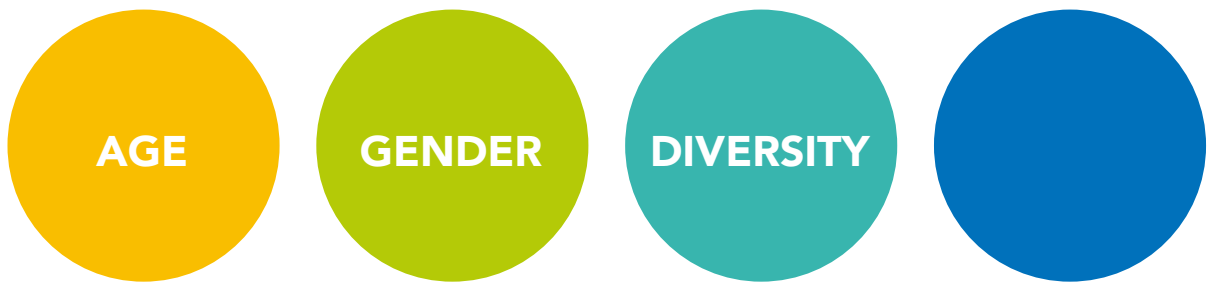




# ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT 2013

UNHCR, 2014  
Division of  
International  
Protection





# ACCOUNTABILITY **REPORT 2013**



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June 2014

Layout and design: BakOS DESIGN



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report

UNHCR has been implementing an accountability system for Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) since 2007. The AGD approach, which became a policy in 2011, establishes minimum standards to achieve equitable outcomes for all persons of concern, putting women and men of all ages and with diverse characteristics at the centre of the decisions affecting their lives. Meaningful and informed participation of persons of concern in decision-making that affects their lives is the main feature of the policy. UNHCR requires its managers to be accountable for the implementation of the AGD policy to ensure age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in humanitarian interventions.

The former AGD Accountability Framework, a stand-alone report produced annually for the past six years, has now been incorporated into Focus - UNHCR's strategic planning and reporting platform under the title: **Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report** (AGD Accountability Report). The report is mandatory for all Regional and Country Offices, Headquarters Divisions, Bureaus and the Executive Office, and has been designed to fit all operation types. The incorporation of the AGD Accountability Framework into Focus is a critical step towards institutionalising and systematising UNHCR's strategies of working with people of concern to the organisation.

The AGD Accountability Report aims to support staff, especially managers, to meet their programme objectives and to identify gaps affecting persons of concern. It also aims to support and enhance organisational leadership for accountability in a transparent, systematic manner. This document presents the seventh annual overview of progress towards compliance with the AGD policy. While reporting remains the personal responsibility of senior managers, the new AGD Accountability Report in Focus is designed to be a collaborative tool. Managers are expected to provide their staff with an opportunity to discuss on-going progress achieved during the course of the year and before the submission of the report.

The AGD Accountability Report is now organised at two strategic planning levels. At the Plan level, Operations, Regional Offices and Headquarters entities are required to report on the following: (a) the senior managers' own activities and engagement in ensuring the full implementation of UNHCR's AGD policy, and (b) the main problems and solutions for three groups (women, children and other groups of concern) and one theme (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence). At the Population Planning Group level, Operations and Regional offices are required to report on any Participatory Assessment they have conducted.

The following major changes have been introduced through the new AGD Accountability Report:

- The integration of the AGD Accountability Report into Focus makes it possible to cross-reference submitted narrative information with quantitative data and indicators, as well as to establish links to other relevant sections of an operation's year-end report, including reporting on the Global Strategic Priorities.
- The Report provides a structured space to report on participatory assessments specific to each population group. Frequency, attendance and results of participatory assessments can be recorded, and their inclusion in planning and programming can be verified.
- The Report moves beyond an assessment of the individual accountability of senior managers. While that particular component is retained, the AGD report also assesses the accountability of the entire organisation at its different levels and across functions.
- The new structure and its link to the country and regional plans will facilitate the tracking of progress - both in quantitative and qualitative terms - directly linked to the implementation of targeted actions and projects that address inequality and promote the AGD policy.

## 1.2 Defining Accountability in UNHCR

Bearing in mind its various dimensions, accountability is defined by UNHCR as a commitment to delivering results for populations of concern within a framework of transparency, agreed feasibility, delegated authority and available resources. Pursuant to this understanding, UNHCR has sought to put in place a modern system of accountability sufficiently robust and comprehensive to respond to the different accountability requirements expected of today's international multilateral organisations. While ultimately guided by a results-based orientation, this system continues to rely on mechanisms that ensure the responsible use of finances and other resources provided to UNHCR, as well as of the authority invested in the organisation and its individual staff members.

UNHCR's system of accountability is not captured in a single document or tool. Rather, the Office's mandate and a vast collection of policies, rules, procedures and guidelines constitute UNHCR's system of accountability. A Global Management Accountability Framework has been designed to map the overarching accountabilities, responsibilities and authorities (ARAs) assigned to UNHCR offices, by function, at the Country, Regional and Headquarters levels. ARAs, which are consistent with those mapped in the GMAF, are also found in job descriptions for all UNHCR positions, from Representatives to Field





Officers. Through the GMAF, as well as through job descriptions, it is possible to discern UNHCR's people-centred approach. At the same time, when it comes to reporting and being held to account, much progress is yet required. While the ARAs identify individual accountabilities and correspond to each staff member's performance appraisal, the Result-based Framework, with its structure of objectives, outputs, impact and performance indicators, is the back-bone of the organisation's structure of accountability towards persons of concern and other stakeholders.

The AGD Accountability Report represents a strategic step forward in UNHCR's efforts to make accountability a reality. It integrates the two dimensions of accountability described above - the individual managerial accountability mapped in the GMAF and the program or "operational" accountability captured by the Result-based Framework. In terms of reporting, managers and staff can report on the ways in which they are engaging with a people-centred approach outlined in the AGD principles using a single tool. This tool is the AGD Accountability Report, which is now integrated into the organisation's strategic planning platform, Focus. UNHCR's stakeholders may also find useful accountability information in a single, consolidated report tracking how the entire organisation, at all levels, implements its AGD policy. Managers' leadership and accountability are combined with operational accountability, complemented by broader information on age, gender and diversity-related problems and solutions. In this sense, the AGD Accountability Report is not only a tool for measuring and reporting on accountability. It also provides a unique perspective on how persons of concern are affected differently by crises, and on the efforts the organisation deploys to address their specific problems.

At the core of the people-centred approach is accountability to the affected population. UNHCR's participatory approach has been praised – most notably after a peer review by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response in 2010. At the same time, there is a sense that UNHCR staff could benefit from stronger leadership by senior managers and targeted training on participatory methods, particularly with regard to conducting a two-way exchange with population of concern, managing expectations, ensuring transparency and developing community-based complaint mechanisms. Addressing these weaknesses, reiterated by the results of this report, would increase the effectiveness of the accountability system of the organisation.

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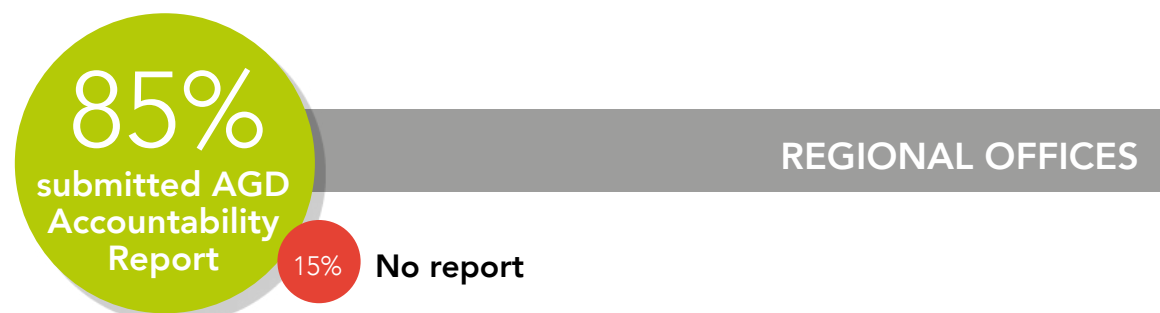
Mirela belongs to the Roma population (also at times referred to as gypsies). Similar to many Roma, Mirela's parents live a nomadic lifestyle and she was never registered at birth. Because she is stateless, Mirela's four kids that have grown up in the Netherlands are also stateless. © UNHCR



## 2. A Global perspective: How Headquarters spell accountability

### 2.1. Completion of the AGD Accountability Report

The completion rate of the AGD Accountability Report is almost 100 percent, with 99% of the 84 country operations submitting the AGD Accountability Report through Focus. AGD Accountability Reports were provided by 11 out of a total of 13 Regional Offices (or 85%). At Headquarters, the Executive Office, all Regional Bureaus and Divisions provided inputs through the AGD Accountability Report. The quality and the level of detail in the reports vary with a few operations failing to provide complete information in all sections of the Report.



## 2.2. The Executive Office

### **An organisation with a mission**

The senior management has promoted the centrality of refugees and other persons of concern in any action, initiative and programme undertaken by the organisation, furthering the principles of the AGD policy in all operations. This commitment was also reiterated by the High Commissioner during his numerous visits to field operations across the world.

### **Committed to persons of concern**

The Assistant High Commissioner for Operations strongly supported the institutionalisation of AGD accountability into the programming and reporting platform of the organisation. She is convinced that this accountability should be extended to staff performance as well. Following her regular and in-depth discussions with Bureau Directors, the Assistant High Commissioner is of the opinion that while a considerable level of awareness, knowledge and commitment to the AGD policy exists among senior managers, accountability needs to be systematically enforced “for AGD to be the way UNHCR does business” and to become integral to the organisation’s mandate.

### **Equity among staff**

With the aim of promoting equity and diversity among staff, including gender equity, the High Commissioner launched the International Professional Recruitment and Conversion policy in 2013 to improve the gender ratio and increase the diversity among staff. This policy and other related initiatives actively supported by the Deputy High Commissioner are based on the constitution of cohorts comprised of candidates reflecting linguistic and geographical diversity in accordance with UNHCR’s existing policies, with a target of 60 percent women, especially at the entry level. In her participation in the Senior Appointment Committee, the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations strongly advocates for gender balance to be taken into account. These initiatives are crucial to nurturing an organisational culture that promotes equality and diversity.

### **Accountability: a steep road**

In order to further strengthen the implementation of the AGD Policy and a people-centred approach, the AGD Accountability Report could be developed into a 360-degree evaluation<sup>1</sup> of the organisation’s performance on equitable programming and accountability towards populations of concern, as suggested during feedback sessions with senior managers.

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<sup>1</sup> 360-degree evaluation is a combination of result-based analysis and feedback that comes to an organisation from different internal and external stakeholders. It can also include feedback from external sources, such as customers and partners or other interested stakeholders.



## 2.3 The Divisions

### International Protection and Program Support

The Director of the Division of International Protection (DIP) exercised his managerial accountabilities for AGD by providing specific instructions to all staff in the Division that they must include at least one AGD objective in their individual work plans. During the year, he systematically reviewed all protection tools and guidelines of the Division to ensure that the AGD perspective is fully reflected. At the same time, the Director personally advocated for the AGD approach in public speeches, during field missions and during meetings with government representatives. Likewise, the Director of the Division for Program Support and Management (DPSM) decided that the question, “Do we systematically mainstream AGD in all DPSM activities?” would be one of the five “lenses for review” to guide the assessment of the Department’s strategies, programmes and impact. The Director also ensured that the DPSM strategy and 2014 Plan are aligned with the AGD policy and that they support a community and rights-based approach. The AGD principles were also reflected in DPSM’s contributions to external publications, including the Global Trends Report and the Statistical Yearbook. Several Bureaus reported difficulties in linking the different global strategies and policies issued by HQ, and adjusting competing priorities while faced with resource gaps. While increased specialization in different sectors may be conducive to more efficient responses, their integration and harmonisation is vital to achieving effective and meaningful results for persons of concern.

## **Emergency, Security and Supply**

The Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) reported an increased focus on protection in the delivery of services. As a result, AGD-sensitive changes were made in the supply chain, such as the introduction of solar lanterns in the list of Core Relief Items, which, when distributed as part of emergency assistance, can substantially improve safety and security for women and girls. UNHCR's Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness (UNHCR eCentre projects) mainstreamed AGD principles throughout its capacity development activities and field-based exercises, with particular emphasis on recognising the different needs and capacities of persons of concern when conducting emergency needs assessments and implementing multi-sectoral programs in the field. Still, the Director noted the need to reach a more effective and practical application of the AGD policy, improving both the coordination and cooperation between sectors providing specific services to persons of concern, including implementing partners. The focus on people in the provision of appropriate services has to guide all actors.

## **Human Resources**

The Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) included additional references to AGD in the Competency Framework to improve the way in which AGD measures are reported in 2013 performance appraisals. Furthermore, all substantive DHRM products were reviewed to ensure that AGD principles are systematically included. Internally, DHRM consistently advocated gender equity in the organisation, including by making available on the Intranet the gender and diversity scorecards, which show the composition of staff in each operation with their age, gender and nationality. The Gender Equity Policy is under revision.

## **The Inspector General Office**

The Inspector General's Office (IGO) has systematically recorded the implementation of the AGD policy as part of all field inspections, compiling a bi-annual report on recurrent findings on age, gender equality and diversity, as well as on participatory assessments. While the IGO reports a positive evolution in the implementation of the AGD policy, he notes that there is potential for further progress, notably in how operations prepare, deliver and systematise the participatory assessments, as well as how they follow up with persons of concern. The IGO commented on the need to monitor the implementation of new policies using AGD lens and to conduct regular evaluations and stock taking exercises at the end of each program cycle.

## **External Relations**

The Director of External Relations (DER) emphasised how the Division highlighted specific groups of concern in external communications, and documented the situation of those most at risk, in order to increase awareness during 2013 and to raise funds to support these vulnerable groups.

## 2.4 The Regional Bureaus

### 2.4.1 AFRICA

The overall response in the AGD Accountability Reports from the Africa region was excellent, with only very few operations presenting only a partial report only. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa provided clear instructions concerning the need to reflect the results of participatory assessments into country and regional-level strategies and programmes. The Director emphasised the implementation of the AGD policy as an essential element of UNHCR's overall participatory approach, defined as "the standard work methodology in the region." End-of-year reporting was subject to systematic review by the Bureau with AGD themes in mind.

#### Consulting refugees

The AGD reports produced by the operations in the region confirm how widespread the practice of participatory assessments has become, and the depth to which the concerns of the population are investigated. In Chad, for instance, participatory assessments were carried out in all the country's 18 refugee camps. In Liberia, two successive rounds of assessment in 2013 involved as many as 858 persons of concern, and Sudan conducted large-scale participatory assessments in all nine refugee camps and in urban settings. Virtually all the countries in the region have active Multi-Functional Teams. Many operations specifically mentioned a link between assessment and Country Operation Plans. In Central African Republic (CAR), for instance, 34% of the assistance budget was reported as devoted to AGD-based interventions. South Sudan mentioned "a number of protection and assistance interventions based on participatory assessments to ensure equal access to services and programs to all in 2014." However, when cross-referencing priorities identified during participatory assessments with projects implemented, gaps emerged. For example, the difficulty in organising food and NFI distributions that address the concerns and difficulties raised by specific groups like persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women or unaccompanied children were noted in several instances. People of concern in these groups reported having to walk long distances to collect their rations, or having to pay someone with food rations to carry it for them.

#### Funding shortfalls

A major concern raised in this respect by the Director was the financial gap between budget and available funds, requiring strict prioritisation and often difficult choices. In Africa, in 2013, UNHCR faced new large-scale emergencies in CAR and South Sudan affecting the neighbouring countries as well. As a result, the dedicated staff resources fell far short of the needs established by UNHCR offices in the region. In order to minimise the negative consequences, specific decisions were made to adjust country budgets to cater for AGD targets such as sanitary materials and birth registration, among other AGD concerns. Particular efforts were also made to preserve objectives which have a significant impact on the protection of women and girls, such as domestic energy requirements.

## Focus on LGBTI

Another notable activity currently being undertaken by the Regional Bureau for Africa was the mapping and monitoring of protection issues facing LGBTI persons in the region. Triggered by the latest wave of negative legislative developments on the continent and subsequent incidents of violence in several countries, the Bureau is leading a review of protection needs and existing response capacities as well as gaps in key country offices, with the aim to improve procedures to address the specific protection needs of LGBTI individuals at country level. Furthermore, half of the operations in the region are priority countries for the rollout of the child protection, education and SGBV strategies in 2013.

### 2.4.2 AMERICAS

All the nine operations in the Americas region provided inputs to the AGD Accountability Report. Through ensuring this perfect reporting compliance rate, the Director of the Bureau for the Americas demonstrated her strong leadership and vision, including AGD as one of the five priorities for the region and ensuring effective and sustainable responses from the operations.

#### Leading AGD

To ensure that all protection and solutions strategies are AGD sensitive, the Bureau undertakes a thorough analysis of the results of the AGD Accountability Reports prepared by the country offices annually. Once the Bureau identifies challenges and constraints at the regional and country level, it provides feedback to operations and discusses them both regionally and at country levels. If appropriate, the Bureau then liaises with specific sections at Headquarters to address gaps and to enhance support to the operations. Another result of this systematic analysis is a yearly compilation of AGD best practices in the Americas. Finally, the Bureau undertakes a revision of the resources allocation, utilising the annual programme review to ensure that budgets are sensitive to AGD-related needs.

#### Accountability: a professional and personal commitment

As a result of this clear strategic direction from the bureau, accountability and leadership on AGD became a priority for representatives in the region. UNHCR Colombia, for instance, consolidated a strategy for decentralising AGD responsibilities to the Heads of Offices and Units, in order to ensure that they are accountable and that they develop concrete actions in accordance with the AGD policy in all phases of the program cycle.

## **2.4.3 REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

### **Individual accountability**

All 18 operations in the Asia and Pacific Region reported, although, in some cases, the reports were incomplete. The Director of the Bureau asked all Representatives to ensure that they lead the work on the implementation of the AGD policy, and that they report on AGD implementation measures with reference to the objectives on leadership in their individual performance evaluations. The Director also personally followed up on the outcomes with Representatives. Continuous, personal engagement with field staff, desk officers and legal advisers was ensured to include and further enhance AGD in the protection and assistance activities.

### **Projects targeting specific groups**

A particular focus for the Bureau was to explore innovative projects in urban settings benefitting youth, female-headed households and older persons. In camp settings, it was a priority to ensure non-discrimination and equal access to assistance and services for disabled and elderly populations. In protracted situations, it was also a priority to address school drop-outs and substance abuse, and to encourage livelihood opportunities and life skill training for youth.

### **Good practices examples**

Good practice examples on accountability and leadership included Iran, where an AGD approach was followed in the design of individual assistance programmes. The Representative in the Republic of Korea worked closely with the protection unit in keeping AGD on the radar of the operation, and advocated for the strengthening of gender-sensitive approaches to refugees in meetings with interlocutors and in contacts with Korea's Women's Development Institute. The Representative in China provided overall guidance to his team on AGD and encouraged them to engage beneficiaries in a constructive dialogue, especially in view of the reduction in assistance packages. The Representative in Australia developed an AGD accountability pilot project in Australia and New Zealand, which was an innovative way to assess the success of host states in integrating AGD considerations in their policies, practices and regulatory frameworks dealing with refugees. The Representative in Pakistan, the country with the lowest level of participatory assessments since the launch of the AGD approach, developed a consultative process precisely to inform the new planning. The Asia and Pacific Region has a number of operations that have been selected as priority countries for strategies on child protection, education and SGBV. This is a further opportunity to develop the implementation of the AGD policy.



## 2.4.4 EUROPE

All the 11 operations in the region completed the AGD Accountability Report. Most of the regional and country offices showed creativity in promoting extensive participatory assessments. For example, in Eastern Europe, the results informed advocacy and fostered dialogues between refugees and local authorities, as well as with hosting communities. Additionally, the Bureau for Europe supported the implementation of two important AGD-related pilot projects in Finland and Malta. Like the Americas, the Bureau for Europe undertook an analysis of trends and issues emerging in the AGD Accountability Reports submitted by all the operations in the region, prepared feedback and undertook follow-up initiatives at the regional and country levels.

### **Finland: refugee women working for refugees**

The objective of the AGD and participatory approach project in Finland was to support the Finnish authorities and NGOs to follow up on the recommendations of the Regional Dialogues that took place in 2011.<sup>2</sup> Through a series of capacity development initiatives at the national, regional, and municipal levels, and in collaborating with NGOs working with refugees, the project has contributed to supporting the institutionalisation of the participation of refugees in the decision-making processes affecting them. The project also sought to further empower some of the women who had participated in the 2011 Dialogue by engaging them as cultural mediators, facilitators and resource persons in capacity development activities.

### **Malta and Georgia: protection through participation**

In Malta, the pilot project identified the specific needs and capacities of persons of concern in order to mainstream an AGD-sensitive approach in service delivery and protection. The project employed an action research methodology with refugee participation that also included capacity development for NGOs and other service providers. Another important initiative was the participatory assessment on human security carried out by the Georgia office, which assessed the effects of restrictions on freedom of movement in South Ossetia, the solutions proposed by residents, and the capacity of residents to implement such solutions. The innovative use of participatory assessments in Europe demonstrates that participation is the starting point for building targeted interventions that are well-grounded and owned by persons of concern. This reflects a careful integration of the community-based protection approach.

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<sup>2</sup> The recommendations are contained in the Report "Protectors, Providers, Survivors: A Dialogue with Refugee Women in Finland", 2011.



## 2.4.5 MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

### **SGBV, a constant challenge**

Of the 16 operations in the region, 15 completed the AGD Accountability Report. Among a variety of serious protection concerns, particularly in the context of the Syrian crisis, the Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa reported that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains one of the most significant and pervasive protection risks faced by refugees, IDPs and other persons of concern in the region. To address this challenge, UNHCR is implementing a multi-sectoral, coordinated and community-based approach to prevent SGBV and respond to the needs of survivors and their families. Case management capacity and referral systems have been steadily enhanced to ensure that response services, including medical and psychosocial services, are accessible, safe and confidential. In Syria, UNHCR enhanced community-based interventions by supporting volunteers trained to identify cases of SGBV to provide services to survivors, and to raise awareness within their communities. Volunteers were selected based on their gender, age and other characteristics in order to reach out to diverse communities more effectively.

### **Children**

The Bureau also reports that the Syrian crisis is relentlessly eroding the protection environment for children. UNHCR is prioritising activities to strengthen national- and community-based child protection systems. Investment in children's learning and protection spaces remain a priority to ensure that a future generation of Syrians is not lost. In order to address some of these issues, UNHCR Lebanon, for instance, is establishing specialised refugee outreach volunteer programmes to provide after-school education support to children. Community centres also provide remedial classes and social activities. In some community centres, youth and adolescents committees are established as a means to enhance the participation of these groups at particular risk.

### **Consolidating the protection response**

The Bureau stressed the struggle faced by operations in the region in trying to link the different global strategies and policies issued by Headquarters. While specialised projects and targeted actions may more effectively address the needs of the population, an exclusive focus on a particular problem and ensuing fragmented interventions may hinder the quality of the global delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance. The feedback from Bureaus on this issue is valuable, and their call for a more integrated approach to operationalise protection needs to be given serious consideration.



## 3. Country Operations and Regional Offices

### 3.1. Representatives' accountability and leadership

As described earlier, the first part of the Plan level AGD Accountability Report provides UNHCR's Representatives the opportunity to report on how they – and their offices in general – have delegated responsibilities vis-à-vis the implementation of the AGD approach. Instead of rating themselves on fixed indicators, managers were asked to provide narrative answers to set questions.

Representatives were asked to report on the existence of a Multi-Functional Team (MFT) in their respective offices. This is an important element of AGD accountability, as it expresses both the willingness of the senior manager to engage – by ensuring that a primary mechanism is in place to discharge his/her AGD responsibilities – and the possibility for the entire office to meaningfully carry out the AGD policy in an operation. Out of 83 reporting country operations, 62 (or 74%) did have an active MFT. The real number, however, may actually be higher than reported, as DRC, Egypt, Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe all conducted participatory assessments in 2013 but did not mention having MFTs. From their reporting, however, it appears that they do work with teams composed of staff from different units and with partners. Two representatives reported that their office do not have MFT. This was the case in Canada, where the legal unit has been expanded to include all staff who undertakes protection activities, and Iran, where participatory assessments with the refugees cannot be conducted.



Secondly, Representatives were asked about their personal engagement in providing leadership and accountability on AGD issues. Only in 24 out of the 83 reports received from country operations did Representatives actually describe their own engagement and concrete actions. Instead, the majority of the reports summarised the activities that the entire office had undertaken in relation to the AGD policy. In a few other cases, Representatives used this section of the Report to describe UNHCR's role in providing leadership within the broader community of stakeholders. "Accountability and Leadership" is, therefore, the section that will require closer follow up and improvement in next years' reporting cycle.

When Representatives did describe their own engagement and related actions, the responses were encapsulated under the following broad categories:

- Creating a working environment that promotes and ensures compliance to AGD core values, which includes achieving gender balance at all functional levels in the office;
- Ensuring that Multi-Functional Teams (or equivalent cross-functional mechanisms) are in place and, often, personally leading them;
- Ensuring that protection risks and solutions are investigated through an on-going dialogue with the persons of concern, most frequently – but not exclusively – through participatory assessments;
- Ensuring that the findings of participatory assessments and other forms of consultation are reflected in planning, implementation and monitoring activities.
- Personally engaging with persons of concern in order to better appreciate the protection risks faced by different groups in a community; and,
- Personally advocating for age, gender and diversity in all contacts, both internally and externally with governmental counterparts, donor representatives, implementing partners and other stakeholders.

A common feature of the Reports submitted by Representatives is the commitment to ensuring a gender balance in staffing. This echoes the Reports by senior managers at Headquarters. This information, provided through the AGD Accountability Report, is consistent with the data concerning actual gender balance in the organisation. According to the statistics provided by the Division of Human Resources, 38% of staff at the global level are female, with a slightly higher ratio of women at the General Services level GS7, where 54% of staff are female, and at the professional P2 level, where 55% of staff are women.

International professional category	Total staff	Male staff	Female staff
<b>D 2 level</b>	15	63%	37%
<b>D 1 level</b>	89	55%	45%
<b>P 5 level</b>	183	58%	42%
<b>P 4 level</b>	564	57%	43%
<b>P 3 level</b>	926	60%	40%

Moreover, several representatives specifically refer to the practice of participatory assessments (PA) with persons of concern in the context of the organisation's broader participatory approach as part of their accountability and leadership. Whilst PA – as reported on through the AGD Accountability Report – is discussed in a later section of this report, it is interesting here to note the importance and visibility given to this activity by most offices.

## 3.2 Organisation-wide accountability

The other sections of the AGD Report at the Plan level address specific population groups - including women, boys and girls, others groups of concern - and one thematic area, SGBV. These sections capture the entire, consolidate outcome of the accountability of all levels of the organisation vis-à-vis the persons of concern with regard to the implementation of the AGD policy. In essence, this accountability consists of fully including an AGD approach in identifying protection problems and implementing solutions.

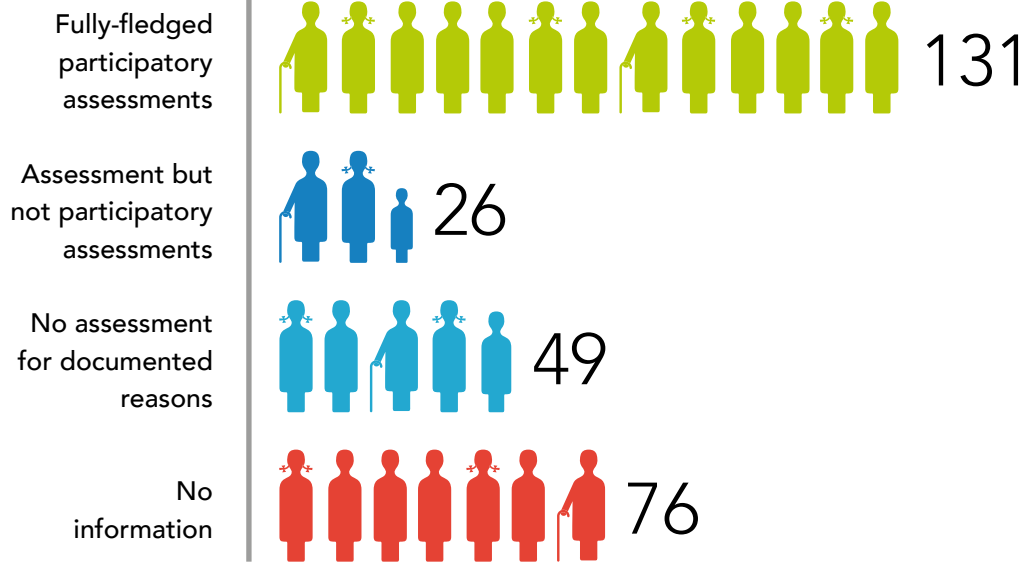
The new reporting system for AGD accountability allows for a thorough analysis of the specific age, gender and diversity-related protection problems faced by persons of concern around the world, and on the range of actions taken by UNHCR and its partners to address them. The fact that these specific sections are now included in Focus, and that reporting on them at the stage of Year End Report is mandatory, allows reporting on AGD to be cross-checked with the selection of results related to impact indicators, and improves the consistency in reporting across operations.

These sections, summarised in the annex to this report, provide a brief description of some of the main problem areas and the solutions adopted. Examples from country operations are provided to both clarify the nature of the problem and to highlight some of the solutions. In order to both broaden the perspective and simultaneously provide more depth, these inputs are cross-referenced with quantitative information provided through two classes of indicators - impact and performance indicators - available through Focus, the organisation's planning and reporting platform. Specific indicators are also linked to three new strategies on the Child Protection, Education and Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). The strategies were implemented through a range of activities in select priority countries, with the following countries implementing all three strategies: Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen. The monitoring and evaluation exercise executed jointly for these strategies offered additional information for the analysis of these specific sections of the AGD report.

## 3.3. Participatory assessments

While the five sections of the AGD Accountability Report discussed above concern the Plan level (the work of a Country Operation or Regional Office), operations in the field were asked to report on participatory assessments at the Population Planning Group (PPG) level. Each operation, therefore, was required to report on a variable number of PPGs – from one to ten – with the majority reporting on two, three or four PPGs. The PPG level of the Report provides information which forms the basis for an analysis into the feature that is likely the main element of accountability concerning the implementation of the AGD approach – which different groups of persons of concern are consulted in-depth on the protection problems they face and on the solutions they propose. The 2013 AGD Accountability Report included a total of 282 Population Planning Groups from 90 country operations and regional offices. In 131 cases (or 46% of the total PPGs) at least one fully-fledged participatory assessment was carried out during 2013.

## PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENTS FOR POPULATION PLANNING GROUPS



In 26 cases, a needs assessment or other investigation was carried out which could not be classified as a fully-fledged participatory assessment. In certain cases, such as the Comprehensive Needs Assessment of IDPs completed in Afghanistan, or the family-level survey of Syrian refugees finalised in Egypt, the operation made efforts to ensure the representation of and participation by different population groups. In other cases, such as, for example, the Livelihoods Mapping conducted by RO Dakar in the Gambia, or the various protection assessments carried out in Sri Lanka, these were altogether different exercises from fully-fledged participatory assessments. In 49 cases, participatory assessment did not take place in 2013, and reasons for this were provided. In some cases, like Jordan, the exercise was postponed until 2014. Libya could not carry out the assessment because of security conditions. Several operations could not conduct a fully-fledged participatory assessment because of a lack of resources. In 76 cases, no information was provided.

In line with the findings of the Participatory Assessment review conducted in 2013, the conclusions of this analysis show that despite their inherent complexity and challenges, Participatory Assessments are generally carried out with real commitment on the part of Multi-Functional Teams in the field, and not perceived merely as a bureaucratic requirement. The consultation part of the participatory process appears to work very well. The problems faced by persons of concern, their capacities and the solutions they propose are investigated and recorded in considerable depth, with a remarkable level of detail, and with full regard to the Age, Gender and Diversity approach adopted by the organisation<sup>3</sup>. This reporting section on participatory assessments at the Population Planning Group (PPG) level will need further attention in future revisions of the AGD Accountability Report. In many cases, in fact, the reporting went beyond what was required and included quantitative data on the number of participants in the focus groups and the recommendations generated by the discussions.

<sup>3</sup> A Review of UNHCR's Participatory Assessments in 2012, December 2013, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/530c4aa74.html>



## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

This report is based largely on the inputs provided at all levels of the organisation to the AGD Accountability Report. It also integrates information from other data sources, including impact and performance indicators in Focus and the Global Strategic Priorities and indicators linked to three new strategies on the Protection of Children, Education and Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence. The global picture emerging from this analysis is consistent with other reviews carried out in the recent past.<sup>4</sup> It describes an organisation which takes its commitment to the Age, Gender and Diversity approach very seriously. UNHCR's AGD policy has become a critical, practical reference, used daily to inform the design and implementation of strategies and programmes at all levels.

The organisation's overall accountability for implementing the AGD approach – including the personal engagement of managers, the practical identification of problems and implementation of solutions with and for the persons of concern – appears fulfilled to a remarkable degree. In most cases, shortcomings appear to be due much more to practical constraints rather than a lack of knowledge of or commitment to the AGD approach. In its first year of implementation, the new AGD Accountability Report has already been well received by field operations and Headquarters. In particular, managers have welcomed the integration of the Report into the organisation's strategic planning and reporting platform. In particular, regional offices appreciated the possibility of reporting on their own AGD-related activities and suggested that, in the future, consolidation of data could be carried out at the regional level. Field operations particularly appreciated the possibility to report on participatory assessments and the opportunities this afford to creating better linkages between participatory assessments and planning and resource allocation decisions.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid; see also UNHCR, *The 2013 Age, Gender and Diversity Survey Report*, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/539016514.html>



The narrative nature of the information provided makes quantitative analysis and reporting quite difficult. This first round of reporting on AGD through the Focus platform has also revealed some gaps in the format of the new AGD Accountability Report, which will be addressed before next year's Report. The analysis of the 2013 data indicates that reporting should be limited to different population groups and should not include thematic subjects such as SGBV (which was reported across all sections of the AGD Report as it is relevant, in different ways, for all population groups). The AGD Report demonstrates that themes such as SGBV have reached – owing to the respective organisation-wide strategies – such a level of visibility that substantive reporting on them emerges from end-year reporting on population groups.

In addition, the new AGD Report does not allow for comparisons with the results of previous years' AGD Accountability Frameworks and is linked to the new Global Strategic Priorities (GSP), not yet applicable in 2013. Therefore, a new set of baseline data for the groups analysed by the AGD Report and linked to the GSP will have to be established in 2014. The Report's current, essentially narrative-based format that allows considerable breadth and depth in the reporting also needs to be balanced with quantitative data.

In order to capitalise on the strengths and address some of the weaknesses, the following revisions to the AGD Accountability Report format are being considered:

- Detail specific content in the narrative information provided in each section of the Report;
- Re-introduce, along with the current narrative sections, quantitative questions;
- Create more direct, and possibly automatic, links between the different sections of the Report and relevant Focus indicators; and,
- Limit reporting to different population groups and omit separate thematic sections.



## 5. Annex: Thematic Sections in Detail

It is apparent from the thematic sections in the AGD Accountability Reports that operations are working directly with persons of concern, recognising that this is essential in order to identify protection gaps and to develop protection-based programmatic content and solutions. The thematic sections of the AGD Accountability Reports demonstrate that operations recognise the importance of working directly with persons of concern to identify protection gaps and to develop protection-based programmatic content and solutions. In particular, in non-camp contexts, outreach and continuous, meaningful contact with persons of concern is systematised and given priority. The thematic sessions - focusing on women, boys and girls, other groups of concern and SGBV - highlight challenges, solutions and operational linkages.

For the section on Women, in 2013, operations reported several key protection challenges, including women's active participation and leadership, livelihoods, access to documentation, SGBV and provision of sanitary materials. For the section on Girls and Boys, operations highlighted access to education, recreational activities and documentation as some of the major protection issues. For the section on other groups of concern, operations highlighted the need for targeted and community-based outreach support for older persons and persons with disabilities, and the multi-faceted protection challenges facing LGBTI persons after displacement. The SGBV-related protection issues presented by operations included harmful traditional practices, barriers to accessing justice, and survival sex, with some operations reporting on multi-sectoral programmes aiming at preventing and responding to SGBV in broader terms.

For each of the issues raised, best practices and challenges were presented. In conclusion, the AGD Accountability Report is, in this sense, an opportunity for field operations to present the main protection issues raised by persons of concern during participatory assessments, as well as to assess how the organisation responds to these problems. It is apparent from the AGD Accountability Reports that there is a need to further strengthen programmatic and operational linkages between protection areas to increase impact by jointly addressing needs and gaps and by planning mutually reinforcing interventions. The following discussions serve as summaries and case studies in each thematic area, as reported by senior UNHCR managers.

## 5.1. Women

Reports from operations pertaining to protection challenges facing women can broadly be classified into three categories: involvement in participatory assessments and leadership initiatives related to protection; access to livelihood opportunities with fair wages and day-care services for children; documentation to reduce vulnerability to SGBV and to ensure access to employment; and, access to justice for women who have experienced SGBV. Operation reported implementing several programmes to mitigate these challenges, including the following: leadership training specifically for women; strong affirmative action for women on refugee representative committees and in refugee leadership structures; business management and financial literacy training; affirmative action for women in employment opportunities and access to land for crop cultivation; day-care facilities for children; and, the introduction of mobile registration teams.

The vast majority of operations highlight that the subordinated role of women in society is primarily due to patriarchal attitudes and deeply-rooted stereotypes regarding roles and responsibilities. Across the world, both in emergencies and in protracted operations, when working with IDPs, refugees and stateless persons, UNHCR, through multifunctional teams, consults with women and girls using, among other tools, participatory assessments in order to better understand their specific needs, identify the capacities within the communities and ensure that their priorities form the basis for multi-year protection strategies. Japan, for example, highlighted that the number of women participating in assessments has increased over the last couple of years, probably due to an increasing awareness in communities that such assessments serve as opportunities to record and address the concerns of both men and women. On the other hand, some operations, such as Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, stressed that during participatory assessments, women often refer to problems pertinent to the whole family without stipulating their specific needs, which they considered less important. In Somaliland, where married women are denied participation in leadership committees by their spouses, women have the opportunity to raise their concerns during participatory assessments.

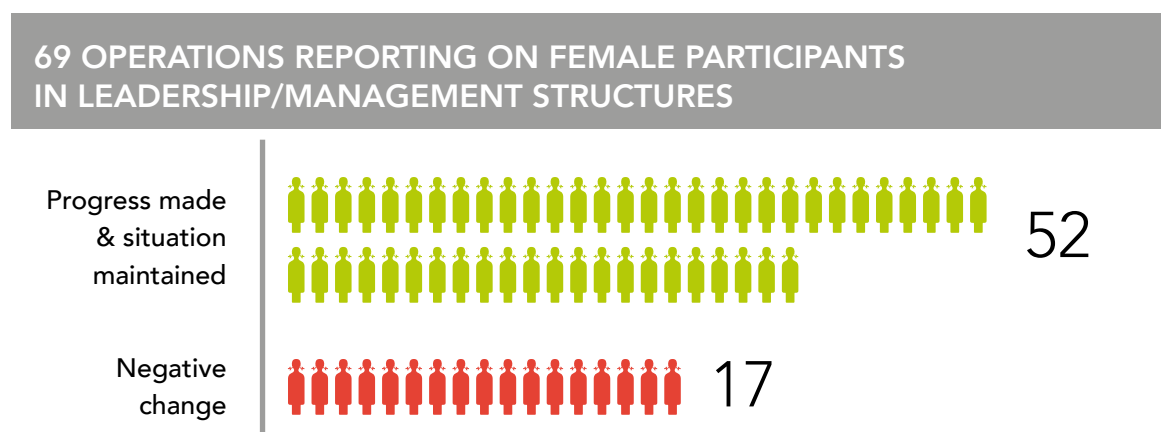
UNHCR is accountable to women and to their challenges and concerns, and should respond to the issues identified by them. The AGD Accountability Report is, in this sense, an opportunity for operations to highlight (a) the challenges identified by women, (b) how these challenges are being addressed, and, (c) the reasons that such challenges are not being addressed, if applicable.

### Participation and Leadership

The complex nature of promoting gender equality often hampers UNHCR's ability to ensure meaningful and equal female participation in leadership structures. Lack of confidence and deeply-rooted gender stereotypes impose challenges in reaching equal representation of women in leadership positions. At the same time, once advancements are made, the active participation of women has a direct and positive impact on their well-being, on their livelihood and on the protection of their families and communities. Women's participation in decision-making structures is the issue that is most often raised by women in participatory assessments across the world. More than half of UNHCR's operations raised this issue in their AGD Accountability Reports. The important goal of promoting gender mainstreaming by working with men and boys to cultivate behavioural change and positive masculinities was also often raised.

Many operations stress that despite their concerted efforts to improve women’s participation, they continue to experience difficulties, and that innovative ideas are needed. In rural areas of Azerbaijan, and in many other areas where UNHCR is working, it is generally expected that women and girls spend most of their time at home with a heavy burden of domestic responsibilities, without opportunities for participating in community affairs. This situation further contributes to reinforcing women’s social isolation and reducing their direct influence in decision-making activities concerning their lives. Some operations also highlighted the multiple effects that a lack of participation can have on access to services and information. To address protection issues related to women’s active participation, operations reported a number of ways through which they support and encourage women’s participation in both formal and informal community structures. Across the world, operations systematically involved women in refugee committees. In some operations, UNHCR made it mandatory to have at least 50% women representation in refugee leadership structures and earmarked certain leadership positions for women. While women are participating in different committees – for example, pertaining to food distribution, child protection, neighbourhood watch team, and parent teacher associations - the presence of women community leaders is still fairly limited.

Recognising that the presence of women in meetings does not necessarily entail active participation, many operations have provided leadership training for women, aimed at empowering them to take on leadership positions. In addition, recognising the difficulties faced by women in leadership positions, Colombia has partnered with the government, local women’s organisations, OHCHR and UN Women in order to support women leaders who face risks because of their community work and who claim their land under the land restitution. In Ethiopia, participatory assessments showed a concern among women that male refugee leaders dominated the refugee representative committees. This was changed through re-elections in 2013, resulting in 50% of the refugee representatives being women. In Jordan, some women stressed their distrust in the street leaders. The operation is addressing this concern by ensuring that under the governance plan for Zaatari, women will be adequately represented in the committees for each district in the camp. The extensive work undertaken by UNHCR together with partners and communities is confirmed by an analysis of the percentage of women in leadership structures, which indicates a positive change from 2012 to 2013 in the vast majority of the operations that reported on this indicator, as depicted in the graph below. In 52 out of 69 situations where operations reported on this indicator, progress was made or the situation maintained.



The importance of women’s active participation not only in decision making structures at the community level, but also in overall peace building efforts, is highlighted by the

fact that during 2013, several operations (Georgia and Saudi Arabia) supported the Government in the development of National Action Plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Recognising that specific measures are needed in order to empower women and address their specific needs, some operations have also specifically targeted women during distributions, which have had positive results on the overall welfare of the family. In Eritrea, for instance, cash transfers were made directly to refugee women particularly at risk in order to improve food security. Women reported an increase in their overall food security compared to earlier when they were selling more than 50% of their food distributions.

## **Livelihood and Day-care Centres**

While the majority of UNHCR's persons of concern face difficulties in accessing livelihood opportunities, many operations reported this as a problem particularly affecting women. In some cases, women are, for social or structural reasons, completely deprived of the opportunity for formal work, which is a contributing factor to their marginalisation and isolation from economic and social life. Many single women across the world stated that they are unable to work because they have difficulties finding a solution for day-care for their children – a challenge exacerbated by the fact that displaced women often lack the community support systems to which they might have otherwise had access in their communities of origin. When women are employed, they are often confined to low-paying and precarious jobs.

Many operations aim to promote livelihoods and enhance women's empowerment through skill development. These initiatives include literacy courses, vocational training and income generation activities specifically targeting women. Women are also specifically employed in positions which are crucial for the welfare and protection of the refugee or IDP community. In Afghanistan, women were offered business management and financial literacy courses, both improving their skills and their courage to establish their own business, and improving the financial situation of vulnerable families. In Algeria, women were offered courses in information technology and language training. In Angola, and based on proposals by refugees themselves, courses focused on information technology, sewing, cooking, and hairdressing. In Costa Rica, women reportedly represented a total of 70% of participants in livelihoods training initiatives. In Namibia, women were prioritised in the access to employment opportunities, while in Zimbabwe single women were included in the irrigation scheme, resulting in the allocation of land and agricultural inputs to hundreds of women to cultivate crops to supplement their rations. In India, several day-care centres, including two run by the refugee community from Myanmar, provided playgroup and early childhood education facilities to more than 400 refugee and asylum-seeking children. The day-care centres allowed refugee women to work while providing a safe and recreational space for their children. A similar approach was adopted in Malaysia, where community based day-care programmes were established together with programmes allowing women to work from home or in groups.

## **Documentation**

The link between employment and documentation was raised by a number of operations, highlighting that the lack of valid documents was a cause of unemployment, exploitation and harassment. While this generally affects all persons of concern, women are often especially vulnerable, as a lack of documentation hinders their ability to report SGBV incidents, thereby putting them further at risk. Operations further highlighted how



documentation is closely linked with access to accommodation, health and social services, and is particularly problematic for single female-headed household. For instance, Brazil highlights how delays in documentation and work permits are particularly of concern to households headed by single females, who are often especially vulnerable to exploitation in light of the urgency to financially support their families. In South Africa, undocumented refugee women who are raped are unable to report the crime to the police.

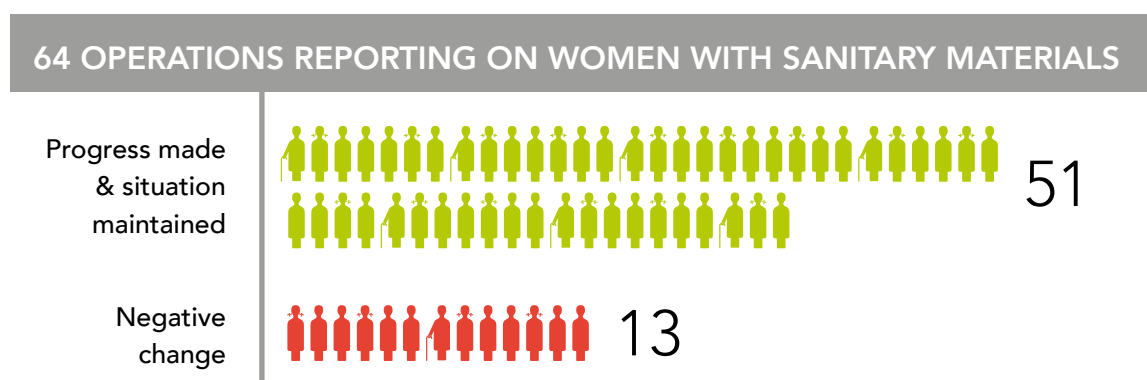
UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, implements a variety of solutions to address the challenges regarding documentation problems. In Congo, Kosovo<sup>5</sup>, Montenegro and Mozambique, for example, 100% of refugee women were individually registered and given personal ID documents, which resulted in an improved protection environment; other operations prioritise single female-headed households in the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process. In Libya, in the absence of a national asylum law and other relevant administrative procedures, UNHCR ensured that refugee women were registered and issued relevant documentation. This documentation process is conducted by a mobile registration team, including in detention centres.

## Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Participatory assessments also elaborated on the effects of SGBV on women and their protection. In the AGD Accountability Reports, many operations highlighted access to justice as a central challenge for women who have experienced SGBV. This challenge is discussed further in the thematic section below pertaining to SGBV.

## Sanitary Materials

The lack of availability of sanitary supplies was also stressed as a challenge to the welfare of women. The positive effect of the concerted efforts to improve women’s access to sanitary supplies is confirmed by the fact that in 51 out of 64 situations, where operations specifically reported on the indicator, there was a positive change in women’s access to sanitary materials, as depicted in the graph below.



<sup>5</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Children from a family with ten kids that live in asylum centre Winterswijk until they have found permanent residence. In the asylum centre in Winterswijk, refugees and asylum seekers that are allowed to settle in the Netherlands are being prepared for life in Dutch society, with amongst others, language education and computer skills. © UNHCR/ Peter de Ruiter



## 5.2. Girls and Boys

For girls and boys, the primary challenges reported by operations can broadly be characterised as follows: the heightened risk of exploitation facing unaccompanied and separated children, including forced labour and sexual abuse; the lack of access to education, including qualified teachers, post-primary education, language barriers, and child labour; the lack of recreational activities, particularly for girls; and, the heightened risk of detention and access to basic services facing undocumented children. UNHCR operations reported a number of strategies to address these concerns, including the following: implementing different participatory assessment methodologies for different age groups; constantly monitoring school enrolment and quality; supporting community mobilisation when State actors deny access to secondary education; providing basic life skills and vocational training in collaboration with partners; providing gender-specific recreational opportunities, including sports programmes that permit refugee children to occasionally leave the camp; and, implementing a Best Interests Determination system to facilitate appropriate durable solutions for children. Similarly, UNHCR operations reported on what is being done to respond to these problems, highlighting programmatic and operational linkages particular between the three strategies for Child Protection, Education and SGBV.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *A Framework for the Protection of Children*, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fe875682.html>  
*UNHCR's 2012-2016 Education Strategy*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5149ba349.html>  
*Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy*, June 2011, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e01ffeb2.html>



UNHCR and its partners support the rights of all girls and boys to participate and express their opinions in all matters affecting their lives in accordance with their gender, age, diversity, maturity, and capacity. UNHCR makes concerted efforts to use different participatory methodologies for different ages. In Bangladesh, for instance, one participatory assessment was conducted with children between 5 and 11 years old; two with adolescents aged 12-17; and three with youth from 18 to 24 years old.

## Unaccompanied and separated children

Operations reported that unaccompanied and separated girls and boys face a greater risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, military recruitment, child labour, lack of access to school and basic assistance, and detention, even if they are accompanied by members of their extended family. It also appears that unaccompanied and separated adolescents may find it more difficult to find foster families for them than for younger children. Some of them also end up bearing responsibilities for younger siblings and might be exposed to discrimination and abuse.

## Access to Education<sup>7</sup>

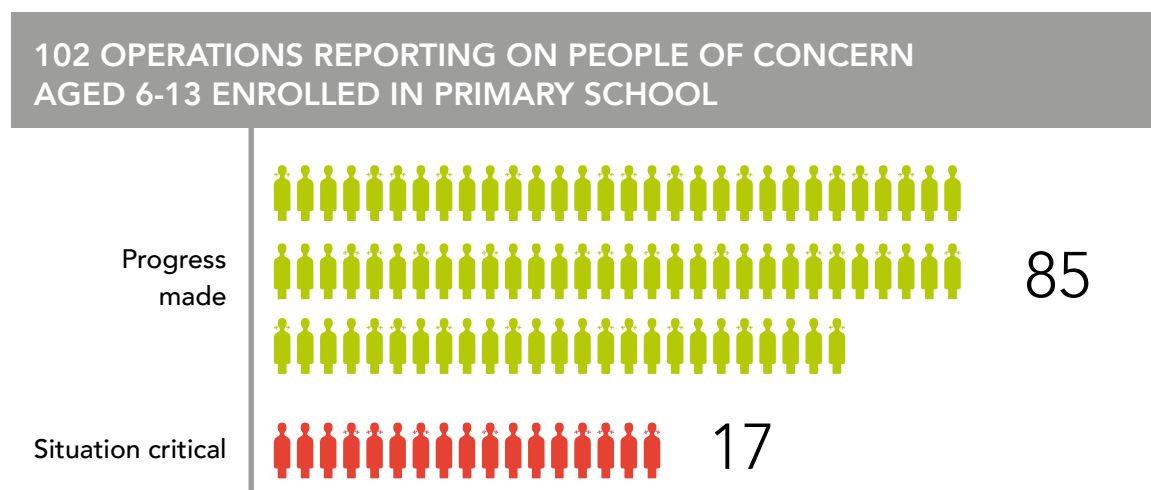
By far, the most important challenge for boys and girls, reported by virtually all operations in the AGD Accountability Reports, is access to education. This crucial area of concern includes various separate yet interlinked challenges, including the following: a lack of schools or separate classrooms; a lack of teachers or unqualified teachers; a lack of teaching materials or school furniture; schools being located too far from where the children live; education being offered in a language that children do not speak; and, host governments providing only primary education to IDP and refugee children. Moreover, operations highlighted other pertinent factors affecting education, including the following: children having to work to support their families; families not understanding the value of education or not having the means to pay for it; and, girls not being allowed by their families to get an education. It is apparent from the AGD Accountability Reports that in order to address these difficulties, highlighted by communities in participatory assessments, UNHCR works with partners around the world to improve education access and learning achievement, focusing on the learning environment, teaching quality, early childhood development and accelerated learning programmes. It also strives to increase access to post-primary education and training, as well as to expand tertiary education opportunities.

An example of this range of interventions comes from Kyrgyzstan, where UNHCR, through partner organisations, carries out constant monitoring of school enrolment and optimal access to education among refugees and asylum seekers; provides support to schools in the form of small cash grants and school supplies; and, through implementing partners, provides legal assistance and supports community mobilisation in situations in which administrations neglect the rights of refugee children to access secondary education. Various education partners have provided informal and non-formal education, basic life

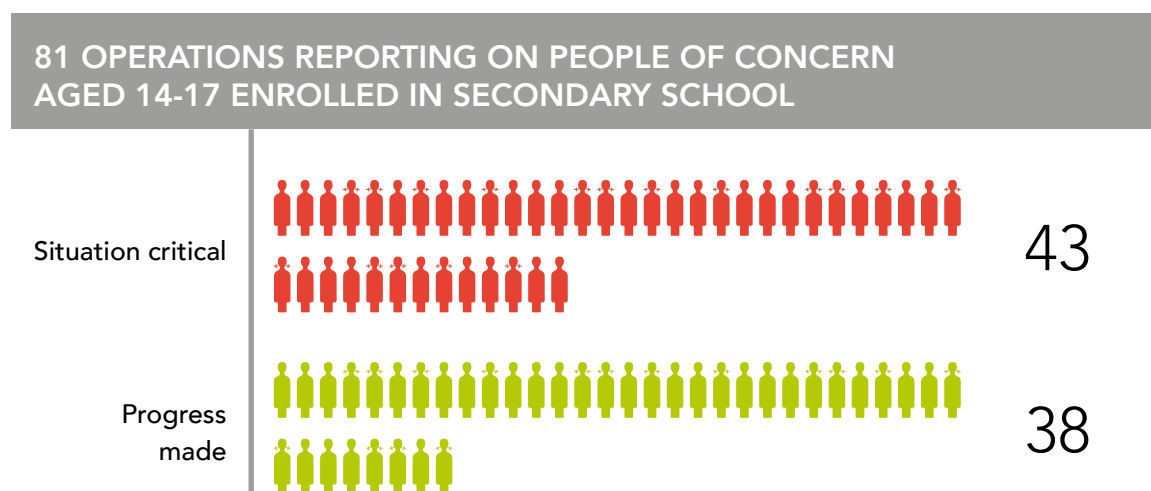
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<sup>7</sup> UNHCR's 2012-2016 Education Strategy, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5149ba349.html>

skills, vocational training, and recreational activities to over 39,000 adolescent girls and boys as well as youth in host communities and the Zaatari camp. UNICEF, together with Save the Children Jordan, Save the Children International, UNHCR and IRD launched an extensive back-to-school campaign in the Zaatari camp and urban areas in order to encourage children to register for and attend school. The back-to-school campaign involved the following key components: extensive focus group discussions; involvement of the community-based child protection committees; and messaging through the child and youth friendly spaces and playgrounds, including through messages designed to address a number of the reasons for the lack of school attendance cited by parents and children. During registration, UNHCR staff also informed children and families about education services available in the camp. The Community Services helpdesk also provides more detailed information on schools available for each respective age group. The extensive work undertaken by UNHCR together with partners and communities is confirmed by an analysis of the percentage of children (age 6 – 13) enrolled in primary school, which indicates a positive change from 2012 to 2013 in 85 out of 102 situations, where operations reported on this indicator.



An analysis of the percentage of persons of concern aged 14-17 enrolled in secondary education shows that the situation is critical in 43 out of 81 situations, where operations reported on this indicator. UNHCR has set itself challenging standards for secondary education which many national education systems also struggle to attain. Criticality levels indicated in the graph below should be considered within this context.



## The Right to Play

The second most frequently reported challenge, highlighted by operations across the world in their AGD Accountability Reports, is a general lack of recreational activities, not only for children, but also for youth. This was highlighted as an obstacle to psychological well-being and development. Furthermore, the limited opportunities available for recreational activities tend to be mostly for boys, with girls excluded. Girls in all age groups often spend most of their time outside school in their homes, and generally do not feel that they have any opportunity to play or participate in activities in their spare time. Very few of the available activities in communities are considered acceptable for girls, and in many contexts, it is simply not considered appropriate for girls to go to sports arenas or internet clubs where boys gather.

This particular problem was addressed, for example, by female UNHCR staff in Afghanistan. In response, monthly sessions of Women's Theatre Project were conducted for girls and women. The topics discussed in each session related to understanding the concept of human rights, sex and gender, women's issues in the community, SGBV, among others. More generally, all around the world, UNHCR and partners are active in increasing access to recreational activities, particularly sports. That was the case, for example, in Algeria, where a sizeable donation of sporting equipment for football, volleyball and basketball was secured from the national Olympic Committee, and was distributed to all schools and youth centres serving the refugee population. In Botswana, children of diverse nationalities, religions and cultures enjoy friendly spaces at the youth centre, where they have access to life skills, indoor recreational activities and enjoy their right to play. Ten youth volunteers and community mobilisers work with youth and children in the camp. Netball and football teams in the camp were successfully assisted to register in the national league, and their participation gave refugee players an opportunity to leave the camp and interact with others.

## Documentation

Problems with documentation were also frequently reported as having a great impact on child protection. In particular, the issuing of birth certificates or notifications for refugee or IDPs new born babies appears often lacking, mostly because national systems are not in place or not functioning, but also because families are not aware of the need to register children at birth. In some cases, when mothers deliver at home, the child falls through the cracks of the regular registration process, which is often closely connected with the health system, wherein the child is immediately registered after birth. Lack of documentation also poses barriers to access to education and negatively affects the number of children in detention. These situations put children at further risk of exploitation. An analysis of the percentage of children under 12 months old who have been issued birth certificates by the authorities show that in almost half of the situations, where operations reported on the indicator there has been no change or even a negative change. As depicted in the graph below obstacles to birth certification are still faced by a number of operations. The reluctance of governments to register refugee children and the lack of a permanent registrar's office in camps remain some of the main causes of delays in birth registration.

In Libya, the main concern for children and adolescents - in particular unaccompanied and separated children - was the lack of official documentation. Children were found in detention due to their parents' irregular movement and the government's non-recognition of their asylum status. In response, UNHCR advocated their right to asylum and the

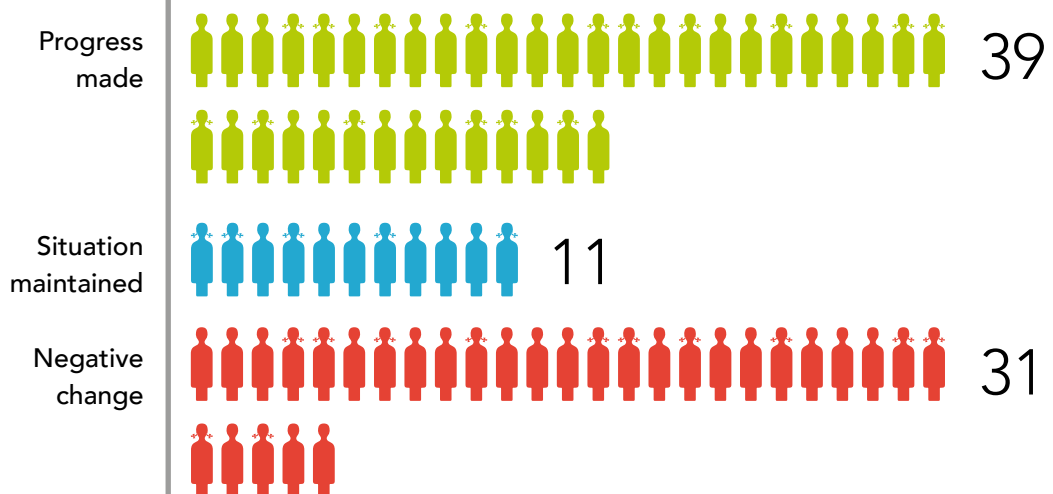
## 46 OPERATIONS REPORTING ON CHILDREN UNDER 12 MONTHS OLD WHO HAVE BEEN ISSUED WITH BIRTH CERTIFICATES



state’s obligation (a) to provide protection, (b) to cease any attempts of deportation, and (c) to release of all minors and their caregivers. Upon their release, UNHCR ensured their registration, provision of services and the identification of care givers within their respective communities. In addition, a Best Interest Determination system was established to facilitate durable solutions. In order to address these concerns in Syria, all refugee children without proper documentation are provided legal counselling, assistance, and close follow-up to ensure that they have obtained proper documentation. Moreover, Best Interest Assessments are conducted for girls and boys facing particular protection risks.

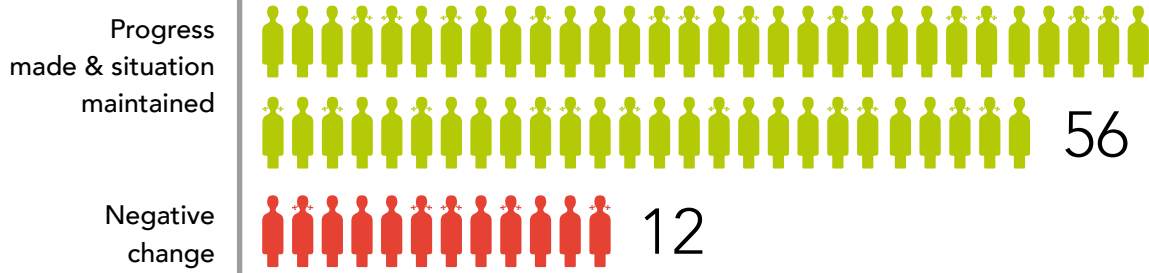
Best Interest Assessments and Determinations are essential tools for determining the needs and managing the care of individual children, as well as putting durable solutions in place through making informed and often life changing determinations. An analysis of the percentage of unaccompanied and separated children for whom a best interest determination process has been initiated or completed depicts that progress has been made in 39 out of 81 situations, where operations have reported on this indicator. Where decreases have occurred they appear generally to be due to a combination of challenges such as increases in the arrival and identification of unaccompanied and separated children, new influxes of refugees and operational constraints.

## 81 OPERATIONS REPORTING ON UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN FOR WHOM A BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION PROCESS HAS BEEN INITIATED OR COMPLETED



An analysis of the percentage of children of concern with specific needs who are identified and assisted depicts that the progress have been made in 56 out of 68 situations, where operations have reported on this indicator.

## 68 OPERATIONS REPORTING ON CHILDREN OF CONCERN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS ARE IDENTIFIED AND ASSISTED



### 5.3. Other Groups of Concern

Operations reported that ‘other groups of concern,’ including the elderly, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, and persons with HIV/AIDS, face a host of distinct challenges. The reported challenges include, but are not limited to, the following: limited access to specialised healthcare; limited participation in assessments; a heightened risk of abuse by their community in displacement settings, including by family members; limited integration into decision-making bodies; and, limited UNHCR budgets to address specific needs. Actions taken by UNHCR operations to ameliorate the situation facing ‘other groups of concern’ entail some of the following initiatives: working closely with specialised partner organisations in camp settings; identifying and registering persons with specific needs through partners, community outreach workers, and UNHCR’s registration system, ProGres and ensuring priority resettlement, where displacement conditions are particularly unfavourable in countries of asylum.

About one third of the AGD Accountability Reports focused on the specific needs of older persons and persons with disabilities and how operations addressed these challenges. More so than in other sections of the reports, operations point to the fact that they can often only cover the basic needs of ‘other persons of concern,’ due to budget restrictions.

Around the world, operations explored the challenges faced by other groups of concern - through, for example, participatory assessments - and implemented specific solutions to address them. In Liberia, in 2013, elderly persons constituted 10% of the total number of persons of concern who participated in the participatory assessments, and persons with disabilities represented 14%. However, in many operations, persons with disabilities, older persons or persons belonging to a specific minority group were simply considered in their respective age and gender groups, and no specific focus group discussion was held to address other aspects of their minority status. Kyrgyzstan reported, along with many other operations, that it appears that persons from other groups of concern generally prefer to report their concerns via individual meetings, and not through participatory assessments. Meanwhile, the importance of including minorities in assessments was highlighted by the AGD report from Ethiopia. UNHCR discovered that the Kunama minority group was facing significant security concerns from the host community due to a lack of grazing land. The UNHCR office, together with the government and partners, initiated conflict resolutions committees, which ensured that the land issue was resolved.



Thousands flee the IDP site and surrounding area in Kibati, north Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on Friday, November 7, 2008. Gunfire was heard near the IDP site causing a panic leaving a steady stream of IDPs heading south towards the provincial capital Goma. © UNHCR / P. Taggart

## Working with partners

Many operations highlighted the constraints imposed by the lack of suitable and specialised implementing partners when working with other groups of concern. As an example of the importance of considering new partnerships in order to address the needs of persons with additional concerns, the approach adopted by the operation in Brazil should be highlighted. Given the rise in the number of persons of concern of various religions, particularly Congolese Catholics and Pentecostals and Syrian Christian orthodox and Muslims, in 2013, UNHCR Brazil worked closely with its implementing partners to strengthen its partnership with religious leaders and faith-based organisations. Through these partnerships, partners were able to scale up their services and the improved interfaith work proved crucial in attending to the specific needs of persons of concern of various faiths.

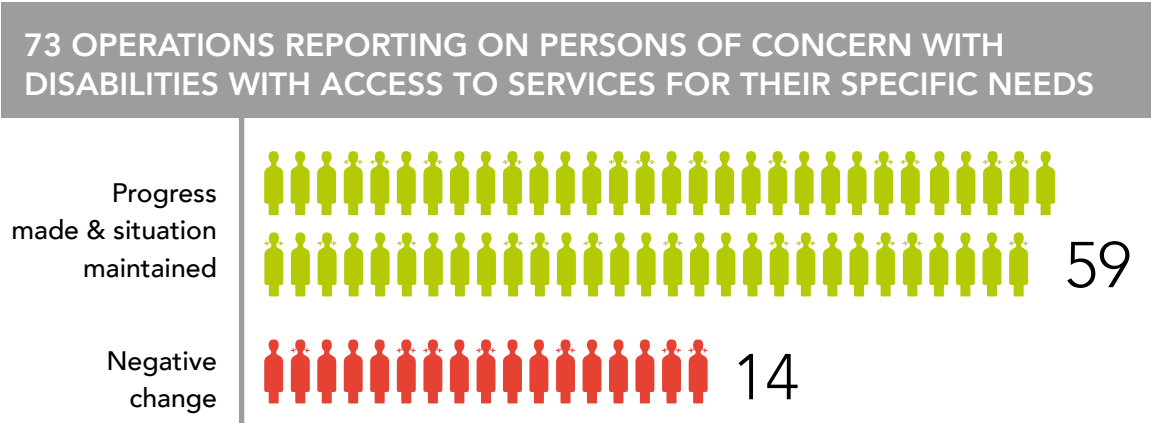
## Community Outreach

Across the world - for example, in Afghanistan, Egypt, Eritrea, Syria, Lebanon and South Sudan - UNHCR is working closely with implementing partners, often through community outreach workers, volunteers, and UNHCR's registration system, *ProGres*,<sup>8</sup> in order to identify persons with specific needs to ensure that they can be prioritised to receive

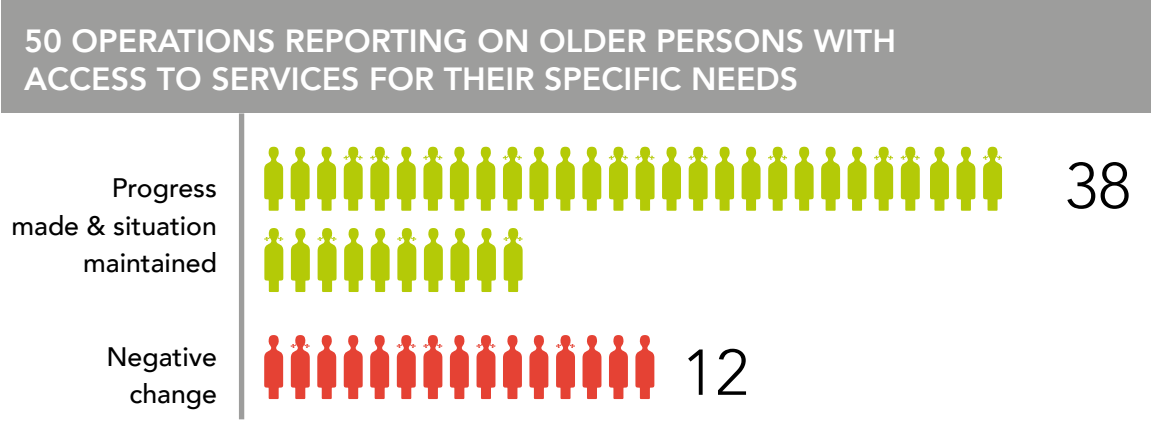
<sup>8</sup> *proGres* is a standardized system for refugee registration whereby refugees are registered systematically. Registration including recording, verifying, and updating of information of people of concern to UNHCR is done to improve their protection and so that UNHCR can ultimately find durable solutions.

specific services. Often, these groups include older persons, single female-headed households and persons with disabilities. In many operations, persons with specific needs were primarily assisted with in-kind cash assistance, or were given priority in service delivery such as food, NFI distribution as well as livelihood opportunities.

In Liberia, UNHCR has established collaboration mechanisms with the national institutions for rehabilitation to support persons living with disability. In Egypt, recipients of cash assistance were selected based on 14 eligibility criteria, which included persons with disabilities, persons with serious medical conditions, older refugees, victims of violence and torture and female-headed households. Payments were distributed monthly together with a winterisation program targeting vulnerable individuals. In Syria, UNHCR, through partners, conducted participatory assessments with IDPs. Based on their needs, community centres then developed programs and services for specific groups, including the elderly and persons with disabilities. In Georgia, after a need identified during participatory assessments, the operation provided wheelchairs to people with disabilities, obtaining them from a refugee-run workshop. In Turkey, camp management has developed some good practices in transferring persons with disabilities to specific sites that are more suitable. Moreover, persons with disabilities are accessing social services that are available for Turkish citizens, which include disability care allowance for the whole family. As depicted in the graph below, there has been an improvement in access to services for persons with disabilities in 59 out of 73 situations, where operations reported on this indicator.



Moreover, analysing the indicator for older people’s access to services for their specific needs, a positive change was reported in 38 out of 50 situations, where operations reported on this indicator.





Mwavita Mlasi studies the books in the cramped, 2-room office of the camp Executive Committee. As Vice President, she says she feels powerful here, because this is where she helps people find solutions to their problems. © UNHCR/S. Camia

## Education for Children with Disabilities

Many operations highlighted the specific concern with regard to education for children with disabilities. In Cameroon, refugee children with disabilities receive psychosocial, medical, material and financial support and are enrolled in specialised schools; however, in many operations, this is not a sustainable option. In Azerbaijan, while children with disabilities are not hindered from attending school as a matter of government policy, very few children with disabilities attend school and are very isolated as a result.

## Decision-Making

From the AGD Accountability Reports it is apparent that, in general, there is a lack of integration of other groups of concern in decision-making bodies. The Regional Office in Dakar, for instance, highlighted that the participation of other groups of concern has to be strengthened in decision-making structures, participatory assessments and community-based activities. To address the inclusion of other groups in the decision-making structures, the operation in Yemen particularly encouraged the participation of minority groups in the upcoming urban refugee election in Sanaa.



## Gender

The importance of recognising the different challenges for people with specific needs depending on their gender was also highlighted by a number of operations. In Lebanon, Syrian male refugees living with injuries or disabilities reported that they are targeted at checkpoints due to a perceived association as having fought in Syria. In Pakistan, participatory assessments revealed that men with disabilities face particular challenges due to their culturally ascribed roles as protector and provider, and are considered a burden to the family when they are no longer able to carry out these roles. It is in line with this that many operations make a concerted effort to include people with disabilities in livelihood programmes. Moreover, in many operations, people with disabilities have formed associations. In Nepal, UNHCR, in collaboration with a national disability organisation, formed groups for women with disabilities for the purposes of empowerment, recognising the link between the risk of SGBV and people living with disabilities.

In many operations, UNHCR is working with persons of concern who have become disabled during their displacement. In Libya, for instance, some persons of concern suffer from mental disorders due to the harsh and deplorable conditions in detention. The lack of protection documentation was one of their main concerns. UNHCR ensured the registration and documentation of all persons with disabilities and elderly persons, both in general and in the detention centres, and advocated for the government to release all vulnerable persons and explore durable solutions. In South Africa, some persons of concern have become disabled in the host country as a result of severe xenophobic violence.

## LGBTI Persons

At least one third of the AGD reports focused on the multiple challenges facing sexual minorities. Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons are forced to flee their countries of origin due to persecution. During flight and after arrival in countries of asylum and resettlement, LGBTI individuals often continue to be subject to the same abuse from which they fled. On top of experiencing specific difficulties during the registration and refugee status determination phase, LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers face widespread discrimination when accessing housing, employment, education, health, psychological care and other social services in host countries. Many operations highlight the importance of maintaining confidentiality when working with LGBTI persons to avoid further discrimination. Mexico, for instance, mentioned how no separate focus group discussion was organised with LGBTI persons to avoid unwanted labelling and further persecution.

Some operations, like Lebanon, concentrate on identification using their extensive networks of refugee outreach volunteers, and provide training on operational LGBTI guidelines to volunteers, registration officers and field staff. A large number of operations highlighted the importance of providing support to government authorities in the refugee status determination process in relation to the identification of LGBTI persons to ensure quality in the credibility assessment and analysis of Country of Origin information. Costa Rica, for instance, stressed that they have previously carried out training on LGBTI guidelines for eligibility officers, and in 2013, international protection was granted to several individuals on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Similarly, the regional office in Stockholm provided training to the Danish Immigration Service on LGBTI claims and intervened in individual cases leading to certain LGBTI claimants being granted Convention refugee status. The operation in Spain is working closely

with the relevant authorities to ensure the adequate identification of protection needs. Many operations engaged in advocacy activities, often through the 16 Days of Activism, and in certain cases, owing to a particularly difficult local context vis-à-vis LGBTI issues, assistance for resettlement was provided. Generally, many operations include LGBTI cases in the overview of profiles for resettlement, given the lack of effective protection environments for this group. Where this is possible - in Canada for example - advocacy also led to organisations serving LGBTI populations to extend their services to LGBTI refugees. In order to address the specific needs of other persons of concern, it is vital to ensure that UNHCR's internal procedures are fully AGD sensitive. For example, in Argentina, the operation highlighted how the existing SOPs for SGBV are primarily focused on adult women in urban areas, and thus do not include referral mechanisms and specific information for LGBTI survivors of SGBV.

## HIV/AIDS

Many operations also highlighted the importance of a heightened focus on HIV. In Canada, for example, all new arrivals are provided with contact information of confidential and free HIV testing services and community HIV emergency help lines offering services in eight different languages. In Mozambique, refugees and asylum seekers have access to the national HIV/AIDS programs as citizens. The main challenge continues to be stigmatisation, which has made it difficult to create support groups; furthermore, it has led to a situation where testing and counselling is often avoided at the camp level, which may represent a risk to the continuation of treatment.

## 5.4 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Despite an increased awareness of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and the efforts to fight it, a disturbing number of UNHCR's persons of concern continue to face this horrific violation of their rights, largely due to gender inequalities that persist around the world. The term SGBV refers to a wide range of harmful acts that are perpetrated against one person's will based on socially ascribed gender roles. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life<sup>9</sup>.

Although SGBV has its own section in the AGD Accountability Report, the multi-sectoral nature of SGBV prevention and response was reflected throughout all the sections of the AGD Accountability Reports by virtually all operations and regional offices. SGBV is massively reported in the section on women, as women are the primary – but by no means the only – survivors. It is also reported in the section on children, because of the disturbingly frequent practice of child marriage. Finally, SGBV is often mentioned as one of the many protection issues facing sexual minorities, both before and during displacement. Although SGBV appears as a central protection area across different population groups, and despite the advancements made in order to incorporate SGBV prevention and response in programmes through a multi-dimensional manner, the scale of the problem remains deeply disturbing.

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<sup>9</sup> IASC. 2005. *Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/439474c74.html> This definition is also based on the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)

Patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted gender stereotypes contribute to perpetuating this horrific human rights violation. The promotion of gender equality as an integral component of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity approach was widely mentioned as a critical issue for SGBV prevention and response throughout the AGD Accountability Reports. By looking at the submissions, it is apparent that the solutions identified by managers in order to address SGBV protection problems represent much of what their offices do in AGD terms.

## **Under-Reporting of SGBV**

Across the world, from urban to camp settings, both in emergencies and in protracted situations, UNHCR applies a participatory approach. By consulting with persons of all ages and backgrounds, UNHCR aims at better understanding their specific needs, identifying their strengths and capacities of mobilisation within their communities, and ensuring that their priorities are incorporated throughout the programme cycle. Despite the application of participatory approaches and the efforts to set-up reporting mechanisms and response services, there is widespread consensus that the problem is severely under-reported. Afghanistan, for instance, mentions that women are afraid to report any legal dispute and domestic violence, and are particularly afraid to report violence to police. Similarly, Central African Republic reports that women and girls do not report violence because of a lack of awareness of their own rights. Kyrgyzstan adds a nuance by reporting that, due to fears for the future of children and lack of self-reliance opportunities, many survivors are reluctant to report domestic violence. Although under-reporting is a problematic issue and is deeply rooted in gender stereotypes, UNHCR believes that consultations with SGBV survivors are crucial for identifying SGBV-related protection issues as well as for involving communities in the search for solutions that affect their lives.

This participatory approach is also a way of being accountable to the populations UNHCR serves. The AGD Accountability Report is, in this sense, an opportunity for operations to present the concerns and challenges identified during consultative processes and to explain how they are being addressed; and if the challenges are not being adequately addressed, it is an opportunity to elaborate on the reasons. In this context, some of the SGBV-related protection issues presented by operations were harmful traditional practices, barriers to accessing justice, and survival sex. The operations explained how these issues are being addressed. Other operations reported on multi-sectoral programmes aiming at preventing and responding to SGBV in broader terms.

## **Harmful Traditional Practices**

Child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) are presented in the AGD Accountability Reports as recurrent issues faced by persons of concern. While there is no simple rule for eradicating these practices, one of the most frequently implemented activities to address harmful practices and improve the women's own awareness of their rights is advocacy and public information. In Sudan, for example, awareness-raising on SGBV reportedly reached more than 800,000 persons through community radio, religious organisations, meetings, and protection networks. In addition, 500 youths, children and other refugee and asylum-seeker community members attended SGBV campaigns and awareness raising activities. Knowing that the problem cannot be effectively addressed without engaging men and boys in SGBV presentation and response, some operations targeted this population group through sensitisation activities. UNHCR works through



Nancy and Leidy are refugees resettled from Ecuador to Uruguay. They fled Colombia due to persecution and threats from the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).  
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a rights-and-community-based approach in order to engage local community-based organisations in the prevention and response to SGBV, as they can have not only expertise in raising awareness within their communities, but also distinct advantages such as shared language and cultural ties. The following graph shows the extent of community's efforts to address SGBV across UNHCR's operations in 2013. Multi-year and multi-sectoral protection strategies are likewise a crucial component in the fight against harmful traditional practices, as it requires long term efforts in order to engage communities and drive social change.

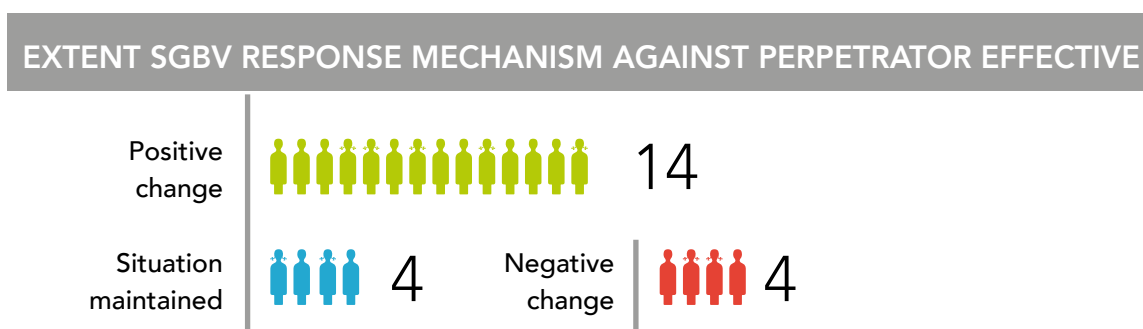
### EXTENT OF COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SGBV



As highlighted in the country examples, communities have a fundamental role to play in both the prevention and the response to SGBV. This indicator chosen by 43 operations showed improvement in the extent of community efforts in this sense in 34 cases (or 79%).

## Access to Justice

Another aspect raised by operations is the formal and informal justice systems which are lacking, ineffective or not trusted by survivors. Azerbaijan, for instance, reported that, despite the introduction of a new law on domestic violence in 2011, the law-enforcing authorities and legal system are still reluctant to interfere in what is being perceived as internal family affairs. In Somalia, limited clan protection support (minority clan) and high levels of impunity make the IDPs an easy target for abuses. Therefore, the operation highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the legal framework on sexual violence through developing national laws and policies as this will facilitate access to justice for all. In order to address these protection concerns, UNHCR, through its Access to Justice Policy released in 2012, is increasingly strengthening partnerships with governments and civil society partners to promote legal remedies for SGBV, including for persons of concern, through advocacy, capacity reinforcement, mobile courts projects, and in collaboration with local legal aid groups. In addition, UNHCR is making efforts to engage traditional justice mechanisms in the provision of legal assistance to SGBV survivors. The South Sudan operation, for instance, collaborates with UNDP's Access to Justice and Rule of Law programme to develop the capacity of national stakeholders involved in SGBV prevention and response. Kenya prioritised the provision of legal assistance for persons of concern through the facilitation of Mobile Legal Aid clinics and Mobile Courts. In another example, SGBV survivors in Serbia were provided free legal assistance including court representation. The chart below depicts the degree to which SGBV response mechanisms against perpetrators were effective in 2013.



22 countries reported on a range of initiatives addressing the problem of impunity for perpetrators of SGBV. 14 of them (or 63%) reported positive change.

## Survival sex

The AGD Accountability Reports also mention that women and girls are often compelled to exchange sex for material goods or protection, or to sell sex in order to survive. Survival sex is frequently mentioned as a direct consequence of gaps in assistance, failures of registration systems or family separations. Many challenges remain, as persons engaged in survival sex are highly stigmatized both by the police and their communities, which leaves them exposed to exploitation and unable to seek legal redress. Because they are stigmatised, children of sex workers often have limited access to education or support services.<sup>10</sup> Survival sex is usually used as a coping mechanism in situations of displacement.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR. 2011. *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy*, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3edcd0661.html>

In Libya, the operation identified the survivors - mainly Eritreans, Ethiopians, Liberians, Chadian, Congolese and Sudanese women and girls between 15 and 45 years old - and provided them with legal advice, financial assistance, health care and psychosocial counselling.

## Core SGBV Response Services

Besides the specific protection issues and response activities presented above, a considerable number of operations provided information on core SGBV response services aimed at preventing and responding to SGBV in broader terms. Compared to 2012, UNHCR operations made progress in the provision of support to known SGBV survivors in 2013, as we can see in the chart below. This progress was based mainly on improvements in the delivery of core services for SGBV survivors, such as psychosocial support, as well as medical, material and legal assistance. In Syria, UNHCR, through its partners, expanded SGBV-related activities to target both refugees and the affected Syrian population. SGBV services in the country include a case management system, referral to specialised services - medical, legal and psychosocial -, and a safe house for persons at imminent risk, in addition to prevention activities such as awareness campaigns. Despite the progress made in the provision of core SGBV response services, further efforts are needed with regards to supporting individuals with specific needs who experienced SGBV, such as men and boy survivors, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI persons of concern. Moreover, UNHCR needs to strengthen the manner in which operations prevent and respond to SGBV through a multi-sectoral approach, enhancing linkages with education, child protection, as well as livelihoods and energy.

### EXTENT OF COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SGBV

