are taken into account in the designing of social policy; (v) promote ongoing training opportunities, especially at the local level, in order to keep the community informed and prepared with regard to matters requiring humanitarian aid.

All of these recommendations are set forth in the commitments assumed through the World Humanitarian Summit, making clear the broad support for gender equality and greater inclusiveness within humanitarian response, in which the promotion and exercise of the rights of women and girls, the support for women's participation as change agents, access to sexual and reproductive health care, and the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls in humanitarian contexts were considered core elements of the agenda of the World Humanitarian Summit<sup>10,11</sup>. This strong emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls reflects the World Humanitarian Summit's firm intention to serve as a point of inflection in efforts to achieve real change that will ensure a systematic response to the needs of women and girls and will energetically promote their role as leaders and as parties responsible for adopting decisions and promoting community resilience.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), giving it the responsibility of focusing exclusively on ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment. Drawing on the view of equality expressed in the United Nations Charter and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Women carries out actions

to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and in favour of women's empowerment and the achievement of equality between women and men, as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian actions, and peace and security<sup>12</sup>.

Although since its foundation, in early 2011, UN Women has worked in the sphere of development, it has also been present in countries before, during and after emergencies. This particular characteristic places UN Women in a unique position for ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women in humanitarian actions. As part of its mandate, it has been given a leadership and coordination role within the United Nations system, as well as one of lending support to the Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility within the United Nations system. This area is led by UNFPA and UNICEF<sup>13</sup>. The actions of UN Women are consistent with its strategic plan, as evidenced by the specific outcomes and products intended to ensure the systematic mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment into humanitarian-response coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring, the strengthening

of resilience, disaster risk management and recovery efforts.

In recent years, UN Women has taken part in the response to very diverse humanitarian situations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the armed conflicts and subsequent agreements in Colombia and Guatemala, the sudden disasters that occurred recently in Chile, Dominica, Ecuador and Haiti, as well as health epidemics, especially the Zika virus outbreak. The extremely high levels of violence in Central America pose an additional challenge.

Hence, this study falls within the framework of the empirical-evidence generation strategy promoted by the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean. The purpose of this strategy is to highlight the various actions carried out by the organization, the lessons learned and good practices with regard to the different emergencies that have occurred recently in the region, and decision-making in favour of developing an evidenced-based regional strategy for organizational response to emergency situations.

## 4. OBJECTIVES

This study aims to: (i) identify the primary actions of UN Women’s humanitarian response with regard to the main crisis/emergency contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean in the last four years; (ii) demonstrate the good practices and lessons learned as a

result of the management of and experience with emergency actions; and (iii) draft recommendations to guide decision-making in favour of developing an evidence-based regional strategy for organizational response to emergencies in Latin America and Caribbean.



# 5

## METHODOLOGY

This is a retrospective descriptive study. It was carried out from December 2016 to March 2017.

The study applied a mixed methodological approach, consisting of not only analysing qualitative data but also combining a deductive-analysis approach based on predefined categories with an inductive approach that left room for hypotheses and elements not foreseen in the initial methodological design.

## 5.1 Selection of country offices and scope of the study

This study has a regional scope and, as such, it identifies the primary actions, good practices and lessons learned from UN Women's emergency response in Latin America and the Caribbean. UN Women country offices that have promoted actions to support national humanitarian responses in the last four years were identified and selected.

The study's advisory team, led by the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean, identified and selected the country offices, based on its prior knowledge of the contribution and support provided by the respective country offices in national responses, in accordance with the type of context or crisis.

The following national offices were selected:

- Brazil, for its response to the Zika virus epidemic;
- Ecuador, for its response to an earthquake-related disaster;
- Colombia, for its response to the armed tensions and the border conflict with Venezuela;
- Guatemala, for its contribution to advancing women's leadership in the post-conflict stage;
- Honduras, for its response to the Zika virus epidemic;

- Haiti, for its humanitarian response to the disaster caused primarily by Hurricane Matthew;
- Chile, for its response to forest fires;
- Dominica and Jamaica, for their responses to hurricanes;
- Jamaica, for its response to the Zika virus epidemic.

In the case of Guatemala, the actions promoted by the country office focused primarily on strengthening peace and security programmes more than on providing immediate humanitarian response. Nevertheless, the advisory group considered it important to document UN Women's work to eradicate violence against women and girls and the struggle against impunity within the framework of the organization's long-term support for and strengthening of administration of justice processes, in a country which continues to be beset by high levels of violence, even after the end of the armed conflict.

## 5.2 Definitions and criteria

Evaluating and rating a good practice requires having standards and criteria. Given the lack of specific evaluations of programmes and approaches, the characteristics described below were used to identify a good practice.

These criteria were determined in conjunction with the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean based on the literature review<sup>14</sup>.

- **Relevance:** alignment with organizational policies, strategies and priorities with regard to gender equality, empowerment and women's participation in humanitarian response;
- **Impact:** achieving short-term objectives and outcomes with respect to gender inequalities, improving the quality of life and lifestyle of women and/or promoting women's participation in humanitarian response;

- **Replicability:** the potential to be adapted to and applied in other humanitarian contexts;
- **Sustainability:** the benefits of the initiative are sustainable over time once the intervention has ended, allowing it to be owned by local humanitarian actors, along with its contribution to supporting/building local capacities.
- **Innovation:** contains an innovative aspect that should be retained and shared in order to be replicated.

Given the areas on which this study focuses, the programmes must be underpinned by the principles of gender equality, women’s empowerment, human rights and the intercultural approach. All of these principles are part of the foundation of UN Women’s work and are reflected in its projects and programmes.

To facilitate decision-making and avoid subjectivity in the selection of practices to be documented, a *good practice* was defined as one that fulfilled all five of the criteria set forth, while those that fulfilled fewer than five criteria were defined as *promising practices*. Importantly, given that the scoring is based largely on information provided by the respondents and a limited number of documents, it is far from exhaustive or conclusive.

In addition, we understand *lessons learned* as “generalizations based on evaluation experiences with projects, programmes, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. The lessons highlight strong or weak points in the preparation, design and execution that affect performance”<sup>15</sup>.

### 5.3 Sources of information

Information was compiled through primary sources (in-depth interviews) and secondary sources, that is, analyses of documents provided by the country offices and/or the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews with key respondents from the selected UN Women country offices was to obtain, enrich, broaden and compare information. The key respondents were selected jointly and by agreement with the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean. Prior to this, a series of profiles were defined that made it possible to ensure that exhaustive and appropriate information would be obtained (at least one year of work or experience at the organization/institution coordination and/or management position, or representation office).

### 5.4 Organization of the study

Under the coordination of the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean, the different stages, timetables and study methodologies were defined and agreed on.

Its main activities were to: identify, adjust and validate the needs for information, definitions, criteria, variables and methodological techniques; identify and select the country offices and the key respondents; provide follow-up and monitoring throughout the implementation process; identify and validate the structure and final content of the research document.

This study was prepared in response to a request from the UN Women’s offices in the region at the regional meeting of UN Women held in June 2016. The Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean then contracted a consultant and established initial contact with the offices selected for the study. The researcher then coordinated and planned the interview agendas with the key respondents.

### 5.5 Interview methods

The interviews were of a semi-structured nature. They were conducted by the researcher. Specific information-input formats (questionnaires, information consolidation matrix) and forms of interaction with other sources/documents, as appropriate, were used.

To conduct the interviews, the most suitable, appropriate channels of communication available were used, and preference was given to face-to-face interviews, primarily through Skype calls. The interviews were governed by the principles of confidentiality, respect and privacy. In all cases, the search for information took into account a perspective based on gender, human rights and cultural relevance.

Once the information compilation phase had ended, the information was entered into an information matrix and presented to the advisory team in order to highlight, scale and validate the preliminary information obtained.

### 5.5.1 Tools and formats

The information-compilation tools and formats were adapted to the context and objectives of the study. Hence, an open-ended questionnaire was formulated and applied to the selected key respondents. The questionnaire contained various sections and was designed to obtain information in connection with the objectives of the study.

In addition, forms were designed to consolidate information (information matrix). Once the field phase had ended, the matrix was presented in order to adjust and preliminarily validate the information obtained for analysis.

## 5.6 Analysis of information

The analysis was descriptive. For each humanitarian crisis or emergency, the countries analysed, the main intervention sectors and the main actions promoted by the organization, along with its positioning vis-à-vis the emergency, are described. The good practices associated with the emergency response and, lastly, the main lessons learned and the existing challenges with regard to the organization's humanitarian response, were also identified and described.

The humanitarian action initiatives were regrouped taking into account their thematic elements. From this perspective, the actions promoted by the projects/programmes can be grouped around four main themes:

- a) **Governance:** actions to strengthen the inclusion of gender equality in humanitarian-response coordination mechanisms and governance systems. This group comprises actions to develop the gender perspective and mainstream it into humanitarian-response policies, programmes and strategies, and/or to create specific, adapted emergency-care regulations, and/or to include the gender perspective into monitoring, follow-up and evaluation frameworks, and/or to strengthen the social fabric and participation, among other objectives.
- b) **Information systems:** actions to incorporate the gender perspective in the systematic collection of information after a disaster/emergency, information analysis and interpretation, information dissemination and use, data monitoring, the conducting of specific studies, and the sharing of information and experiences, among other objectives.
- c) **Material/technological resources:** actions to improve infrastructure, supply inputs/equipment, emergency kits, among other items.
- d) **Capacity building:** actions to build capacities, provide ongoing updating and training for the staff (institutional, of civil society or even of the United Nations system) on the gender and human rights perspective in humanitarian responses.

## 5.7 Limitations of the study

Information compilation and analysis depended on certain factors and limitations that affected the study. These factors include the limited existence and availability of and/or access to documentation and the scope of the available information. In many



cases, this is consolidated information of a general nature that focuses on activities and actions. In some cases it includes no more than a few observations on outcomes, without concrete details on the impact that specific interventions have on the beneficiary population. Nevertheless, the combination of documentary analysis with interviews makes it possible to broaden and deepen the analysis and delve into aspects that otherwise would not have come to light.

In the framework of the study, no visits were made to projects or programmes. This, in addition to the limited documentation on practices throughout the Latin America and the Caribbean region, points to some of the challenges faced by the study in attempting to produce a more complete, thorough description of experiences supported by UN Women in the region over the last few years.

This study covers only the initiatives implemented directly by UN Women, and it is based primarily on the information provided by the organization's staff, at both the Regional Office and the country offices. By inviting respondents to select the information they considered appropriate, the study may have opened the door for bias and subjectivity in the selection of activities and experiences and in the information reported. The study does not

provide information or perspectives from other, outside stakeholders involved in national humanitarian response.

Given that participation was voluntary and depended on respondents' availability, some relevant activities or experiences may not have been identified or analysed. Therefore, the fact that an initiative or action is not referred to in this study does not necessarily mean that it is not noteworthy or that a country does not have relevant initiatives or experiences.

Lastly, although the practices and lessons covered by the study were documented independently and over a certain length of time, they should not be analysed in isolation, nor should generalizations be drawn with respect to the entire organization. Rather, these practices and lessons are the result of an ongoing process of experimentation, learning and knowledge transfer to which this study hopes to contribute.

## 5.8 Dissemination plan

Once the analysis had been completed, the study was submitted to and validated by the Regional Office of UN Women for Latin America and the Caribbean and by the participating country offices. All final comments and contributions have been included in this document.





# 6

## KEY FINDINGS

## 6.1 Participation rate and countries analysed, by context

Nine country offices were identified and selected for the study. All of them participated (participation rate: 100%), and 13 key respondents were interviewed.

The following table shows the type of emergency analysed for each country included in the study.

## 6.2 Emergency situations in Latin America and the Caribbean and main actions promoted by UN Women

### 6.2.1 Impact of the armed conflict in Colombia and main actions promoted by UN Women

The more than 50 years of armed conflict in Colombia have been marked by constant human rights violations, primarily involving the persons in the areas affected by the conflict. The effects of violence against women and girls and the violation of their human rights have been experienced by women of all ages, who have been victims of threats, murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, sexual abuse, involuntary pregnancy and forced abortion. Official figures indicate that more than 400,000 lost their lives as a result of the armed conflict, and that more than 57,000 have been victims of forced displacement. Between 1995 and 2011, violence in connection with the conflict caused the internal displacement of more than 2,700,000 women (close to 6% of the total population of the country and 51% of all displaced persons). Approximately 15.8% of displaced women state that they have been victims of sexual violence. Women belonging to indigenous ethnic groups and Afro-Colombian women have been disproportionately affected by the violence stemming from the conflict: of the 3,445 homicides of indigenous and Afro-Colombian persons, 65.5% were women.

**TABLE 1**  
Type of emergency analysed by country

Type of emergency	Characteristics	Country
Health emergency	Zika virus epidemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brazil</li> <li>• Honduras</li> <li>• Jamaica</li> </ul>
Disasters	Hurricanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haiti</li> <li>• Dominica</li> <li>• Jamaica</li> </ul>
	Earthquakes	• Ecuador
	Forest fires	• Chile
	Disaster-risk reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honduras</li> <li>• Guatemala</li> </ul>
Complex emergencies	Armed conflict and post-conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colombia</li> <li>• Guatemala</li> </ul>

The armed conflict also affected the degree of social tolerance to violence against women and girls. This violence is part of their daily reality. In Colombia, available data reflect this situation: every three days a woman is a victim of femicide, every six days woman is murdered by her domestic partner or former partner, every fifteen seconds a woman is a victim of some type of violence, and every six hours a woman is a victim of sexual violence. All of this constitutes the continuum of violence against women<sup>16</sup>.

### Main actions promoted by UN Women in response to the conflict in Colombia

UN Women has worked in Colombia since 2005, initially under the UNIFEM programme on Women, Peace and Security, and since 2011, within the structure of the country offices of UN Women for the Americas and the Caribbean.

UN Women's response to the armed conflict has been broad and multifaceted. Specifically in

the humanitarian area, it has intervened in the different stages of the humanitarian cycle with preparedness, response and recovery actions, and it has been particularly active in the protection and early recovery sectors. In many situations and communities women are doubly affected: by the violence generated by the conflict, and by the frequency of natural disasters.

UN Women's intervention has promoted and enhanced processes of coordination and governance and guaranteed the inclusion of the gender perspective in the entire humanitarian cycle. Some of UN Women's actions are highlighted below:

Another of the thematic components highlighted and promoted by the country office in response to the armed conflict, especially through the protection project in the departments of Cauca and Chocó, is **the strengthening of the capacities of institutional human resources and of civil society organizations** with respect to rights, empowerment and the gender perspective. The capacities highlighted include:

- Raising the awareness of civil society organizations on rights, empowerment and the gender perspective (network of women of Chocó-Cauca)
- Training of local stakeholders in emergencies, detection and mitigation of risks associated with violence against women and girls, care pathways and referral and care systems
- Training of institutional stakeholders in managing cases of violence against women and girls, and in the handling and custody of forensic evidence

- Joint Action Plan of OCHA, UN Women and UNFPA for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into humanitarian action, 2015-2016
- Technical assistance for the inclusion of the gender perspective in contingency plans in response to mass population movements as a result of the conflict
- Mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the action plans of the clusters that make up the humanitarian architecture, as well as into monitoring and evaluation framework
- Evaluation of the mainstreaming of gender into local proposals to OCHA emergency funds
- Technical assistance in the adaptation of care protocols for violence against women, including sexual violence
- Review of the contents of safety and dignity kits provided to women and girls, ensuring that they meet minimum requirements

In addition, to contribute to humanitarian response in one of the regions of the country most affected by the armed conflict<sup>17,18,19,20</sup> UN Women promoted actions to improve protection strategies under a human rights and early recovery perspective for displaced or confined indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, or for such communities at risk of displacement or confinement, in Cauca and Chocó. These actions included:

- the establishment of local spaces of protection, empowerment and information;
- technical assistance for the adaptation of care protocols for violence against women in the local context;
- strengthening women's rights defence organizations (Departmental Network of Women from Chocó).

In addition, UN Woman promoted actions to ensure the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in rapid assessments in the areas affected by the conflict, with the following results:

- The creation of tools to include the gender perspective in exploratory rapid assessment missions (Multi-sectoral Initial Rapid Assessment - MIRA) and the piloting thereof (2015)
- The standardization of methodological processes for gathering information on gender-based violence
- Leadership in gathering information with focus groups of women in the missions conducted in:
  - Buenos Aires - Cauca (2016)
  - La Guajira (2016)
  - Litoral de San Juan (Chocó) (2016)
  - Nariño (2016)

As part of the strategy to protect displaced or confined indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, or those at risk, in Cauca and Chocó, actions were promoted for **awareness-raising and empowerment on human rights and the gender perspective among indigenous women** in the affected communities. In addition, awareness-raising and information actions on preventing violence against women and girls, care services and referral systems were promoted. Tools were also provided to institutional staff on the chain of custody of forensic evidence regarding violence against women and girls. As part of the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, UN Women supported the preparation of communication materials (videos) on maternal health and safe delivery.

The main sources of financing reported are the CERF funds (2014-2015), the Government of Norway's funds (MIRA) and the organization's core funds.

### 6.2.2 Actions promoted by UN Women in the emergency response on the Colombia-Venezuela border

Under the state of emergency declared by the Government of Venezuela on 21 August 2015 in six municipios of the State of Táchira, and following the closing of the border with Colombia, thousands of Colombian citizens were deported/repatriated from Venezuela to Norte de Santander, Colombia. Most of the persons deported were placed in shelters set up in Cúcuta and Villa del Rosario (Norte de Santander). The emergency and the overwhelming of local response capacities prompted the Cúcuta and Villa del Rosario municipal governments to declare a state of disaster<sup>21</sup>.

According to government records, 53% of the persons affected by the emergency were women, and 23% were women between 18 and 38 years of age. In humanitarian situations, there are frequent cases of gender-based violence. For this reason, the office of UN Women in Colombia, using its core funds, promoted actions to ensure the inclusion of the gender perspective in humanitarian response, strengthening the capacities of the local institutional human resources and of civil society to carry out prevention, mitigation and care actions relative to violence against women and girls. In addition, it promoted actions to ensure that the situation and the needs of women and girls would be highlighted in national reports on this emergency and to provide basic staples for the women affected (security and dignity kits). Actions were taken to raise awareness among the population affected on rights, prevention and care with regard to violence against women (see table 2).

- e) **Governance:** actions to strengthen the inclusion of gender equality in humanitarian-response coordination mechanisms and governance systems.

**TABLE 2**

**Main thematic actions promoted by UN Women in response to the emergency on the Colombia-Venezuela border**

<b>Governance</b> <i>(Policies, programmes, strategies, regulations, etc.)</i>	<b>Information systems</b>	<b>Material/technological resources</b>	<b>Capacity building</b>
Support for the Local Humanitarian Team	Post-emergency diagnostic studies (on-the-ground visits to assess the context and needs): identification of specific risks and needs	Provision of security and dignity kits in temporary shelters	<p>Awareness-raising among shelter coordinators and local officials on violence against women and girls and care pathways</p> <p>Training and empowerment of women affected on regulatory frameworks, prevention and care pathways regarding violence against women and girls</p> <p>Training of local community leaders to monitor shelters and raise awareness on violence against women and girls, detect cases and provide referrals</p>
Highlighting and mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the local response plans/strategy			
Mainstreaming of the gender perspective into monitoring frameworks and interim and final assessments	Promoting the disaggregation of data contained from these contexts (OCHA)		
Cooperation in mainstreaming the gender perspective into shelter management and distribution processes			

This group would comprise actions to develop the gender perspective and mainstream it into humanitarian-response policies, programmes and strategies, and/or to create specific, adapted emergency-care regulations, and/or to include the gender perspective into monitoring, follow-up and evaluation frameworks, and/or to strengthen the social fabric and participation, among other objectives.

- f) **Information systems:** actions to incorporate the gender perspective in the systematic collection of information after a disaster/emergency, information analysis and interpretation, information dissemination and use, data monitoring, the conducting of specific studies, and the sharing of information and experiences, among other objectives.
- g) **Material/technological resources:** actions to improve infrastructure, supply inputs/equipment, emergency kits, among other items.

- h) **Capacity building:** actions to build capacities, provide ongoing updating and training for the staff (institutional, of civil society or even of the United Nations system) on the gender and human rights perspective in humanitarian responses.

**6.2.3 Impact of the armed conflict in Guatemala and main actions promoted by UN Women**

After the 36-year internal armed conflict that ended with the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords, Guatemala’s political life entered a new phase. The accords were the foundation of the agenda to construct a more inclusive country.

According to the findings of the Truth Commission (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico - CEH), sexual violence extended beyond the three decades of conflict. The CEH recognized extensive

underreporting of sexual violence (>90%). The commission was able to document only 285 of the 1,465 cases reported at that time. Women's demands for justice and transformative redress, expressed in the 2008 Declaration of Huehuetenango, led to the holding of the International Festivals of Historical Memory of Women and the International Tribunal of Conscience on Sexual Violence against Women in Guatemala in 2010. A verdict was issued reproaching the lack of diligence in investigating and prosecuting sexual crimes and the absence of prevention policies as a message condoning permissiveness and impunity. In 2014, the case of sexual slavery of 15 Q'eqchi women at the military detachment in the community of Sepur Zarco -considered a crime under international law- was brought before the courts after being prosecuted through domestic courts and under domestic laws. On 26 February 2016, the "Tribunal A de Mayor Riesgo" sentenced an ex-military commissioner and a retired colonel to 240 and 120 years of prison, respectively, for crimes against humanity in the modality of sexual violence and murder.

The consequences of impunity surrounding the grave, mass violations of human rights of women during Guatemala's internal armed conflict continue to have repercussions in the alarming rates of violence against women. Starting with the entry into force of the Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women in 2008, the number of criminal charges of violence has increased and continues to increase.

According to the Office of the Prosecutor, this is one of the crimes for which charges are most frequently filed. Between 2009 and 2016, 6,398 women were murdered in acts of violence (1,161 in 2016), 323,640 charges of violence against women were filed and 43,687 cases of sexual violence against women and girls were recorded. Between April 2015 and March 2016, the Office of the Prosecutor received 45,388 charges of acts of violence against women and 262 charges of femicide<sup>22</sup>. In the same period, of 5,469 convictions, 1,647 (30%) were for acts of violence

against women. A sexual assault is estimated to occur every 45 minutes, in most cases, against adolescent or young women. Twenty percent of women have suffered physical violence after the age of 15, 8.4% have been victims of sexual violence and 7% have been victims of domestic violence during pregnancy.

Violence at the hands of partners or former partners, which may include sexual violence, is the most common experience, and women are exposed throughout their lives. Younger women are the most affected. Approximately one in eight women between age 15 and 19 who report that they currently are or have at one point been married or in a domestic partnership state that they suffered physical violence at the hands of their partners (current or former), while one in ten state they have suffered such violence in the last 12 months. In the case of women between the age of 15 and 19, one in thirty state that they suffered sexual violence at the hands of their partners (current or former), and one in forty state they have suffered such violence in the last 12 months<sup>23</sup>.

Although the justice system has striven to address violence against women and reduce the widespread impunity in this regard (by establishing specialized units of victim assistance, investigation and criminal prosecution, and special tribunals to deal with femicide), important challenges remain, given that both the specialized courts and the Office of the Prosecutor have a limited scope of action. The report on the System for Gauging Impunity reports an impunity rate of 99% in violence against women and 98% for femicides<sup>24</sup>.

### Main actions promoted by UN Women in Guatemala

Since its inception, recognizing that violence against women has continued as well as the organization's own leadership role in constructing peace and the rule of law, UN Women has focused essentially on the protection sector. It has done so primarily through



processes to seek the truth, administrate justice and redress the harm caused to the survivors of violence against women, particularly sexual violence during and after the internal armed conflict.

Its thematic actions include the **strengthening the governance processes** and mainstreaming gender equality and women's human rights in policies, programmes and strategies in the post-conflict stage and in the processes in favour of the administration of justice.

The following thematic actions stand out: (1) assessment for the mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective into the services and assistance provided by the Office of the Prosecutor and documentation on the status, position and condition of women at that institution; (2) technical assistance on developing and implementing the Policy on Equality between Men and Women of the Office of the Prosecutor and on developing the system to monitor and evaluate that policy; (3) technical assistance for the formulation of the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and related provisions of the United Nations Security Council on Women, Peace and Security; (4) support for the Joint Strategy of the Office of the Prosecutor and the Judiciary to broaden women's access to special justice mechanisms; (5) technical assistance on developing institutional prevention and care protocols with respect to violence against women and providing psychosocial assistance and other substantive protection measures; (6) support for processes to monitor and gauge the fulfilment of commitments for the advancement of women set forth in the Peace Accords; (7) mainstreaming of the gender and women's human rights perspective in the United Nations Plan of Priorities for the Consolidation of Peace; (8) Support for the Latin America and the Caribbean regional consultation for the drafting of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 on women's human rights in conflict, post-conflict and conflict prevention situations; (9) the provision of specialized support for the drafting of the regional report on implementing

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in connection with the commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of its adoption (1325+15); (10) support for the Latin America and Caribbean regional consultation for the drafting of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 on women's human rights in conflict, post-conflict and conflict prevention situations.

In addition, UN Women in Guatemala has been involved in **mainstreaming the gender focus in the planning and response of humanitarian actors in the country**. For example, UN Women conducted workshops with women's organizations to give a voice to the specific demands and needs of women in humanitarian action, as part of the national consultation process for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit led by OCHA. Another contribution was its work in socializing the guidelines of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on preventing sexual violence in humanitarian contexts within the United Nations system and promoting the creation of the Community of Knowledge and Practice on Gender in Humanitarian Action.

Another of the thematic components highlighted and promoted by the country office was the **strengthening of the capacities of institutional human resources** and of civil society organizations with respect to rights, empowerment and the gender perspective. The capacities highlighted and promoted include: (1) institutional capacity-building in care pathways with respect to violence against women and administration-of-justice processes under a human rights and gender perspective (Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Prosecutor and judicial bodies); (2) technical assistance for expert reports (special justice mechanisms) and emblematic/strategic lawsuits; (3) technical assistance for transitional justice and specialized mechanisms to ensure access to justice for women survivors of violence; (4) support for civil society organizations and victims of the armed conflict with respect to the administration of justice, the search for the truth and dignified and transformative redress.

In addition, UN Women contributed to **generating information and empirical evidence** and collaborated on the development of: (1) a feasibility study on the use of electronic devices for the protection of women survivors of sexual violence, attempted femicide and other forms of violence; (2) research, documentation and systematization of processes of justice and redress for women survivors of violence during the armed conflict as part of the preservation of the historical memory; (3) the formulation of assessments and baselines in the implementation of Resolution 1325 at the national level. In addition, UN Women helped with the computer equipment for the implementation of protection and monitoring measures with respect to violence against women and girls (**enhancement of material and technological resources**).

The main sources of funding were the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the core funds of UN Women.

#### 6.2.4 Impact of the Zika virus in Brazil and main actions promoted by UN Women

On 1 February 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Zika virus epidemic and its purported connection with microcephaly a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. In April of that year, the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the causal relationship between Zika virus infection and microcephaly as well as other birth defects<sup>25</sup>.

Brazil was one of the countries in the region most affected by the Zika virus epidemic. On 17 May 2016, the Brazilian Health Ministry reported 5,280 suspected cases of microcephaly related to the Zika virus, with 508 confirmed cases of microcephaly with typical birth defects indicative of congenital infection<sup>26</sup>.

In the wake of the health emergency, the office of UN Women in Brazil, in conjunction with the

- The establishment of the Situation Room for the defence of women’s human, sexual and reproductive rights in response to the Zika virus. In this space more than 40 women’s and feminist organizations and networks meet regularly to analyse and promote strategies for women’s needs with regard to health issues and sexual and reproductive rights, the needs for assistance and care for boys and girls who are carriers of the syndrome of birth defects related to the virus or with respect to the structural factors that inform the epidemic and its impact on women’s lives and roles. The Situation Room also fosters dialogue among civil society and national and state government, the justice system and academia.
- Coordination of the first communication campaign centred on women’s needs, in partnership with UNFPA, PAHO/WHO and the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women;
- Designing and implementing the “More Rights, Less Zika” communication strategy for prevention of the disease and for promoting women’s rights (including sexual and reproductive rights) in the context of the Zika virus. The strategy resulted from the dialogue carried out in the Women’s Situation Room;
- Development of communication materials for the empowerment of women and the promotion of their rights (posters, flyers, messages, documentaries<sup>27</sup>) and the dissemination of this information over radio<sup>28</sup> and television<sup>29</sup> and through social networks;
- Support for the development of a virtual platform for communication products<sup>30</sup>;
- Workshops with journalists and social communicators to improve capacities in disseminating messages and language with respect to the epidemic, taking into account women’s voices.

IMAGE 1

Examples of communication products (Brazil)



Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), promoted a series of actions to **strengthen capacities** with respect to the epidemic. The purpose of these actions was primarily to increase the role of women's organizations and networks in order to deal with the epidemic and its consequences on women's lives and their human rights. The primary actions that were promoted include, *inter alia*:

As part of the **evidence generation** processes, UN women promoted a regional qualitative study to

bring about a better understanding of the impact of the Zika virus and its implications for women's rights, needs, demands and perspectives, in which Brazil took part.

The response actions to the Zika virus epidemic were supported through the following sources of funding: UN Women core funds, the Canadian embassy, UNFPA, PAHO/WHO, Ford Foundation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) —the latter primarily for actions having a regional scope.

### 6.2.5 Impact of the Zika virus in Honduras and main actions promoted by UN Women

Another country affected by the Zika epidemic, and where UN Women promoted response actions, was Honduras. As of December 2016, the number of suspected and confirmed indigenous cases of Zika virus infection was 32,000 and 300, respectively, with two recorded cases of congenital syndrome associated with the Zika virus infection<sup>31</sup>.

In line with the epidemic response actions promoted in Brazil, UN Women collaborated in implementing a Communication and Education and Gender Strategy for Zika-virus-epidemic prevention and care. The strategy was focused on promoting women's rights (including sexual and reproductive rights) in the context of Zika. UN Women supported the preparation and development of communication materials for

women's empowerment and the promotion of their rights (posters, flyers, messages, media stories) and the dissemination of these materials through radio spots (at the local level), newspapers, television, social networks, as well as in institutional public spaces (health centres, ministries, local government offices, the Supreme Court of Justice), universities, NGOs, airports, Social Security centres, among others<sup>32</sup>.

In addition, UN women promoted actions to train and sensitize journalists and social communicators in order to improve their capacity to disseminate messages, as well as the language used, with respect to the Zika virus epidemic. Awareness-building and promotion actions with respect to women's rights were carried out in the main cities affected, including Tegucigalpa and Choloma. Support was given for the preparation of a guideline on preventing infection taking into account

**IMAGE 2**  
**Examples of communication products (Honduras)**



women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. Honduras took part in the regional qualitative study promoted by UN Women to highlight the Zika virus's impact on women's rights, needs, demands and perspectives.

In addition to emergency response actions, UN Women as participated in **disaster risk reduction initiative initiatives** with institutions that specialize in this topic, such as UNISDR.

In 2017, in conjunction with UNISDR, UN Women in Honduras promoted national workshops with the Standing Commission on Contingencies (COPECO) to raise awareness on the issue and mainstream the gender perspective into national risk reduction strategy. In addition, awareness-raising actions were carried out through various media outlets to highlight the importance of the gender perspective in disaster risk reduction and inform the population of the importance this perspective, thereby helping foster women's participation in the risk management process at all levels. The national office prepared a methodological guideline to help the countries of the region include the gender perspective in national risk management plans. This guideline is accompanied by a package of tools to provide orientation on the process in a timely manner<sup>33</sup>.

### 6.2.6 Impact of disasters (earthquake) in Ecuador and main actions promoted by UN Women

On 16 April 2016, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the coast of the north-western provinces of Ecuador, causing severe damage and claiming numerous victims. In the aftermath, the Ecuadorian government declared a state of national emergency. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 230,000 persons were directly affected by the earthquake, 8,679 were placed in 26 camps and 11,146 were living in makeshift settlements<sup>34</sup>.

Women and girls were especially vulnerable to emergency, requiring greater protection and access to means of subsistence owing to the fact that all forms of violence against women and girls peak in such situations.

Violence against women is a topic of concern in Ecuador. According to the most recent national survey on gender-based violence<sup>35,36</sup>, six of every ten women have been victims of violence. In addition, one of every four women have been sexually assaulted or raped. This figure is even higher in some of the provinces directly affected by the earthquake, such as Esmeraldas, Guayas and Santo Domingo. Ecuador is among the countries of the region with the highest rates of teenage pregnancy<sup>37,38</sup>.

UN Women played an important role within the United Nations system in the emergency response, primarily in the protection sector. Along with the UNFPA, it co-led the gender-based violence group within the protection cluster and promoted violence reduction, mitigation, prevention and care actions.

Following the emergency, in conjunction with the UNFPA, UN Women organized a high-level visit with government authorities (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Social Inclusion) to the disaster areas to identify and contextualize the specific needs and the resilience of the different population groups affected by the emergency and to reduce, mitigate and address violence against women within these contexts.

The initiatives include actions to mainstream the gender perspective in **governance processes**. Hence, UN Women collaborated on:

In addition, UN Women participated in **evidence generation** processes, incorporating the gender perspective in rapid assessments of the affected areas

- A strategy for addressing violence against women and girls in emergency contexts, intended to strengthen capacities, monitor the implementation of care pathways and ensure the availability of strategic information
- The establishment and design of temporary shelters with the gender perspective and recommendations for their coordination and management
- The adaptation of care pathways and protocols with respect to violence against women and girls in emergency contexts
- The drafting of a booklet for the protection of the population in disaster areas and a code of conduct for the actions of military personnel deployed to provide humanitarian assistance and crisis intervention
- A guide for addressing violence against women and girls in emergency contexts
- The formulation of training content and methodologies for public officials and persons affected

(MIRAs), with sections on gender and women's status in the rapid assessment carried out in Ecuador. The national office also promoted a study to identify the economic activities carried out by women placed in shelters prior to the crisis, the impact of the emergency and their incorporation into the economic recovery.

Of the thematic components promoted by the country office, that of the **strengthening of the capacities of institutional human resources** and of civil society organizations with respect to human rights, empowerment and the gender perspective stands out. These themes covered included: (i) the nationwide immediate awareness-raising plan with on-site public operators in charge of watching over and managing the shelters (public officials, national

police, armed forces) in connection with preventing, mitigating and addressing violence against women and girls, emergencies and care pathways and with the technical regulation on dealing with violence against women and girls (in coordination with the Ministry of Defence and Security); (ii) training local outreach workers in preventing violence against women and girls and in case detection and management; (iii) support for establishing groups of young women facilitators to prevent violence against women and girls, raise awareness on sexual and report reproductive health and provide peer training.

UN Women supplied more than 4,000 protection kits as part of the awareness-raising workshops on violence against women and girls, which were intended for women and adolescents living in shelters and comprehensive care centres (the kits contained a flashlight, lock, fact sheet on the pathway for assistance for cases of violence during the emergency, a whistle, and male condoms). In addition, actions were carried out to sensitize and empower women on human rights, self-esteem and leadership with respect to crisis contexts, undertakings and participation in the recovery phases. Communication materials were prepared, including brochures on rights, giant posters on care pathways in response to violence against women and girls and cartoon stories (*"What to do in cases of sexual violence against women, girls, boys and adolescents during this emergency"*), which were distributed at shelters and temporary living quarters.

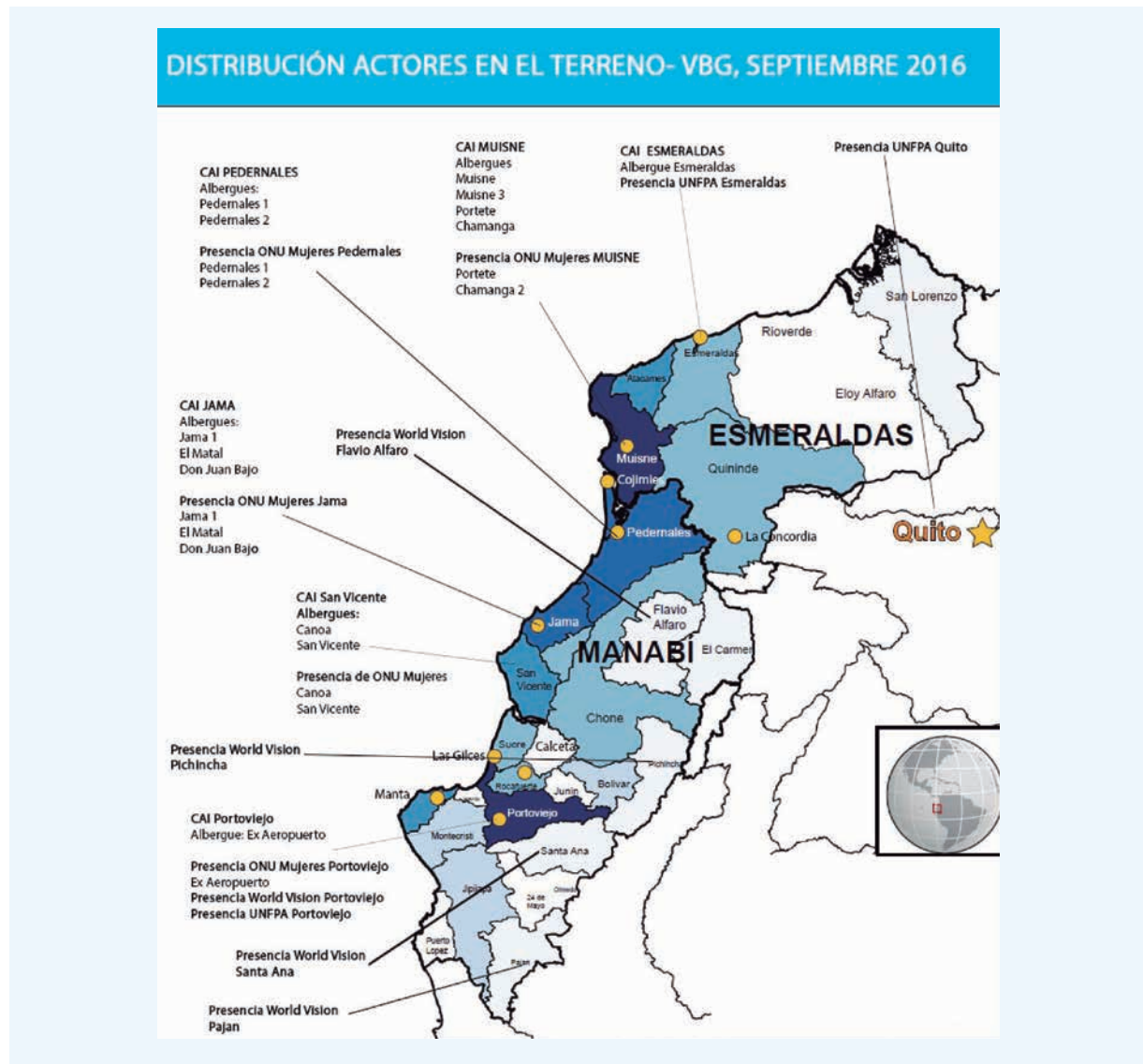
In addition, and as part of the **early post-emergency recovery** efforts, UN Women and UNDP, with ECHO funding, promoted joint capacity-building actions in favour women's participation and economic autonomy, professional training for women (bricklaying, cooking, tourism, sewing, handcrafts), support for the improvement and recovery of their economic activities, provision of small amounts of working capital and inputs to leverage funding sources from local banks, the establishment of partnerships with enterprises for construction tasks, and their incorporation into recovery

processes and the marketing of their products. Experience has shown that these actions must be initiated immediately after an emergency occurs, once the primary humanitarian needs have been met. As with protection actions, the recovery of the social and economic fabric and of their livelihood is a key element for reducing women's vulnerabilities

and the gender gaps, which tend to widen when emergency cooperation assistance and state aid run out.

The main source of funding with which UN Women supported the emergency response was its core funds and CERF funding.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Map of humanitarian response actions promoted by UN Women following the 2016 Ecuador earthquake**



### 6.2.7 Impact of disasters (forest fires) in Chile and main actions promoted by UN Women

Since 2 January 2017, Chile has had to respond to a series of forest fires in the central-south area of the country. Although definitive figures on the total impact of the disaster are not yet available<sup>39</sup>, the fires caused 11 deaths and 13 injuries, while 6,162 who persons suffered property damage and 519 were placed in shelters. Also, 2,113 dwellings were destroyed and 5,000 people were displaced. Altogether, more than 7,000 persons were affected. The fire claimed more than 600,000 hectares of land used for various purposes (forest plantations, native forests, farmland, prairies as well as in urban areas). The regions most affected by the fires were Maule and Bio-Bio, where women make up approximately 51% of the population<sup>40</sup>.

UN Women, using its core funds, promoted actions to ensure the inclusion of the protection and gender perspective into the **preliminary assessments** in the aftermath of the fires. It participated in the mission of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team in the affected areas, mapping different social actors and promoting the use of tools and methodologies standardized and systematized by the organization for the inclusion of the gender perspective into the compilation of information and into the government and inter-agency MIRA report of the United Nations system.

Regarding UN Women's participation in **other emergency and natural disaster situations**, specific actions were taken in response to floods and mudslides in the Antofagasta region of northern Chile in 2015, with the dissemination of brochures on prevention and care pathways with respect to violence against women and girls in the dignity kits distributed by UNFPA in the temporary shelters.

### 6.2.8 Impact of disasters (hurricanes) in Haiti and main actions promoted by UN Women

Hurricane Matthew, in October 2016, affected 2.1 million persons, including 1.4 million who required assistance, especially in the departments of the south and southwest<sup>41</sup>. Forty-four percent of Haitian households are headed by women, and a large proportion of whom live in poverty or extreme poverty. The high rates of violence against women and girls, in addition to their limited access to basic services, including health and education, are an everyday reality for most Haitian women. This is compounded by deficiencies in preventing, mitigating and responding in a timely fashion to violence against women and girls, particularly during the early, critical stages of an emergency, which increases women's and girls' exposure to violence, insecurity, abuse and exploitation.

UN Women promoted emergency response actions, primarily in the protection sector —reduction, mitigation, prevention and treatment of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls— and early recovery<sup>42</sup>.

UN Women played an essential role in incorporating gender equality as one of the pillars or strategic cores of the United Nations system's humanitarian response plan ("flash appeal")<sup>43</sup>. In addition, as part of the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into **policy and governance processes**, UN Women helped:

Another of the thematic components promoted by the country office following the emergency was the **strengthening of the capacities of institutional human resources** and of civil society organizations. These capacities include: (i) raising the awareness of the institutional personnel of the United Nations system, and of the women affected, with regard to rights, empowerment and the gender perspective in humanitarian response; (ii) training women's organizations and NGOs in managing protection spaces for



- establish, in conjunction with UNICEF, local spaces for protection, empowerment and information on violence against women and girls, care pathways and women’s rights;
- incorporate the gender perspective into the food security programmes;
- develop a monitoring tool for the United Nations system’s humanitarian response plan with the gender perspective;
- incorporate the gender perspective into early recovery programmes, primarily “cash for work” programmes;
- strengthen pro-human rights women’s organizations by supporting the drafting of the “letter of the demands”, a position paper of women’s groups that reflects practical and strategic needs for achieving a policy impact with respect to emergencies. This was also intended to encourage women to actively participate in identifying priority needs following the hurricane and targeting assistance in the most affected areas.

women and girls affected by the disaster; (iii) training the Civil Protection Directorate’s emergency unit in including the gender perspective in humanitarian response.

As for **evidence generation**, UN Women took part in the post-disaster needs assessments in the affected areas (Jérémie and Les Cayes)<sup>44</sup>. In addition, actions were taken to **sensitize and empower** women on rights, self-esteem and leadership with regard to crisis contexts, as well as on prevention, mitigation and referral pathways for cases of violence against women and girls (in conjunction with UNFPA). UN Women also participated in mainstreaming the gender perspective into the local communication strategy for emergencies as

well as for preventing cholera, other waterborne diseases, the Zika virus and violence against women and girls.

The main sources of funding were: CERF funding and the core funds of UN Women.

### 6.2.9 Main actions promoted by UN Women in response to the hurricanes and the Zika virus epidemic in countries of the English-speaking Caribbean

In August 2015, Dominica was devastated by Tropical Storm Erika, which caused major landslides and flooding. Hundreds of homes were damaged and thousands of people displaced. Causing 30 deaths, Erika was the country’s worst natural disaster since Hurricane David in 1979.

UN Women participated in the post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA), ensuring the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the missions and reports. Working closely with UNFPA, UN Women promoted the creation of **local protection spaces**, informing women on emergencies, prevention, mitigation and care pathways with respect to violence against women and girls and providing psychosocial support. In conjunction with UNFPA, it helped distribute dignity kits to women at temporary shelters<sup>45</sup>.

UN Women also cooperated in various disaster responses in other countries of the Caribbean (especially Jamaica and Barbados), primarily contributing to mainstreaming the gender perspective into the post-disaster needs assessments.

As for the **Zika epidemic** in the Caribbean, and specifically in Jamaica, UN Women provided technical assistance to the Health Ministry, supporting a communication strategy centred on women’s rights, promoted panel discussions with civil society organizations as well as local dialogues with women and families, thus advancing women’s rights (including

sexual and reproductive rights) in the context of the Zika virus. In addition, Jamaica was included in the regional qualitative study on the impact of the Zika virus and its repercussions for women's rights, needs, demands and perspectives.

## 6.3 Good practices

This section presents and examines the good practices identified in emergency contexts. Figure 3 shows the countries on which the analysis focuses.

**FIGURE 2**  
Countries in which good practices were identified



The table below gives an overview of the practices.

Practice	Country	Criteria	Number of criteria attained	Classification
Co-leadership of the gender-based violence subgroup (protection cluster)	Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
High-level joint observation mission with the government in areas hit by the earthquake	Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
Economic recovery of women affected by the earthquake	Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>– Impact</li> <li>– Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	3/5	Promising practice
Situation Room of women in response to the Zika epidemic	Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
Support for the consolidation of transitional justice and specialized mechanisms to ensure access to justice for women survivors of violence during and after the armed conflict	Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
Support for the development of system for monitoring and assessing compliance with the commitments with respect to women in the Peace Accords	Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
Joint Action Plan of OCHA, UN Women and UNFPA in Humanitarian Action	Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
Mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the Missions - MIRA Reports	Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice
Creation of a financial mechanism for local women's organizations to promote peace in areas of armed conflict (" <i>Mujeres Constructoras de Paz</i> ")	Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>– Impact</li> <li>– Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	3/5	Promising practice
Strategic positioning of gender equality in the United Nations system as one of the priority areas of humanitarian response	Haiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance</li> <li>✓ Impact</li> <li>✓ Sustainability</li> <li>✓ Replicability</li> <li>✓ Innovation</li> </ul>	5/5	Good practice

## ECUADOR

### Co-leadership of the gender-based violence subgroup (Protection cluster)

In the wake of the earthquake that hit Ecuador in April 2016, UN Women played a central role in the emergency response, co-leading, in conjunction with UNFPA, the protection sector's gender-based violence subgroup, and facilitating and coordinating the rapid response to violence against women in humanitarian emergencies, as called for in IASC guidelines. The subgroup coordinated multiple governmental stakeholders and organizations, communities and persons affected, NGOs, United Nations agencies and other national and international agencies, all of which took part in the comprehensive prevention and response efforts<sup>46</sup>.

Rates of violence against women and girls are very high in Ecuador<sup>47</sup>. By co-leading the subgroup, UN Women was able to highlight the problems and place them at the centre of the debate as the type of response that takes into account specific needs. This also allowed the organization to plan various types of actions, in particular: (i) activities related to managing and improving temporary shelters in order to guarantee privacy and safety (through the provision of lighting and the allocation of more space so as to minimize the risk of violence against women and girls); (ii) the adaptation of care pathways and protocols with respect to violence against women and girls in emergencies; (iii) the preparation of a guideline for addressing violence against women and girls in emergencies. Although these are but a few

examples of the impact of the initiative, they are laying the foundations for the sustainability of the intervention. In addition, more than 3,000 public services operators (police, armed forces, social sector personnel) were trained to mitigate risk and improve access to care services related to gender-based violence; more than 1,000 displaced persons in settlements/shelters were sensitized on how to prevent, mitigate the risk of and respond to cases of violence against women and girls; and more than 4,000 protection kits (solar lamps, whistles, locks, fact sheets on the care pathway with respect to violence against women and girls in emergency situations as well as their rights) were distributed to affected women and adolescents, as part of UN Women's response<sup>48</sup>.

This joint effort made it possible to ensure not only that the gender perspective would be incorporated into all actions promoted by the subgroup, but also that it would be incorporated by all sectors, and thus that these topics would be taken into account by the coordination offices and in the reports prepared. All actions promoted by the subgroup were systematized in a document, which made it possible to highlight and socialize achievements and served as a record for reference in future emergencies.

Nearly a year after the earthquake, the gender-based violence subgroup hopes to continue carrying out its work as long as the temporary shelters are being used. In conjunction with UNICEF and UNFPA, UN Women established coordination mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the group within the United Nations system response team (as part of the Group for Child Protection).

Although this type of leadership by UN Women is not envisioned within the general architecture of humanitarian response, it is an innovative practice for the organization, primarily in Ecuador and in



some emergency contexts in the region. This was the first time that UN Women co-led a humanitarian response subgroup in this country, making this a good opportunity to leverage the presence of UNFPA, and to ensure experience, complementarity and coordination of work and mandates with it, in spaces in which UN Women had not been present.

In addition, this proved to be a replicable practice for all emergency contexts, both in Ecuador and in

other countries, and it was possible as a result of awareness-raising and policy-impact efforts as well as of a justification based on sound arguments in favour of the initiative presented at the main decision-making bodies of the United Nations system at the national level.

Lastly, the initiative is in line with the organization's mandate, with output 4.3 of the Strategic Plan and with UN Women's 2014-2017 humanitarian response strategy (relevance).

## ECUADOR

### High-level joint observation mission in affected areas

Rates of violence against women are very high in Ecuador<sup>49</sup>. From the outset of the emergency, UN Women, in conjunction with the UNFPA, organized a high-level visit with government authorities (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Social Inclusion) to the disaster areas in order to identify and contextualize the specific needs and the resilience of the various population groups affected by these situations. In addition, the mission focused on jointly identifying areas for improvement, ensuring an appropriate inclusion of the gender perspective in humanitarian response. The visit made it possible to identify, on site and with the main organizations leading the response, a series of shortcomings and deficiencies as well as areas for improvement in order to ensure appropriate prevention, mitigation and care with respect to violence against women and girls. The visit also made it possible to establish political and technical contact in humanitarian response, which translated into the ongoing participation of these organizations in the gender-based violence subgroup as part of the protection cluster, co-led by UN Women and UNFPA.

The high-level joint visit made it possible, *inter alia*, to highlight the problems and place them at the centre of the debate as the type of response that takes into account needs, as well as to plan and generate appropriate actions for improving the quality of life of women and girls living at the shelters. As a result, work was carried out related, among other objectives, to managing and improving the shelters so as to ensure privacy and safety through the provision of lighting and the allocation of more space, minimizing the risks of violence. In addition, protocols and protocol-based care pathways with respect to violence against women and girls in emergency contexts were adapted, for the training of more than 3,000 public services operators (police, armed forces, social sector personnel) in order to ensure risk mitigation and improve access to care services related to violence against women and girls<sup>50</sup>.

Because this was a joint practice, it was able to foster ownership of and responsibility for the resulting initiatives at the institutional and community level. The drafting of specific terms of reference along with the development of a clear methodology on visits and roles, in addition to

the formulation of specific information compilation tools (questionnaires, fact sheets), ensured clarity regarding what was expected and how the mission was to be carried out. In addition, this bolstered locally based follow-up actions, laying the foundations for sustainability. This in turn created a precedent for future cooperation

actions on the timely inclusion of the gender perspective in humanitarian response (replicability).

Lastly, the initiative is in line with the organization's mandate, with output 4.3 of the Strategic Plan and with UN Women's 2014-2017 humanitarian response strategy (relevance).

## ECUADOR

### Economic recovery of women affected by the earthquake

In disaster situations, livelihoods and means of subsistence are seriously affected, and this is even more pronounced in the case of women. This means that it is essential to consider specific needs and to create possibilities for earning immediate income, in order to ensure that the emergency situation and the response do not further widen existing economic gaps.

In the areas affected by the earthquake, fishing, tourism, commerce, small-scale production and domestic service are the main source of income of many women, who depend on these activities to support their families and their homes. Following the earthquake, these activities were seriously affected: dwellings, markets, access roads to houses, stalls in public spaces (streets, avenues, etc.), the demand for domestic services (and the means of transportation needed to provide these services). This was compounded by the fact that these women were required to act as caregivers, primarily for children and the elderly, because childcare services ceased to be available and family care networks were disrupted. In addition, women who were married or in a domestic partnership and whose husbands or partners were permanently away searching for work faced extreme vulnerability, increasing their economic dependence. Undoubtedly, this was exacerbated in the case of women heads of household. According

to INEC data, in the wake of the earthquake, 75% of women older than 15 who were salaried employees lost their employment (which was linked to other productive activities such as agriculture and fishing, in addition to domestic service). In the case of women business owners, 47% lost their business completely and 14% experienced partial losses.

Focusing on the need for urgent assistance following the disaster, UN Women, in conjunction with UNDP, implemented an early recovery programme in the affected areas (provinces of Manabí and Esmeraldas), carrying out various actions to incorporate women into the reconstruction process and deploying an economic empowerment strategy. Training courses were given, actively involving women and allowing them to earn income through building-reconstruction and debris-removal activities while entrepreneurial undertakings were promoted and production processes were strengthened. The programme included, *inter alia*, coordination with women's organizations that were integrated into the planning processes and provided data for the development of the strategy.

Through the initiative, which is still under way, more than 200 women received training in "Leadership, self-esteem and how to improve my business" in the cities of Manta, Rocafuerte, Calceta and Pedernales. In addition, 40 women

received training in construction and bricklaying, and 13 were hired by the company ISABA for the reconstruction of the El Rodeo Social Rehabilitation Centre. This initiative aims to train 500 potential beneficiaries, and to help more than 100 women receive working capital and supplies, and thus to reach approximately 5% of the population of the rural agricultural communities in seven cantons of the province of Manabí.

Including women in early recovery activities such as debris removal and/or reconstruction and bricklaying not only required rethinking the organization's understanding of the traditional gender-based division of these activities, but also offered UNW an opportunity to work through social representations of the gender-based roles in the areas affected by

the earthquake. In addition, it contributed to women's empowerment in the affected areas, offering them various alternative sources of income.

This initiative is replicable in other humanitarian emergency contexts and could serve to boost women's role in reconstruction actions and facilitate their access to resources for securing a livelihood and their inclusion in traditionally male fields of employment. This in turn could contribute to a change in social representations and roles as well as stereotypes with respect to the division of labour.

The initiative is in line with the organization's mandate, with output 4.3 of the Strategic Plan and with UN Women's 2014-2017 humanitarian response strategy.



## BRAZIL

### Situation Room of women in response to the Zika virus epidemic

On 1 February 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Zika virus epidemic and its purported connection with microcephaly a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. In April of that year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the causal relationship between Zika virus infection and microcephaly and other birth defects<sup>51,52</sup>.

On 17 May 2016, the Brazilian Health Ministry reported 201 new suspected cases of microcephaly related to the Zika virus, raising the number of notified suspected cases to 5,280 through Epidemiological Week 6. With 46 new confirmed cases recorded, the total number of confirmed cases of microcephaly with typical birth defects indicative of congenital infection stood at 508<sup>53</sup>.

UN Women, in close collaboration with UNFPA and the PAHO/WHO, organized a reference group with more than 40 women's organizations, including the leading coordination agencies, networks and experts, to discuss the most important issues that women faced as a result of the epidemic and to support the formulation of a common strategy to strengthen all of women's human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, in response to the Zika epidemic in that country. The group, made up of representatives of more than 30 civil society organizations and diverse women's representatives (Afro-Brazilian women's organizations; community, youth and sexual and reproductive health organizations; and rights networks), has continued to meet regularly<sup>54</sup>. This space was called, "Situation Room: impact and mobilization", and was composed of two sub-working groups: "Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights" and "Women's Access to Services". The initiative became a strategic space for sharing information, identifying synergies and support and guiding the design of interventions at the United Nations to contribute to the national response to the epidemic.

A key element for the success of the intervention was centring reflection and discussion on women's specific voices and needs with respect to an epidemic that primarily affects women and girls in terms of its consequences and the enjoyment of rights. The strategies resulting from the Situation Room led to the formulation of a communication strategy called "More Rights, Less Zika", which focused on women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, and not merely on the eradication of the vector (mosquito). Workshops were organized with journalists and communicators to improve the capacity to disseminate messages, as well as the language used, with respect to the Zika virus. Research-based communications materials were produced, and programmes on prevention within the sphere of health and the promotion of services, and from a rights perspective, including sexual and reproductive rights, were carried out through the media and disseminated on more than 2,000 radio stations in addition to social media. This included the production of a television series. These initiatives addressed women's rights in the context of the Zika virus epidemic. All of the communications products were stored on an online platform with unrestricted access, in order for them to continue to be replicated and disseminated<sup>55</sup>.

This practice promoted not only the social participation of women's organizations in the response to the epidemic but also their organizing and their role with regard to the response, making it possible to put forth proposals that took into account their specific needs and allowing them to be the spokeswomen for the strategy and the legitimate interlocutors in the national response (ownership). It also allowed the results of research and studies on the Zika infection to be shared. And it made it possible to guide the response approach within the United Nations system (with women's rights at the centre) and combine the synergies of various agencies, contributing to the timely mobilization of resources not only for the continuity of the Situation Room, but



also to ensure support for actions, primarily in social communication. This also made it possible to promote significant interaction with health officials at the federal, state and municipal levels, and with researchers, creating opportunities for dialogue, which emphasized the importance of policies, research and other initiatives to ensure that women's voices were heard. This led government authorities to recognize the important role of women and women's organizations in ensuring a comprehensive response to the epidemic, and made it possible to provide information to women everywhere in the country, including in the most remote areas.

Although the WHO has now deactivated the state of emergency, one year after the crisis, the Situation Room continues to carry out its work in the country, having adapted to the context, to the moment (previously it met every six weeks, whereas now it meets every four months), and having adjusted, as well, its approach (virtual and on-site). Hence, this is a low-cost initiative that could be bolstered with communications technologies and through social networks.

Not only did UN Women implement this initiative in Brazil, but it also promoted it in other countries of the region, including Honduras and Jamaica, thus making it a replicable and innovative practice. Until then the country (or the countries) did not have a joint space for policy and programme coordination with high-level representatives of civil society organizations, public institutions and the academic sector in response to the epidemic.

Lastly, the UN Women's initiative in Brazil to promote the integration of women's rights in the response to the Zika epidemic is in line with the mandate and roles of the organization, and is consistent with the principles and components of output 4 of its strategic plan: "peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women's leadership and participation", empowering, supporting the voices, the actions and the capacity of women's organizations in humanitarian efforts and their participation as decision-makers in the formulation of plans and actions with a direct impact on their own outlooks on survival and recovery, as well as on those of their families and communities.



## GUATEMALA

### Support for the consolidation of transitional justice and specialized mechanisms to ensure access to justice for women survivors of violence during and after the armed conflict

Following the signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala, strategic, coordinated efforts were carried out to strengthen national capacities for promoting the right to truth, justice, reparations and the non-recurrence of the human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict, with special emphasis on violations against women and indigenous peoples. These efforts were primarily focused on strengthening the capacities of State institutions with respect to investigation, prosecution, punishment and the administration of justice. Nevertheless, the country continues to face significant obstacles to the timely administration of justice and to redressing the harm caused to women survivors of violence perpetrated as a tool for maintaining subordination and control over women's lives and bodies and sustained by a patriarchal, conservative culture and a weak justice and reparations system. This has led, *inter alia*, to greater impunity<sup>56</sup>.

UN Women has played an important role in improving women's access to justice and security, bolstering their leadership in the peacebuilding processes<sup>57</sup>. Thanks to the confidence it gained through its systematic work in recent years, the Guatemala office supported the evidence-based policy-impact processes that civil society has been carrying out to give women survivors of violence during and after the conflict access to justice and transformative redress, by documenting and systematizing processes as part of the preservation and awareness-raising with regard to historical memory and women's contributions to peacebuilding. The 2014 prosecution, and 2016 sentencing, by "Tribunal A de Mayor Riesgo" in the sexual slavery case in Sepur Zarco<sup>58</sup> is the most emblematic example at the national level, creating a legal precedent

and contributing to gender justice on the path to transformative redress and the reduction of impunity. UN Women contributed support and technical assistance, including expert opinions and emblematic, strategic litigation, to the Office of the Prosecutor —for example, the support given to the specialized units of victim assistance, investigation and criminal prosecution— and to special tribunals, as well as ongoing institutional capacity-building (Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Public Prosecutor and judiciary) in protocol-based care pathways with respect to survivors of violence and processes of justice under a rights and gender perspective. These are but some of the examples that are laying the foundations for sustainability.

To centre the judicial process on the violation of women's human rights and the redress of such violations is an innovative approach that brings women to the fore as subjects of rights. It incorporates, for the first time, the perspective of psychosocial support for victims into the entire prosecution process. In addition, the support provided to civil society in favour of the right to truth and the administration of justice made it possible to strengthen the justice mechanisms, with trials being prepared by women to redress the harm cause to women, which produced gender jurisprudence (active subjects in the process). This procedure is replicable both nationally and in other countries that have experienced similar conflicts.

These practices are aligned with the organization's mandate, its strategic plan and its humanitarian response strategy for 2014-2017, which bolster, *inter alia*, the national capacity of institutions and partners and the empowerment and involvement of society in devising and implementing policies

and measures that take into account gender equality and prevention, mitigation, care and resilience with respect to violence against women

and processes of justice from a human rights and gender perspective.



The surviving women of Sepur Zarco covered their faces to protect their identity during the 20 days in which they declared and raised hand in recognition before the favorable resolution of the verdict and sentence.

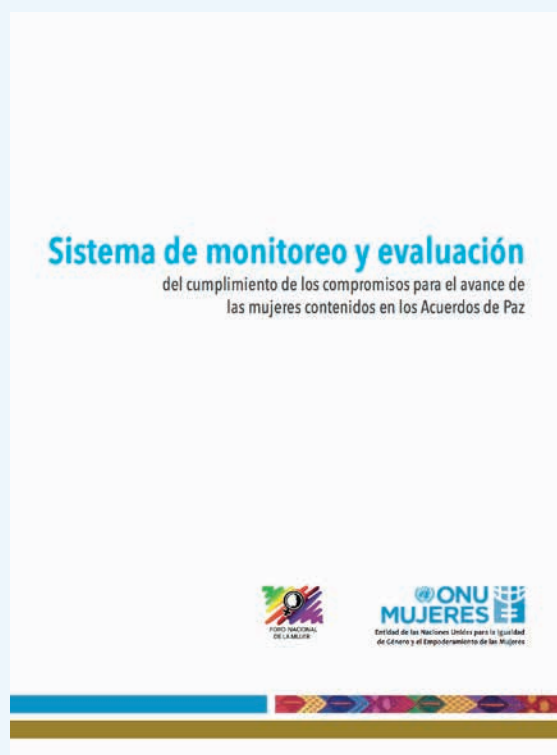
## GUATEMALA

### Support for the development of system for monitoring and assessing compliance with the commitments with respect to women in the Peace Accords

In Guatemala, the National Council for the Implementation of the Peace Accords (Consejo Nacional para el Cumplimiento de los Acuerdos de Paz - CNAP)<sup>59</sup>, as the national agency responsible for ensuring that the agreements complied with, decided, with the support of UN Women, to establish a monitoring and evaluation system to gauge the progress in carrying out actions with respect to women's status in the Peace Accords.

Hence, UN Women, through the Woman's Unit of the CNAP and the National Forum on Women, developed an institutional tool to monitor and evaluate the commitments relative to women set forth in the agreements. By using tracking indicators with clear definitions of numerators and denominators, establishing baselines and means of verification for each indicator and systematically compiling information, this tool makes it possible

to periodically monitor these commitments and influence decision-making to favour the implementation of the commitments adopted by the country<sup>60</sup>.



The experience of developing and implementing a tool to monitor and evaluate the commitments set forth in the Peace Accords had some distinctive aspects that allow it to be classified as a good practice. First, the initiative was implemented with the national authorities, primarily the National Council for the Implementation of the Peace Accords. This encouraged ownership of the tool by State institutions and civil society sectors represented in the CNAP, contributing to the sustainability of the system as well as to institutional ownership and responsibility. Moreover, the monitoring and evaluation system is based on an innovative arrangement, given that it links the global agenda for peace

(including, *inter alia*, Resolution 1325) along with the Peace Accords/commitments adopted by the country to a restorative post-conflict policy that in turn is linked to the National Policy for the Promotion and Comprehensive Development of Women (PNPDIM) and the related 2008-2023 Equity Plan.

In addition, and before the monitoring and evaluation tool had been designed, the CNAP had created a webpage showing a range of indicators related to the 12 Peace Accords and the implementation thereof. This platform includes a section on the commitments relative to women contained in the Peace Accords. As a complementary part of the monitoring, and with the support of UN Women, the CNAP is thus proceeding to strengthen the current tool, by developing the System for Monitoring and Evaluating the Commitments of the Peace Accords with respect to women. This in turn makes it possible to maintain quality, updated information in response to State interventions carried out in compliance with the commitments identified.

Not only does this practice makes it possible to monitor the progress in implementing the commitments adopted by the country, but it also serves as an evidenced-based policy-impact tool that is conducive to promoting the rule of law and improving women's lives.

The success of the system in Guatemala serves as a good precedent for the replication of the tool in other countries of the region with similar contexts.

Lastly, the initiative is in line with the organization's mandate and output 4.3, outcomes 4.3.1 and 4.3.3., of UN Women's Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 and with its global humanitarian response strategy for the same period, primarily in the development of formal accountability mechanisms for monitoring the fulfilment of gender commitments in the response to development and humanitarian action.

## COLOMBIA

### Joint Action Plan of OCHA, UN Women and UNFPA for the integration of the gender perspective in Humanitarian Action

As part of the high-level partnership agreements between OCHA and UN Women<sup>61</sup> and in order to move forward in integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women into humanitarian action, the offices of both agencies in Colombia, in conjunction with UNFPA, developed a Joint Humanitarian Action Plan.<sup>62</sup> The many objectives of the initiative include placing the prevention of violence against women and girls and sexual and reproductive rights in the country's humanitarian architecture.

The Joint Action Plan provides guidance on technical assistance from humanitarian actors at the local and national level to ensure the inclusion of gender and the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls in processes of coordination, programming and monitoring of humanitarian efforts. The Joint Action Plan promotes, *inter alia*: (i) incorporating data disaggregated by sex and age into emergency-evaluation processes and into periodic monitoring analyses that contribute to planning and evaluation processes and decision-making with respect to humanitarian response and the fostering of the capacity of national partners; (ii) supporting the IASC's gender marker in the funding appeals and mechanisms managed by OCHA; (iii) ensuring the gender perspective in the mechanisms for monitoring and assessing humanitarian response; (iv) developing communication and impact products that will integrate distinct needs, capacities and voices into humanitarian response; (v) proposing support for humanitarian leadership to efficaciously mainstream the gender perspective into humanitarian programming; (vi) establishing the measures needed to protect women, girls, boys and men from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian contexts.

This practice not only allows women's rights to be positioned in the national humanitarian response, but also influences the promotion and exercise of these rights through the actions of the United Nations system and the different humanitarian actors and State institutions. Moreover, it promotes the participation of civil society organizations in humanitarian action response, communication and coordination mechanisms. Thus it contributes to capacity building by mainstreaming the gender perspective into humanitarian action within the Humanitarian Country Team and national institutions, laying the bases for the sustainability of the intervention and positioning UN Women in high-level humanitarian response.

A two-year collaborative framework was established and is in the process of being renewed. This is the first time that a collaborative initiative of this type in humanitarian contexts is being promoted, which has set a precedent allowing the initiative to be replicated in other countries of the region.

The active participation of UN Women in the Humanitarian Country Team, in the areas of protection, health and early recovery, as well as its co-leadership in the gender-based violence subgroup within the protection area, allowed for: (i) the timely mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the action and the monitoring and evaluation plans of the various humanitarian action groups (ii) the creation of tools to include the gender perspective in the evaluation missions (MIRA) and the piloting thereof; (iii) ongoing technical assistance for the contingency plans in response to mass population movements as a result of the armed conflict, as well as prevention and response work with respect to gender-based violence, in particular

sexual violence against young women in emergency situations. These are some examples of the impact of the initiative.

This practice is aligned with the organization's mandate, with its strategic plan for 2014-2017, with its Global Humanitarian Response Strategy, as well as with its National Humanitarian Response

Strategy (relevance), and bolsters, *inter alia*, the national capacity of institutions and partners as well as the involvement of civil society in devising and implementing policies and measures that take into account gender equality and the need for prevention, mitigation, care and resilience with respect to violence against women and girls in humanitarian response.



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## COLOMBIA

### Mainstreaming of the gender perspective into MIRA missions and reports

The Multi-sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is an evaluation instrument, the application of which is led by OCHA, that allows the different humanitarian actors to gain a common understanding of the situation from the outset of an emergency and to guide decision-making towards joint planning and the mobilization of resources for humanitarian response. The MIRA is underpinned by an analytical framework that provides guidance on the systematic compilation, the organization and the initial analysis of information in the areas affected by an emergency. It has a national scope and provides support for the subsequent design of evaluations and analyses of deeper needs<sup>63</sup>.

Hence, in order to ensure the inclusion of the gender perspective in the MIRA evaluations and to highlight, from the outset, the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls in emergency contexts, UN Women in Colombia devised a series of methodological tools to complement the information from the MIRA evaluation so as to obtain a better gender analysis, taking into account the situation of adult and adolescent women and girls in the affected communities. These tools serve as a guideline allowing the teams of the MIRA mission to ensure that the actions to be implemented during the evaluations include a better, gender-based perspective. The tools include a checklist of the actions to be carried out to mainstream the gender perspective or incorporate it into MIRA evaluations and a methodological guideline for compiling both qualitative information (observations, opinions and attitudes through focus groups exclusively with adult and adolescent women) as well as qualitative information<sup>64,65,66</sup>.

Since 2015, these tools have been validated and incorporated by OCHA as part of the MIRAs in the country, which until then lacked the gender perspective. The use of this instrument has made it possible, *inter alia*, to provide information specifically on affected women and girls, not only

for purpose of shedding light on sectors that are traditionally part of humanitarian action (health, water and wastewater, food security, etc.), but also for that of examining their situation in greater depth, and thus complementing the overall assessment exercise. The tool has been used in Colombia to compile information specifically on the women and girls affected by the armed conflict in the regions of Cauca (2016), Chocó (2015) and Guajira (2016). In addition, it made it possible to provide guidance on decision-making and on the timely mainstreaming of the gender perspective into humanitarian response actions in the affected areas, with a distinction being drawn between, for example, strengthening the capacities of local institutional actors in the prevention, detection and mitigation of risks associated with violence against women and girls, and the referral of and assistance with cases. It also contributed to the development of adapted care protocols with regard to violence against women and girls and actions to raise the awareness of affected women and girls on available services. These are but a few examples of the results of the initiative.

The definitive mainstreaming of the gender focus into the methodological processes of the MIRA evaluations ensures that the foundations have been laid for it to be used and implemented in future emergencies (sustainability). The methodological tool for compiling information is available, and was used recently in the disasters in Chile (forest fires) and Ecuador (earthquake). These cases provide a good example of its replicability in countries of the region.

Lastly, the initiative is in line with the organization's mandate and with output 4.3, outcomes 4.3.1 and 4.3.3., of UN Women's Global Strategy for 2014-2017, with its Global Humanitarian Response Strategy for 2014-2017, as well as with its National Humanitarian Response Strategy (relevance).

## COLOMBIA

### Creation of a financial mechanism for local women's organizations to promote peace in areas of armed conflict ("*Women Builders of Peace*")

The more than 50 years of armed conflict in Colombia have been marked by constant human rights violations. Women have been victims of threats, murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, sexual abuse, involuntary pregnancy and forced abortion. Women belonging to indigenous ethnic groups and Afro-Colombian women have been disproportionately affected by the violence stemming from the conflict<sup>67</sup>.

Women in Colombia have, nevertheless, become authentic leaders and mobilizers of the organizational processes that over the years have resisted violence; they are an example of resilience and are playing an essential role in the peacebuilding process.

To strengthen their capacities, UN Women, in conjunction with the embassy of Norway and with the support of USAID, promoted the civil society support programme named "Women Builders of Peace". This is a funding window for projects to allow local-level women's organizations and ethnic organizations to promote women's and girls' rights through four thematic lines: (i) peacebuilding and teaching for peace; (ii) conflict prevention, management and resolution; (iii) eradication of all types of violence against women and girls; (iv) recovery of livelihoods in contexts of armed conflict, post-conflict or natural disasters.

The programme is currently in the implementation phase and is supporting initiatives in the four departments of Colombia's Pacific coast, while it is also being extended to other regions of the country. This practice is innovative, given that it makes it possible to support exclusively, through calls for proposals and eligibility requirements, more than 15 community-based organizations, and it has an organizational support and strengthening component. The mechanism also makes it possible to work with very diverse organizations, which in the long run will encourage a very rewarding sharing of experiences in strengthening civil society.

Although it is still too early to evaluate the impact of the programme, the implementation of this initiative has distinctive characteristics, such as promoting local projects/actions in response to the conflict through existing local women's organizations familiar with the issues and needs of women and girls and accepted in the community, which recognizes the legitimacy of their work. The actions taken ensure the mainstreaming of the gender perspective and cultural relevance, primarily in a region with a large indigenous population. The programme has also led to the highlighting and inclusion of local women's organizations that in general have limited access to resources.

The initiative has a virtual platform providing continuous access to updated information on the programme, making it possible to raise awareness on and highlight its different phases with respect to the various actors and the general public<sup>68</sup>. Through a process of open calls for proposals, the initiative has made it possible to create a transparent mechanism for obtaining resources, in which proposals that put forth innovative solutions to specific situations and problems, and that have the potential to be efficient, fair and sustainable, are viewed positively.

The permanent collaboration between UN Women and the embassy of Norway over the years has allowed this initiative to become reality. The funding mechanism was conceived as "seed funding" for two years, and it is expected that in the future new partners will join and contribute to the initiative. The existence of this type of initiatives serves as a good precedent for replication in other countries of the region.

Lastly, the initiative is in line with the organization's mandate and with output 4.3 of UN Women's Global Strategy for 2014-2017, with its Global Humanitarian Response Strategy for 2014-2017, as well as with its National Humanitarian Response Strategy (relevance).



## HAITI

### Strategic positioning of gender equality in the United Nations system as one of the priority areas of humanitarian response

Hurricane Matthew, in October 2016, affected 2.1 million persons, including 1.4 million who required humanitarian assistance, especially in the southwestern department of Grand'Anse and the departments in the south of the country<sup>69</sup>.

Forty-four percent of Haitian families are headed by women, a large proportion of whom live in poverty or extreme poverty. The high rates of violence against women, in addition to their limited access to basic services, including health and education, are an everyday reality for most Haitian women. This is compounded by deficiencies in preventing, mitigating and responding in a timely fashion to violence against women and girls, particularly during the early, most critical stages of an emergency, which increases women's, boys' and girls' exposure to violence, insecurity, abuse and exploitation.

Following the emergency, UN Women, played an important role in highlighting, within the Humanitarian Country Team, the importance of promoting gender equality in humanitarian response in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls and enhance their participation in decision-making on the type of assistance and protection they needed during the crisis. Impact and awareness-raising efforts, and the support of OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinator, have allowed UN Women to position "the equal participation of women in decision-making spaces, protection and dignified access to humanitarian assistance" as one of the four strategic objectives set forth in the United Nations' flash appeal in emergency response. This made it possible to highlight and position the gender focus as one of the central themes within the United Nations system's humanitarian response structure and with regard to the various humanitarian actors.



The actions resulting from the humanitarian response include: (i) the inclusion of specific gender indicators in the various sectors and monitoring and humanitarian response plans; (ii) the empowerment of community-based and women's organizations, including organizations of affected women, promoting their participation and leadership in emergency and early-recovery actions; (iii) actions to prevent, mitigate and respond to violence against women and girls, primarily in temporary shelters and living quarters, that is, to improve living conditions so as to ensure privacy and security and reduce violence, the creation of safe spaces for the prevention of violence against women and girls, and the participation of women in

economic recovery; (iv) the promotion and provision of basic health services, including sexual and reproductive health services for pregnant and lactating women and women of childbearing age, the restoration of emergency services in maternity units and care centres, and the availability of mobile units; (v) “cash for work”-type income-generating actions with a strong gender perspective<sup>70</sup>.

The existence of a specific strategic objective highlighting the gender focus within humanitarian response is an innovative practice within the United Nations system in the country, given that, in past emergencies, this perspective was

generally included in humanitarian actions in a tenuous and transversal manner, or in fact it was not included at all. Thus, this sets a precedent in humanitarian response within the United Nations system at the national level that may be replicated in future emergencies and in other countries of the region.

The initiative is in line with the mandate and Global Strategy of UN Women for 2014-2017 and with the essential areas of action proposed in UN Women’s Humanitarian Strategy: coordination and leadership; policy impact and evidenced-based actions; capacity building; and specific actions within the organization’s mandate.



## 6.4 Positioning of UN Women vis-à-vis crisis and/or emergency situations, and lessons learned

UN Women promotes the real, effective positioning of women as subjects of rights, ensuring equality between men and women as partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian action. It works to ensure compliance with all humanitarian action frameworks and policies, as well as with all binding documents relative to gender equality, women's rights and empowerment. As shown above, UN Women: (a) promotes, *inter alia*, the generation of accessible, readily understandable data on the effects of disasters and conflicts on women; (b) facilitates coordination to ensure that United Nations teams as well as other technical institutional and civil society teams have access to knowledge and skills with respect to gender; (c) fosters the empowerment and participation of civil society, in particular of women's organizations, in decision-making processes on forms of assistance and protection based on their needs and a recognition of them as key actors in humanitarian response, in recovery and in disaster risk reduction; (d) promotes actions for the formulation of egalitarian human response policies, as well as for the prevention of violence against women in crisis situations and for the administration of justice and reduction of impunity; (e) promotes the training of national agents, including women's and other groups, with respect to gender equality and care of women and girls, based on their needs.

Nevertheless, the positioning of UN Women in the countries of the region with respect to humanitarian response is heterogeneous, with actions of varying representativity in decision-making forums, depending on the characteristics, composition and capacities of the country offices.

In **Ecuador**, UN Women quickly became involved in the United Nations' humanitarian response to the earthquake, as an active member of both the Humanitarian Country Team and the expanded Humanitarian Country Team, actively participating in the inter-clusters and protection clusters and co-leading, together

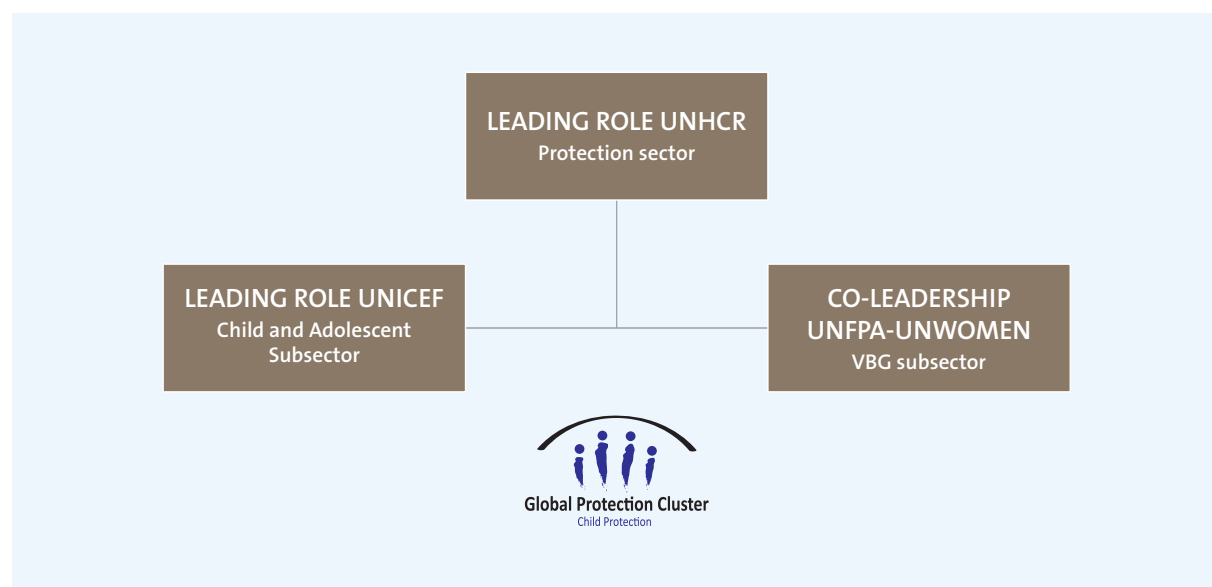
with the UNFPA, the gender-based violence subgroup within the protection cluster. In particular, it co-led coordination and collaborative actions, actively taking part in preparing the terms of reference and the action plan of the subgroup and in managing CERF funds.

UN Women also actively participated in the high-level visit coordinated with the government to the affected areas and temporary shelters, which helped position itself vis-a-vis the government as an expert agency on gender and also to participate in the joint identification of on-site needs and the joint determination of the steps to be taken in the emergency response. In addition, UN Women signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ensuring technical assistance in the pilot project for the protection of women and girls in shelters, and initiated a joint project with the UNDP with respect to the economic recovery of women affected by the earthquake (early recovery).

UN Women actively coordinated actions with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence for the inclusion of the gender focus in the emergency-response activities and took part in the thematic panels led by the Ministry of Social Inclusion, especially Panel 4 on economic recovery and protection. This panel was subsequently dissolved, and the government entities were incorporated into the gender-based violence subgroup (enhanced subgroup) together with the Ministry of Justice, among others.

UN Women is similarly positioned in **Colombia**, where since 2015 the country office has actively participated in the Humanitarian Country Team and the expanded Humanitarian Country Team, introducing the gender focus in decision-making processes on humanitarian response. This is reflected in the Joint Action Plan signed by OCHA, UN Women and UNFPA for mainstreaming the gender perspective into humanitarian action. In addition UN Women participates on an ongoing basis in the inter-cluster mechanism, in the protection cluster, and in the early-recovery cluster. Since September 2015, together with the UNFPA, it has co-led the gender-based violence subgroup within the protection cluster, carrying out coordination and

**FIGURE 3**  
**Humanitarian Response: Protection Sector**



technical assistance work and managing CERF funds as well as carrying out work relating to the Secretariat (2014-2015). UN Women is a member of the Proposal Evaluation and Monitoring Technical Committee of the Humanitarian Fund managed by OCHA. The Colombia office has played an active role in recent humanitarian emergencies in the region, providing assistance and technical support to other country offices at the initial stages of emergencies, such as the earthquake in Ecuador.

With regard to national counterparts, UN Women coordinates actions directly with the Victims Unit of the Office of the Underdirector of Assistance and Humanitarian Care and with the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Women’s Equity - National Gender Mechanism. In the latter role, it has coordinated response actions following the border emergency with Venezuela. Through OCHA it communicates with the Risk Management Unit and the Unified Command Post, which is the national response unit in charge of institutional disaster response. UN Women is also part of the local coordination group on gender-based violence in the regions of Chocó and Cauca. In

conjunction with UNFPA and the UNHCR, this group coordinates the work of local authorities on prevention, mitigation and care with respect to violence against women and girls. In addition, local actions are coordinated and technical assistance is provided to local humanitarian response teams through the five decentralized territorial offices in Cauca, Chocó, Meta, Nariño and Antioquia.

In **Brazil**, the Zika epidemic response was led from the outset by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). After discussions were held by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) with respect to the epidemic, and in light of the need to focus the response on including women’s rights rather than exclusively on eradicating the vector, the United Nations system created the Interagency Group for Response to the Zika Outbreak. UN Women took part as an active member (of both this group and of the technical subgroup), along with PAHO/WHO. In addition, it co-led (together with PAHO/WHO and UNFPA) the creation and operation of the Situation Room for the Human Rights of women in the context of the Zika virus epidemic. This forum serves as a space for

dialogue, reflection and discussion with civil society organizations and of liaison with the government and other agents in times of crisis. UN Women carried out coordination and technical assistance work and work related to the Secretariat, coordinated the conducting of the first communication campaign focusing on women's needs (in partnership with UNFPA, PAHO/WHO and the Secretariat of Policies for Women) and supported the development of radio and TV communication products and the multi-sector communication strategy named "More Rights, Less Zika", which focused on women's rights in the context of the Zika virus.

In **Guatemala**, UN Women participates actively in UNCT as a space for determining, discussing and monitoring the different post-conflict response initiatives financed through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund for the Consolidation of Peace (PBF). In addition, it takes part in interagency workgroups of the various post-conflict response initiatives and leads the PBF's gender initiative, carrying out work related to coordination, communication, technical assistance and management, as well as with respect to the Secretariat, and coordinating actions primarily with UNFPA, the UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). UN Women also coordinates actions with the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Supreme Court of Justice, and the Interagency Committee on Access to Justice, and it participates in the Interagency Panel on Resolution 1325.

In **Haiti**, UN Women quickly became involved in the United Nations system's humanitarian response to Hurricane Matthew, participating in the Humanitarian Country Team's decision-making processes with respect to the humanitarian response and defending and positioning the gender perspective in those processes. In addition, it participated in the initial stage of the food security group and played an active role in the protection group and early recovery group, primarily by providing technical assistance and ensuring the inclusion of the gender perspective into the "cash for work" programmes<sup>71</sup>. It coordinated actions with the UNFPA, primarily in prevention, mitigation and care with respect to violence against women and girls; protection spaces with UNICEF; and actions relating primarily to rapid assessments in the affected areas, in collaboration with the WFP. In addition, UN Women coordinated actions with the Ministry of the Interior through the Civil Protection Directorate and the Ministry of Women, ensuring that the gender perspective was mainstreamed into the local emergency response.

Regarding its humanitarian response in the **English-speaking Caribbean**, UN Women has an office in Barbados that serves the entire region. Because of its need to set priorities with regard to strategies and programmes, the office collaborates in specific emergency-response actions, primarily post-disaster needs assessments (PDNAs). In the wake of Tropical Storm Erika in Dominica, UN Women also coordinated and collaborated closely with UNFPA on actions primarily in prevention, mitigation and care with respect to violence against women and girls in temporary shelters.





# 7

## CONCLUSIONS

The study made it possible to obtain retrospective information from the last four years on UN Women's main actions in different emergency contexts, describe the organization's role and positioning and identify good practices and lessons learned resulting from its experience in these situations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Although the data obtained cannot be used to draw generalizations, an initial consideration has to do with the scope of the study and the opportunities and limitations of the methodology adopted and referred to at the beginning (see section 3.7). A study based solely on documentary analysis and interviews, even if exhaustive, will always have certain limitations. This was brought out during the interviews with some country representatives, which revealed previously unknown information or made apparent some relevant aspects of the projects studied. In addition, regardless of how extensive and detailed a study may be, there is no substitute for direct observation and fieldwork the purpose of getting first-hand knowledge of initiatives on the ground. Therefore, information gaps and inaccuracies were not only possible, but also foreseeable. Finally, as noted, the information provided herein depends on the information furnished by UN Women. It was not examined by other actors in order to carry out an external comparison or validation of it. Nonetheless, it was corroborated within the organization.

In terms of breadth and analysis, the information presented in this study provides unique insight into the organization's different initiatives in the region, and an initial opportunity to leverage the experiences resulting from UN Women's work on and contribution to emergency responses. It has thus laid the foundations for the systematization, documentation and ongoing exchange of information and lessons on the work carried out in the different emergency contexts. In addition, this is an initial compilation and the first comprehensive analysis. Hence, rather than being exhaustive, it is a starting point for future processes of compilation, analysis and continual improvement of the information.

As for the content, and with regard to the level of knowledge management found in the countries of the region, the practices carried out over the last four years have, with few exceptions, not been duly documented or shared. Most activities have been taken from project proposals rather than from progress reports, thus reflecting plans rather than progress in programme implementation. It is also necessary to mention the difficulty in finding information on outcomes and impacts on beneficiaries as a result of deficiencies in monitoring and assessment mechanisms (and in the respective documentation) in humanitarian contexts, as well as in the internal information system. This has a negative repercussion on the organization's possibilities for learning and improving as well as for strengthening its accountability processes.

One should also stress the importance of investing in the preparation and development of capacities within and outside of the organization before emergencies occur in order to better utilize experiences and position the organization at the time of an emergency.

An overall analysis points to the need for UN Women to intensify its efforts to devise a clearer, and more clearly defined, strategy for humanitarian contexts in the region. Although the areas of action are in line with UN Women's mandate and strategic plan, there is an imbalance among the different country offices in terms of undertaking and contributing to these actions, among other reasons, because of each office's different capacities and characteristics. Having more precise, standardized guidelines and models with respect to the organization's role and positioning in humanitarian action, based on previously defined intervention models that take into account the country offices' different capacities, realities and risks, would allow the organization to provide guidance on decision-making and the timely prioritization of emblematic actions in response to emergencies.

UN Women is a relatively young organization that is capitalizing on the knowledge and experience accumulated in the Latin America and Caribbean



region to define and intensify its actions and provide added value in response to the humanitarian crises that continually strike the region. Having continuous, timely and updated information will allow the organization to optimize its resources and define the adequate response structure for dealing with emergencies, while building on its comparative advantages.

In addition, the study generated lessons learned and recommendations that have been shared internally and that are being analysed both by the Regional Office and the country offices. These additional findings provide elements for the construction of a regional humanitarian action strategy and the respective monitoring and assessment framework in alignment with UNW's new strategic plan for 2018 to 2021.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# 10. ENDNOTES

1. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee includes: OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO and WHO. The following organisations are permanent invitees: ICRC, IFRC, IOM, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Inter-Action, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (RSGIDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Bank.
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**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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