



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
4 October 2021

Original: English

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## Seventy-sixth session

Agenda item 75 (a)

**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

### **International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/124](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters and to report thereon to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. The report provides an overview of progress made and outlines related trends, challenges and thematic priorities. It concludes with recommendations for further improvements. The period covered in the report is 1 January to 31 December 2020.



## I. Year in review

### A. Disaster data and trends for 2020

1. The past decade was the warmest on record, and 2020 was the third warmest year on record.<sup>1</sup> Intense tropical cyclones and monsoon seasons and more frequent, longer and devastating droughts caused loss of lives and livelihoods and displacement and hindered progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Disasters disproportionately affected the most vulnerable, including women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, poor and marginalized people and those living in small island developing States and countries with protracted conflicts. Globally, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic exacerbated vulnerability to disasters, added a layer of complexity to preparedness and response efforts and reinforced the urgency of a step change in multi-hazard risk analysis and early warning, the prevention and reduction of systemic risk, preparedness and anticipatory action.

2. The climate crisis is an existential threat to humanity, in particular for some small island developing States. It is a key driver of increasing humanitarian needs, which have more than doubled over the past decade. That trend is expected to further escalate as increasingly frequent and severe sudden- and slow-onset climate-related disasters destroy livelihoods, erode resilience, drive displacement, aggravate food and water insecurity, exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and intersect with other drivers of vulnerability, instability and conflict. In its most recent report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned of the unprecedented scale of recent changes across the climate system and the imminent risk of crossing the threshold of 1.5°C global warming. It projected increasing heatwaves, rainfall and associated flooding, more intense droughts and tropical cyclones, continuing sea level rise affecting small island developing States and coastal communities and other global and regional changes.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the climate crisis will put millions more people at risk of disasters, amplify the impact of such disasters on the most vulnerable and risk pushing an estimated 100 million people into poverty by 2030.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of immediate climate action, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance and protection owing to climate-related disasters could increase to over 200 million by 2050, and related response funding requirements could increase to \$20 billion annually by 2030.<sup>4</sup>

3. For 2020, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters recorded 390 disaster events, which affected 100 million people, caused 15,071 deaths and inflicted \$172.4 billion in damage.<sup>5</sup> Asia was the most affected continent, with 41 per cent of all disaster events and 64 per cent of the total number of people affected globally. In comparison with the previous two decades (2000–2019), 2020 was above the annual average in terms of recorded events (368) and economic losses (\$151.6 billion). There were fewer deaths and people affected compared with the annual averages (61,709 and 201.3 million people, respectively), which was largely

<sup>1</sup> World Meteorological Organization (WMO), *WMO Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2020* (Geneva, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis – Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*.

<sup>3</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C* (2018).

<sup>4</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “The cost of doing nothing: the humanitarian price of climate change and how it can be avoided” (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Emergency Events Database, available at <https://public.emdat.be>.

due to the absence of mega-disasters. Floods were the most common disaster (201 events), while storms affected the highest number of people (45.5 million) and caused the highest economic losses (\$92.7 billion). Compared with annual averages, there were 23 per cent more flood events, 18 per cent more flood deaths and 26 per cent more storms.<sup>6</sup> Between 1970 and 2019, weather-related disasters increased nearly fivefold and related economic losses sevenfold, at an average of \$202 million daily, while deaths decreased threefold, largely owing to improved early warning systems.<sup>7</sup>

4. Disasters caused an estimated 30.7 million new internal displacements in 145 countries and territories in 2020, which was the highest figure in the past 10 years. Weather-related disasters caused 98 per cent of those displacements, most of them in Asia. It is estimated that 7 million people in 104 countries and territories will remain displaced owing to disasters at the end of 2021.<sup>8</sup>

5. Extreme weather events were the primary driver of acute food insecurity<sup>9</sup> for 15.7 million people in 15 countries, in particular across Africa, Central America, the Middle East and South Asia, and in many other contexts such events compounded food insecurity caused by conflict and the economic impact of the pandemic, which were the primary drivers of food crises for 99.1 million and 40.5 million people, respectively, in 2020.<sup>10</sup>

## B. Overview of disasters associated with natural hazards in 2020

6. Disasters inflicted severe losses throughout Africa. Floods and landslides affected 7 million people and caused 1,300 deaths, the highest figure since 2006. East Africa was affected by the highest levels of rain in 40 years. In Somalia, flooding affected 1.6 million people, killing 35 and displacing 900,000. In Ethiopia, flooding and landslides affected 1.1 million people and displaced 340,000. In South Sudan, over 1 million people were affected by flooding, with 500,000 displaced and the second consecutive year of severe flooding worsening extreme levels of food insecurity, malnutrition and displacement. In the Sudan, the worst flooding in decades affected nearly 900,000 people, damaging houses and causing loss of livelihoods and agricultural production. In Burundi, floods and landslides in over half of the country's provinces destroyed homes, crops and infrastructure. Floods displaced an estimated 632,000 people in the Niger and affected 388,000 in Chad.

7. Droughts affected a total of 13.4 million people across the Sahel, in particular in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. Southern Africa continued to be affected by an ongoing drought that started in 2018, affecting, inter alia, 1.3 million people in Madagascar, 2.7 million in Mozambique and 766,000 in Lesotho. Cyclone Gati, estimated to be the strongest storm on record in Somalia, affected over 120,000 people, displaced 42,000 and created conditions conducive to further desert locust breeding, exacerbating the worst outbreak in decades. In December, Tropical Storm Chalane affected 96,000 people in Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

<sup>6</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, "2020: the non-COVID year in disasters" (Brussels, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> WMO, *WMO Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water Extremes (1970–2019)* (Geneva, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021* (Geneva, 2021). Owing to the scarcity of data, estimates are conservative regarding the number of people displaced by slow-onset disasters and those who remained displaced at the end of 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and Cadre harmonisé (CH) Phase 3 or above.

<sup>10</sup> Food Security Information Network, *2021 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions* (Rome, 2021).

8. Asia and the Pacific were severely affected by tropical cyclones and monsoon flooding. Cambodia, the Philippines and Viet Nam were hit by flooding, storm surges, landslides and wind damage from a series of tropical cyclones. In the Philippines, Typhoon Goni affected 3.3 million people and displaced 1.2 million, while Typhoon Vamco affected 5.2 million people and displaced 1.5 million. In Viet Nam, successive storms, floods and landslides affected 2.2 million people. In Bangladesh, monsoon flooding submerged a quarter of the country's landmass, affected over 5.4 million people and damaged 1.3 million homes. Cyclone Amphan struck Bangladesh and India, affecting over 20 million people, displacing 5 million and leaving more than 100 dead. In Pakistan, monsoon floods affected 2.4 million people and displaced thousands. In Nepal, monsoon floods and landslides caused nearly 450 deaths.

9. In the Pacific, category 5 Cyclone Harold caused extensive damage in Fiji and Vanuatu. In Vanuatu, it caused economic damage equivalent to half of the country's gross domestic product. In December, category 5 Cyclone Yasa struck Fiji, affecting 93,000 people, more than 10 per cent of its population, and causing extensive economic damage.

10. With 30 named storms, the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season broke the record for the most active season in the Atlantic basin. In November, Hurricanes Eta and Iota affected an estimated 9.2 million people in Central America, including 4.6 million in Honduras and 2.4 million in Guatemala.

### **C. Funding for disaster response in 2020**

11. In 2020, a total of \$234 million was reported to the Financial Tracking Service of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in response to emergencies classified as disasters, including \$96.1 million in response to floods and landslides, \$83.2 million for droughts, \$50.9 million for cyclones and hurricanes and \$3.8 million for earthquakes and tsunamis.

12. The Central Emergency Response Fund allocated \$165.6 million for disaster response efforts that assisted 12.2 million people in 27 countries. This included \$76.2 million to address needs in drought-affected countries, \$49.7 million to respond to floods, \$26.2 million for tropical cyclones and \$13.5 million for locust outbreaks. The Fund allocated \$33.4 million to support anticipatory action pilots in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia.<sup>11</sup> Some \$92 million was allocated through country-based pooled funds to enable timely life-saving responses to the impact of floods, droughts and harsh winter conditions in eight countries.

## **II. Progress in strengthening disaster preparedness, response and resilience**

### **A. Humanitarian implications of the climate crisis**

13. Existing humanitarian capacities and available resources will struggle to keep pace in the face of the growing magnitude of the climate crisis and its humanitarian impact. Countries and humanitarian organizations are already overstretched as they respond to record levels of need caused by conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic and disasters. Compounding these challenges, climate vulnerability and shocks are often concentrated in countries where there are protracted crises and communities are

<sup>11</sup> In Bangladesh, \$2.4 million of the initial \$5.2 million allocation was reprogrammed for rapid response.

struggling to cope. In 2020, 8 of the 10 countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change had an inter-agency humanitarian appeal.<sup>12</sup>

14. The humanitarian system must continue to adapt, prepare, anticipate and respond more effectively in addressing escalating climate and disaster risks and impacts. This requires enhanced analysis and monitoring of climate impacts on the most vulnerable people and countries. It requires increasing efforts to strengthen early warning and preparedness at all levels, scale up anticipatory action and act earlier and faster, aided by multi-hazard risk analysis, predictive analytics and forecasting, to help to mitigate the humanitarian impact of climate shocks, strengthen resilience, prevent hazards from escalating into major disasters and reduce humanitarian needs. International support should reinforce national and local capacities and activities in disaster preparedness, response and resilience. These efforts need to be supplemented by enhanced collaboration and complementarity with development, climate and disaster risk reduction actors to reduce need, risk and vulnerability, strengthen resilience and leave no one behind.

15. Ultimately, the root causes behind the continuing increase in humanitarian needs must be addressed. While humanitarian actors have an essential role in addressing needs caused by disasters, more ambitious and accelerated global action and investment is urgently required to mitigate and adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risk, impacts and losses as an integral element of sustainable development, in particular in contexts affected by the compounding impact of the climate crisis, conflict and the pandemic.

16. The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change provides a decisive moment to mobilize greater commitment and concrete action to support those most vulnerable to the humanitarian impact of the climate crisis, including with significantly increased financing for adaptation and resilience and more ambitious nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans and other climate frameworks. The findings of the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change must be heeded with urgency and drive more determined climate action at all levels.

17. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the systemic and interconnected aspects of risk and the compounding and cascading impact of shocks. The response to and recovery from the pandemic form an opportunity to strengthen prevention, preparedness and resilience to future shocks and increase momentum for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitments, goals and targets of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

## **B. Lessons learned from responding to disasters during the coronavirus disease pandemic: the importance of locally led solutions**

18. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies estimates that at least 51.6 million people had been directly affected by overlapping climate-related disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic by mid-September 2020.<sup>13</sup> Those most

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* (2020).

<sup>13</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “Climate-related extreme weather events and COVID-19: a first look at the number of people affected by intersecting disasters” (Geneva, 2020).

vulnerable to disasters have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, which has eroded their resilience to future shocks.

19. The humanitarian system adapted disaster preparedness and response activities to the challenging operational circumstances created by the pandemic. Movement restrictions and physical distancing complicated evacuations and temporary sheltering during disasters and the conduct of simulation exercises ahead of seasonal hazards. This necessitated adapting early warning messaging to include information on physical distancing and preventive behaviour during evacuations and incorporating containment measures and provisions for protecting high-risk groups from virus exposure into contingency plans and standard operating procedures. Disaster responders required personal protective equipment and protocols and training on responding while adhering to measures to prevent the spread of the virus, “doing no harm” and ensuring accountability to affected populations. The pandemic hampered routine immunization and vaccination campaigns and made preventing disease outbreaks and delivering health care more challenging during disasters. However, earlier investments in multi-hazard disaster risk management and pre-established coordination mechanisms and collaboration between health and disaster management authorities and line ministries helped to mobilize rapid and comprehensive responses to the dual impact of disasters and the pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

20. Locally led approaches have been key to effectively preparing for and responding to climate-related disasters during the pandemic. Local aid workers have been less likely to be constrained by movement restrictions during lockdowns, as they are often deemed essential workers. Disaster responses during the pandemic accelerated the inclusivity and localization of humanitarian assistance and the role of local organizations, which have a deep understanding of the context, long-standing relationships, trust and acceptance with the affected communities and who can mobilize communities and local networks.<sup>15</sup> To support locally led responses, the Central Emergency Response Fund deployed \$25 million to support 24 front-line non-governmental organizations (NGOs), of which one third were local organizations, while \$236 million was allocated under country-based pooled funds to local and national NGOs.

21. For example, in Vanuatu, national first responders, local organizations and the private sector proved essential in responding to Cyclone Harold. The Vanuatu Business Resilience Council, a local business network of the Connecting Business initiative supported globally by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, provided a coordination mechanism for the private sector to engage with the Government and partners, conducted damage assessments, deployed telecommunications teams to reconnect the islands and provided shipping and logistics for relief and recovery efforts. Working with partners, the local network provided over 1,000 households with relief items. In 2020, the Connecting Business initiative supported 17 private sector networks globally, 9 of which responded to disasters during the pandemic.<sup>16</sup>

22. The pandemic required remote support and leveraging of technology to support locally led disaster preparedness and response efforts. During post-disaster needs

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Combating the dual challenge of COVID-19 and climate-related disasters”, Asia-Pacific COVID-19 Brief (Bangkok, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance on strengthening participation, representation and leadership of local and national actors in inter-Agency Standing Committee humanitarian coordination mechanisms (2021) and interim guidance on localization and the COVID-19 response (2020).

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Development Programme and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Connecting Business initiative: progress report 2020” (New York, 2021).

assessments, local actors often collected information and data by using community feedback mechanisms and forms shared through mobile devices, which informed remote analysis and international support to localized responses.

23. The response to the pandemic underscored the importance of: facilitating and expediting the movement of relief goods and access by humanitarian personnel; pre-positioned relief items during pandemic-related shutdowns, when procurement was challenging and costly; and supply chains that are resilient, agile and close to affected people. It demonstrated the importance of local organizations in distributing relief items and supporting affected communities, and of in-country surge mechanisms drawing from national response capacities and staff as an alternative to international surge deployments.

24. In Asia and the Pacific, the Pacific Disaster Center, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme (WFP) used the Joint Analysis of Disaster Exposure to map community vulnerability and model disaster impacts to estimate the number of affected people and those most likely to require humanitarian assistance and protection following disasters. This helped to pre-position relief items near evacuation shelters for distribution according to COVID-19 protocols.

25. Regional offices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs adjusted their surge strategies and support tools in the wake of the pandemic. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the regional office conducted 20 surge and 9 preparedness missions, implemented virtual simulation exercises and strengthened complementarity and interoperability with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and its regional response mechanism. In Southern and Eastern Africa, the Office deployed a surge team to support the flood response in the Sudan, drought responses in Angola and Namibia, contingency planning in Madagascar, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe and the development of a joint rapid needs assessment tool in Uganda. In Asia and the Pacific, the regional office complemented its 30 surge missions by providing remote support in 21 countries in response coordination, operational readiness and information management. To improve readiness ahead of the typhoon season in the Philippines and adapt to the operational implications of the pandemic, the Office and its partners reviewed the operational plans and protocols of the humanitarian country team, which were subsequently activated in response to successive typhoons.

26. United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system teams were deployed in Honduras and Guatemala in response to Hurricanes Eta and Iota to support national disaster management authorities and humanitarian country teams in coordination, needs assessments, information management and the environment. The deployments highlighted the importance of preparedness, combining field presence and remote support, common standard operating procedures and the coordination of resources and personnel across the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system prior to disasters. In addition, the system launched its new refresher course, developed in 2020, to enable its members to better empower and support localized responses.

27. The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group initiated planning on remote earthquake response exercises and developed operational guidance to ensure that urban search and rescue teams operate safely as front-line responders during the pandemic. In many countries, the teams quickly adapted and mobilized to support national pandemic responses, including by establishing mobile hospitals, providing logistics support and carrying out aerial assessments.

28. Globally, the pandemic underscored the importance of investment in shock-responsive social protection systems that can be scaled up during disasters and

leverage best practices in cash and voucher assistance. Responses to Cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh and Cyclone Harold in Fiji demonstrated the utility, speed and low transaction cost of cash transfers and supporting local markets, while innovations such as digital payments helped to limit physical contact during the pandemic.

29. To ensure effective disaster responses during and after the pandemic, international actors should increase coordinated efforts and investment in reinforcing community resilience and engagement and the capacities, activities and leadership of national and local responders in preparedness and response efforts, including by providing tailored and complementary support. Strengthened national and local capacities in multi-hazard risk analysis, forecasting, early warning and preparedness will be crucial for anticipating, mitigating and recovering from future shocks. The United Nations common guidance on helping to build resilient societies informs comprehensive and joined-up actions in strengthening resilience and managing interconnected and cascading risks.

30. Established international networks such as the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group provide useful lessons and best practices for strengthening partnerships for response. Partnerships with local and national actors should enable them to leverage comparative advantages and develop their institutional and technical capacities in, inter alia, needs assessments, operational readiness, delivering assistance safely during the pandemic and accessing international funding and resources.

### **C. Anticipatory action**

31. Increasingly frequent and severe disasters are challenging capacities and available resources, which are already overstretched in responding to protracted crises and complex humanitarian challenges. This underlines the need to anticipate hazards with greater effectiveness and cost-efficiency. Hazards and their impacts have become increasingly predictable owing to advancements in science, technology, data and analytics. Evidence shows that anticipatory action ahead of forecasted shocks is faster and more dignified and cost-effective than traditional reactive responses.

32. In 2020, Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners advanced anticipatory action projects in more than 60 countries. The Central Emergency Response Fund committed an initial \$140 million over two years for anticipatory action frameworks in Africa and Asia. By the end of 2020, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had facilitated the development of frameworks in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia to address recurring floods and droughts. The Office also set out to facilitate new frameworks to mitigate the impacts of floods, droughts, typhoons and plague in Burkina Faso, Chad, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, the Niger, the Philippines and South Sudan.

33. In July, the anticipatory action framework for floods was triggered in Bangladesh. With plans, protocols and funding in place, the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated funds within four hours of when the critical threshold that triggered the framework's activation was reached, enabling United Nations agencies and partners to deliver humanitarian assistance to more than 220,000 people before floods peaked. Anticipatory action helped households to evacuate people and livestock, protect productive assets and expedite their recovery, and provided food assistance. Some 23,000 families received cash transfers from WFP, while the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided 12,000 families with animal feed and 7,000 families with water-tight storage drums to store agricultural and other tools to prevent them from being washed away by the floods.



and to protect their livelihoods. In addition, 10,500 women and girls received hygiene kits and became more likely to access health care and continue their education and livelihoods. Overall, affected people could act in a more dignified manner as they received support ahead of peak flooding. More people were reached at half the cost, per person reached, of comparable regular responses in previous years. Efficiency gains obtained through lower pre-crisis costs of procurement and logistics enabled FAO to distribute more animal feed and storage drums, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) achieved over 10 per cent in cost savings.

34. In Somalia, the anticipatory action framework was triggered when food insecurity was forecasted to increase owing to the compounded impacts of floods, locusts and COVID-19. Originally designed for droughts, activating the plan in response to other hazards required swift adjustments to pre-planned actions and highlighted the importance of identifying shock-specific triggers and actions, increasing targeting at community level, tailoring support for specific vulnerabilities and livelihoods and planning for recurring seasonal shocks. A \$15 million allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund enabled pre-agreed activities to swiftly provide nearly 640,000 people with assistance in food security, nutrition, health, protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene to mitigate the loss of livelihoods, the deterioration of nutrition and the outbreak of diseases. Pre-agreed financing and actions made the project approval process three times faster and activities were implemented more quickly. The early health response reduced disease outbreaks and malnutrition, and sustained immunization for children. The anticipatory rehabilitation and upgrading of boreholes improved household finances, supported livestock health, reduced water disputes and mitigated displacement, while cash transfers helped safeguard food security and sustain local markets. The allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund was complemented by a \$22 million allocation from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund to scale up operations in response to the triple shock and in support of local and national actors.

35. In Ethiopia, the anticipatory action framework for drought was completed in late 2020. Forecasts projecting drought for early 2021, and 12.9 million people facing food insecurity within six months, triggered a \$20 million allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund, which was disbursed in two phases. The funding enabled FAO, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization to provide cash assistance and farming inputs, support livestock health, distribute non-food items, rehabilitate water schemes and conduct hygiene promotion ahead of the shock. Within six months, national and international partners had supported 75,000 farmers with agricultural inputs; provided 11,000 pastoralists with livestock feed; distributed 14,300 hygiene kits; rehabilitated 60 water schemes, providing 71,500 people with safe water access; counselled 18,600 mothers on optimal breastfeeding to prevent child malnutrition and screened 8,600 children for malnutrition; provided 3,000 families with cash to keep their children in school; trained and deployed 12 medical rapid response teams; and trained 256 agency and implementing partner staff members on protection issues.

36. Recent initiatives also emphasized the effectiveness of locally led anticipatory action. For example, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies released pre-agreed financing from the forecast-based action mechanism of its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to support the activation of early action protocols ahead of forecasted hazards. In Bangladesh, funds were released ahead of Cyclone Amphan to support more than 20,000 vulnerable people with emergency food and water and first aid and safety equipment, and provide precautionary measures against COVID-19 while they sheltered. In Mongolia, cash grants were provided to vulnerable herder families to help protect their livestock and livelihoods. In

Mozambique, hygiene and sanitation supplies to reduce the risk of waterborne diseases and kits to reinforce houses and schools were distributed ahead of tropical storm Chalane.

37. While many pilot initiatives are currently limited in scope, scale and financing, recent experience has demonstrated the feasibility of scaling up collective anticipatory action. Strengthened coordination, coherence, complementarity and additional flexible financing are essential for addressing current limitations and bottlenecks, achieving the system-wide scale up of anticipatory action initiatives and further increasing their effectiveness and impact. This requires moving from single-agency pilots to inter-agency and multi-stakeholder approaches that cover more at-risk people and locations and multiple sectors and types of natural hazards. To ensure sustainability, anticipatory approaches need to be nationally owned and part of national and local disaster risk management systems and shock-responsive safety nets.

38. System-wide scale up also requires pre-arranged financing that is coordinated, predictable, flexible, sustainable and at a scale demanded by increasingly severe and frequent disasters. Anticipatory action should complement traditional disaster responses; social protection; other disaster risk financing instruments, such as insurance and contingency financing windows of international financial institutions; and climate adaptation financing. For example, in 2020, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility provided nearly \$42 million in parametric insurance pay-outs to its members in response to hurricanes and excessive rainfall. The African Risk Capacity pay-outs helped reduce livelihood losses due to crop failure among vulnerable populations in Madagascar and supported drought response efforts in Zimbabwe. The use of insurance should be increased to strengthen resilience, including by developing anticipatory insurance policies at the household and national levels to provide pay-outs ahead of shocks. The access of vulnerable countries to pre-agreed contingency financing and the speed of disbursements should also be improved.

39. Initiatives such as the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership, the Crisis Lookout Coalition, the Anticipatory Action Task Force, the Anticipation Hub, the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action and the InsuResilience Global Partnership merit support to help proactive humanitarian action. Collective learning and impact evaluations will help inform the development and implementation of increasingly effective anticipatory action frameworks.

## **D. Strengthening early warning and preparedness for response**

40. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Emergency Response Preparedness approach was implemented in 69 countries to develop a shared understanding of risks and ensure readiness to respond to shocks with increased speed, volume, predictability and effectiveness. By the end of 2020, 92 per cent of countries identified as high-risk by the INFORM initiative had in place high-quality preparedness plans in line with the approach. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee also developed interim guidance on the Emergency Response Preparedness approach to the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen preparedness measures for country teams when addressing the potential non-health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its compounded effects on existing risks.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-interim-guidance-covid-19-emergency-response-preparedness-approach>.

41. The launch and dissemination by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Words into Action guidelines on enhancing preparedness for effective response, and the companion guide on the design and conduct of simulation exercises, provide national and local disaster managers with practical road maps to implement related actions outlined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

42. The recommendations and checklist on scaling up disaster risk reduction in humanitarian action of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction provide actions to incorporate disaster risk reduction considerations into humanitarian responses, including in the humanitarian programme cycle, and help tackle the root causes of humanitarian need through strengthened coherence and collaboration between humanitarian and disaster risk reduction actors, including with regard to joint risk analysis and reducing the need for response in the future.

43. Strengthening early warning systems and collaboration among hydrometeorological services, humanitarian actors and communities is essential for effective preparedness and early action. Only 40 per cent of WMO members, however, report having multi-hazard early warning systems in place, and on average one in three people are still not adequately covered by early warning systems.<sup>18</sup> The availability and coverage of these systems must be urgently increased, in particular in least developed countries and small island developing States. National capacities to translate early warning into early action must be supported and strengthened, and advances in communication technology must be utilized to improve the dissemination of actionable early warning information to at-risk communities.

44. By the end of 2020, the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems initiative covered 57 countries. In 2020, the initiative added 114 million people to its coverage, protecting them from drought and sand and dust storms. The initiative expanded projects to strengthen early warning capacities in the Pacific and West Africa and launched a five-year project covering the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique and Seychelles to enhance regional cooperation and national capacities on impact-based forecasting and early warning.

45. Following forecasts of a likely La Niña event, the countries identified by the El Niño Southern Oscillation Global Cell of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as being most at risk received further monitoring, analysis, support and recommended early actions, in line with inter-agency standard operating procedures for anticipatory action to El Niño/La Niña episodes.

46. Preparedness should also be strengthened for geophysical disasters, as illustrated by the eruption of La Soufrière volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in April 2021, and for possible back-to-back disasters, as exemplified by the dual impact of the earthquake and Tropical Storm Grace that struck Haiti in August 2021. Rapid response must link to effective early recovery and risk-informed development to reduce vulnerability, including through investment in resilient infrastructure, housing and livelihoods.

## **E. Enhancing the collection, sharing and use of data**

47. Relevant, complete and timely data that is standardized and disaggregated, and has enhanced spatial resolution, is essential for anticipating and understanding disaster risk and impacts and assessing and monitoring evolving needs. The

<sup>18</sup> WMO, *2020 State of Climate Services – Risk Information and Early Warning Systems* (Geneva, 2020).

humanitarian data ecosystem is getting stronger as more organizations share data and as awareness of the importance of responsibly collecting and sharing data increases.

48. The INFORM initiative continues to publish its Risk Index biannually. In 2020, INFORM released a new Severity Index, which measures the severity of humanitarian crises, including disasters. INFORM partners also carried out a scoping phase for INFORM Warning, which will monitor dynamic risks, including seasonal and slow-onset hazards, and support early warning processes and decisions regarding preparedness and early action. Development of INFORM Warning will start in 2022. INFORM partners also began the development of an adaptation of the INFORM Risk Index that will incorporate the effects of climate change.

49. To promote data responsibility, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported eight field offices in adopting strong data protection policies and practices and system-wide information-sharing protocols, which will inform the revision and formalization of the Office's Data Responsibility Guidelines in 2021. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR co-led efforts to develop Inter-Agency Standing Committee operational guidance on data responsibility in humanitarian action, which includes a set of principles and recommended actions for data responsibility during humanitarian responses to address challenges to the privacy and security of affected people, and to "do no harm" while maximizing the benefits of data.

## **F. Food security and disasters**

50. Climate variability and extremes are key drivers of hunger and food crises. More frequent and severe disasters, in particular droughts, increase food insecurity and malnutrition by destroying crops, killing livestock and devastating agricultural livelihoods.

51. Urgent action is needed to strengthen the resilience of agriculture, food systems and the communities that rely on them to shocks and stresses. Risk analysis, real-time monitoring and early warning mechanisms should identify communities at risk of climate shocks and resulting food insecurity, while technological innovations, such as remote sensing, geospatial information gathering and drones, can enhance assessments and data collection. These efforts should inform investment in preparedness, anticipatory action and national shock-responsive social protection mechanisms, safety nets, insurance instruments and humanitarian food and seed reserves to address immediate and longer-term needs and vulnerabilities and support agricultural livelihoods. Multi-hazard and multisectoral approaches help enable comprehensive responses to hunger, food insecurity and interconnected risks. Where possible, local purchases of food and agricultural inputs for humanitarian purposes should be pursued to support local markets, economies and food supply chains, including with cash assistance.

52. In 2020, Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners worked to prevent and address disaster-related food insecurity. FAO provided drought-resistant seeds, built irrigation infrastructure through cash-for-work schemes and distributed fodder seeds and concentrated livestock feed ahead of impending droughts in various regions. FAO surveillance and control operations saved over 2.9 million tons of cereals, sufficient to feed almost 20 million people for a year, and protected 1.4 million pastoral households in the Greater Horn of Africa and Yemen from the locust upsurge and helped avert a major spread of the pests to West Africa and the Sahel. WFP protected over 1.2 million people in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania and Zimbabwe from drought with climate risk macroinsurance through the African Risk Capacity

Replica initiative, complementing national social protection frameworks. Through the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative, WFP enabled 180,000 farming households to access microinsurance in 10 countries, providing a safety net to 900,000 people. Pay-outs following a failed growing season in Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe supported purchases of food and agricultural inputs and helped protect livelihoods and food security.

## G. Disaster displacement

53. The climate crisis is increasing the risk and occurrence of displacement. Absent scaled-up investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction, disaster displacement will increase significantly. A collaborative long-term approach is required among humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction, climate, human rights and other actors to address and find solutions to disaster displacement and its root causes. Funding mechanisms should address disaster displacement, including through protection, anticipatory action and adaptation.<sup>19</sup>

54. Disaster displacement can be significant in scale and become protracted. Data collection often ends after the emergency phase of a disaster, creating gaps in monitoring whether or not displaced persons are able to find a durable solution. This leads to underestimating the scale and duration of displacement, which limits the effectiveness and accountability of policies and responses with regard to providing the necessary assistance and protection services to address longer-term needs and achieve durable solutions.

55. The lack of disaggregated data on sex, age, disability and other characteristics makes it challenging to fully understand the scope of displacement, identify those most vulnerable and tailor responses to their specific needs and vulnerabilities. More comprehensive data collection, including by national authorities and using tools such as the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, should be incorporated into disaster preparedness, response and recovery to strengthen evidence-based assistance and solutions and their funding. To this end, the publication entitled *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics* provides guidance for the production of official statistics on internal displacement.

56. Significant progress has been made in developing national and regional frameworks to address disaster displacement. For example, Bangladesh has developed a comprehensive policy framework and strategy on internal displacement focusing on disasters and climate change, and has strengthened preparedness for displacement through the displacement management cluster co-led by the Government and IOM. In Fiji and Vanuatu, national policies and guidelines on disaster displacement, planned relocations and durable solutions are guiding actions. In Ghana and Peru, climate policies and laws acknowledge disaster displacement. In Southern Africa, Inter-Agency Standing Committee and NGO partners are supporting the development of disaster displacement guidelines and frameworks in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

57. The *GP20 Compilation of National Practices to Prevent, Address and Find Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement*<sup>20</sup> presents good practices and encourages Member States to integrate internal displacement into existing laws and policies on land management, development, climate and disaster risk reduction. Other recommendations include investing in data collection and analysis to plan for

<sup>19</sup> See also [A/75/207](#).

<sup>20</sup> Available at [www.globalprotectioncluster.org/2020/11/23/gp20-compilation-of-national-practices-to-prevent-address-and-find-durable-solutions-to-internal-displacement/](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/2020/11/23/gp20-compilation-of-national-practices-to-prevent-address-and-find-durable-solutions-to-internal-displacement/).

disasters and identify at-risk communities and anticipating, preventing and addressing protracted disaster displacement to advance durable solutions.

58. Member States maintain an obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of people who are displaced and cross international borders in the context of disasters and climate change, regardless of their status. The global legal framework for refugee protection may be applicable in some specific circumstances where persecution risks result from or are increased in the context of disasters and climate change. Complementary or temporary forms of protection can provide alternatives for those displaced and ineligible for refugee status.<sup>21</sup> In 2020, the Human Rights Committee recognized the possible triggering of non-refoulement protection obligations under international human rights law in such situations.<sup>22</sup> The Platform on Disaster Displacement continues to support Governments and regional organizations on effective humanitarian protection measures to address needs related to cross-border disaster displacement.

59. Regional policy frameworks and migration protocols and tools can support the management of human mobility in the context of disasters and climate and mobilize political commitment and action at the national level. Endorsed in 2020, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Protocol on Free Movement in the IGAD Region provides best practices for facilitating the cross-border movement of people displaced by disasters or at risk thereof. The development of a regional approach to address climate-related human mobility in the Pacific is currently being explored by Pacific island countries and territories, the United Nations and partners. In the Caribbean, 120 border officials from eight Member States of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States were trained to manage cross-border displacement ahead of the 2020 hurricane season.

60. The report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Internal Displacement<sup>23</sup> elaborates on the prevention of and durable solutions to disaster displacement, including through disaster risk reduction and displacement-sensitive adaptation.

## H. Gender and disasters

61. Disasters and the climate crisis affect women and girls disproportionately and exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and discrimination. In particular, women and girls with disabilities, older women, adolescent girls and those displaced are exposed to further protection risks, including child marriage, early pregnancy, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, coupled with lack of access to food, nutrition, livelihoods and sexual and reproductive health services. Women and girls often lack resources and assets required for resilience. However, women and women's organizations are often first responders during disasters and have a central role in the survival and resilience of communities and the promotion of women's rights. By better understanding the specific needs, priorities and capacities of women and girls, humanitarian actors can facilitate their contribution and access to humanitarian assistance and remove related obstacles.

62. Robust gender analysis and women's empowerment and participation in decision-making are critical for effective disaster preparedness and response. Prevention of and response to gender-based violence, including through the Central

<sup>21</sup> See UNHCR, "Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters", 1 October 2020.

<sup>22</sup> See [CCPR/C/127/D/2728/2016](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/cpr/127/D/2728/2016).

<sup>23</sup> Available at [www.internaldisplacement-panel.org/](https://www.internaldisplacement-panel.org/).

Emergency Response Fund and allocations from country-based pooled funds, and in line with the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies and related commitments, should also be prioritized.

63. Women's participation and leadership in decision-making are key to gender equality, as confirmed by the findings of the first inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The need for strengthened coordination, accountability and institutionalization of policies, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's gender policy and accountability framework, at the country and global levels was highlighted, while access to long-term gender expertise and at the onset of disasters were enabling factors for gender mainstreaming. Deployments of senior gender capacity advisers through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Standby Capacity Project were highly valued. In 2020, the Project deployed advisers to 16 countries, including for disaster response in Mozambique. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies conducted a dialogue series to amplify the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, strengthen the visibility and leadership of women-led organizations and ensure that women's rights and empowerment are incorporated into disaster preparedness and response. A United Nations joint study on the status of gender equality and women's leadership in disaster risk reduction provided additional and complementary recommendations for strengthening gender-responsive disaster risk reduction.

64. A regional inter-agency task team on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse was established in Eastern and Southern Africa to share good practices, drawing from lessons learned in the response to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth, and to complement and support the country-level networks on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse operating in Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

## **I. Children, education and disasters**

65. Disasters took a heavy toll on children in 2020. In South Asia alone, weeks of monsoon rains, flooding and landslides in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal affected over 4 million children. The climate crisis is a threat to all rights guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The rights, needs and perspectives of children must better inform climate policies. The climate crisis disproportionately affects the access of girls to education by amplifying the inequalities they face, including poverty, discriminatory gender norms, increased household responsibilities and concerns related to hygiene and safety, and through child marriage and other negative coping mechanisms for climate shocks and stresses, which result in reduced school attendance and increased dropout rates for girls. If climate change follows its current trajectory, by 2025 it will be a contributing factor in preventing at least 12.5 million girls annually from completing their education.<sup>24</sup>

66. Initiatives to strengthen the resilience of children, youth and schools were advanced in 2020. The Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector initiated an update of the comprehensive school safety framework, which reduces disaster risks in the education sector by promoting safe learning facilities, school disaster management and education on risk reduction and resilience and by ensuring universal access to quality education. The Words into Action guidelines on engaging children and youth in disaster risk reduction and resilience building was launched to enhance child-centred approaches. UNICEF

<sup>24</sup> Malala Fund, "A greener, fairer future: why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education" (2021).

supported Governments in developing child-sensitive national and local multi-hazard risk management plans in 56 countries by the end of 2020. In several countries, UNICEF uses school-based disaster risk reduction to address the vulnerabilities of children and engage them as contributors in resilience. In the Sahel, UNICEF launched a strategy to strengthen the resilience of education systems and help 13 million children access quality learning.

## **J. Persons with disabilities and disasters**

67. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by disasters, which amplify the risks and challenges they face as a result of pre-existing discrimination and barriers to accessing assistance and protection.

68. In 2020, disability inclusion was reinforced in needs assessments, response plans and funding allocations. Increased efforts are required to support the engagement and capacity-building of persons with disabilities and their organizations and the integration of disability inclusion into all humanitarian action to ensure the quality, effectiveness and accountability of activities, in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action,<sup>25</sup> the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

69. Increased collection and use of data on persons with disabilities and their priorities are required for more inclusive and better designed, targeted and tailored responses to their needs and vulnerabilities. The role of the Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds in supporting disability-inclusive responses should be further increased, building on progress made in 2020 when the funds supported 11.2 million persons with disabilities and helped remove barriers to their access to assistance and protection.

## **K. Mental health and psychosocial support in disasters**

70. Disasters have a significant mental health and psychosocial impact on affected people. People living with mental health conditions are disproportionately affected by disasters and may experience aggravated symptoms or disruptions in access to care and support during disasters.

71. In 2020, a joint inter-agency call for action was issued to integrate cross-sectoral mental health and psychosocial support into needs assessments and preparedness, response and recovery efforts to meet the needs of all populations affected by emergencies; scale up the implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings; and strengthen capacities, activities and funding for mental health and psychosocial support.<sup>26</sup>

72. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee developed guidance for integrating mental health and psychosocial support into disaster risk reduction and climate action to strengthen resilience and improve mental health and psychosocial well-being before, during and after disasters, including by ensuring access to universal health coverage and social protection mechanisms.

<sup>25</sup> Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines>.

<sup>26</sup> Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings/joint-interagency-call-action-mhpss-2020>.



73. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee launched an inter-agency rapid deployment mechanism for mental health and psychosocial support, which included 13 deployments in 2020, several of which were to disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean, to strengthen national capacities and responses, including by supporting the development of standard operating procedures, rapid needs assessments and psychological first aid training for first responders. During 2020, the number of inter-agency cross-sectoral technical working groups on mental health and psychosocial support doubled to 50 humanitarian contexts and contributed to disaster responses to cyclones, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

### **III. Recommendations**

**74. On the basis of the present report, the Secretary-General recommends that Member States, the United Nations, humanitarian and development organizations and other relevant stakeholders:**

**(a) Continue to strengthen humanitarian system-wide disaster preparedness and response, including through contingency planning and pre-positioning with national authorities and local communities, and through international surge mechanisms and logistical support capacities and their enhanced readiness and rapid deployment, and to increase predictable, timely and flexible funding for preparedness and rapid response, including through flash appeals, the Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds;**

**(b) Continue to strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems and the production, collection and timely dissemination of actionable early warning and risk information to enable effective early action at the global, regional, national and local levels;**

**(c) Strengthen efforts to manage disaster and climate risks and impacts, and reinforce regional, national and local capacities and community resilience, including with increased funding, and also continue to strengthen analysis, planning, programming and financing to better reduce need, risk and vulnerability and strengthen resilience, including through increased collaboration and complementarity among humanitarian, development, climate change and disaster risk reduction actors;**

**(d) Increase the ambition of contributions to the Paris Agreement, including with a view to achieving transformative mitigation, adaptation and resilience actions, in particular for vulnerable communities and countries;**

**(e) Systematically collect, analyse, share and apply best practices and lessons learned related to disaster preparedness, response and recovery, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, by actively seeking the views of affected people to improve preparedness, response, recovery and resilience related to future disasters, with a view to strengthening and augmenting regional, national and local capacities and community engagement, reinforcing partnerships with regional organizations and drawing on private sector capabilities;**

**(f) Continue to scale up anticipatory action initiatives and strengthen their coordination, coherence, complementarity and impact, and increase the use of disaster risk analysis, climate science, predictive analytics and forecasting and the sharing of data and analysis across sectors and at all levels to better anticipate and address disaster and climate risks and impacts;**

(g) Continue efforts to establish a more comprehensive overview and understanding of disaster and climate risks, impacts, damages and losses, including through more systematic collection, analysis and use of data and statistics disaggregated by sex, age and disability, to guide risk-informed investments and preparedness in areas and communities that are likely to be affected in the future;

(h) Increase support to the Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds for early and rapid response and the scaling up of anticipatory action to mitigate the impact of disasters, including in underfunded contexts, and encourage international financial institutions to accelerate financing at scale for preparedness and anticipatory action before a crisis, as well as for risk-informed resilient recovery, in ways that complement and reinforce humanitarian pooled funds;

(i) Enhance the use of pre-agreed contingency finance mechanisms in response to disasters, increase the scale and speed of their disbursements and ensure they are fit for purpose;

(j) Increase efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition and their underlying causes related to disasters and climate change, including by developing and strengthening resilient food systems, risk-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection systems and the use of cash and voucher assistance and disaster risk insurance to strengthen livelihoods, food production, resilience and recovery, and by improving the availability and use of data on food security risks and impacts;

(k) Continue to strengthen collaboration among humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction, climate change and human rights actors to prevent and address disaster displacement, assist and protect persons displaced by disasters, strengthen resilience and achieve durable solutions, including through joined-up programming and funding, and work with national and local authorities to incorporate disaster displacement and durable solutions into national adaptation plans and strategies, policies and laws on disaster risk reduction and response;

(l) Continue to reinforce regional collaboration and practices to provide assistance and protection and achieve durable solutions in response to internal and cross-border displacement in the context of disasters and climate change, and enhance the collection, sharing, disaggregation and interoperability of related data at all levels to strengthen responses and the achievement of durable solutions, and increase the sharing of best practices in this regard;

(m) Continue to strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to protection risks and needs in the context of disasters and climate change, incorporate a protection perspective into disaster risk management and reinforce protection capacities in surge mechanisms, strengthen protection from gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure the centrality of protection in disasters and effective protection outcomes for the affected and most vulnerable people;

(n) Increase efforts and strategies to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making through partnerships with local women's organizations and groups, supported by disaggregated data and robust gender analysis, including on disaster risks, impacts and vulnerability experienced by women and girls;

(o) Strengthen the disaster resilience and safety of schools and reduce interruptions to education during disasters, including by ensuring universal access to quality education and increasing education on disaster risk management;

(p) Strengthen capacities to mainstream the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations into strategies, policies and programming and improve the collection, sharing and use of data disaggregated by disability, and ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management and all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle, including in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action;

(q) Increase efforts to provide and fund cross-sectoral mental health and psychosocial support services that are systematically integrated into preparedness, response and recovery efforts to effectively address related needs during disasters, and in this regard work to improve the coverage and quality of these activities, and ensure the provided support reduces stigma, discrimination and exclusion and is implemented with a longer-term vision that strengthens local capacities and community resilience and builds on evidence-based approaches and best practices.

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