Country evaluation of the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project

Syria

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) is committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects and practices. EPAU also promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR and encourages an active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policymakers and the research community. All of these activities are undertaken with the purpose of strengthening UNHCR's operational effectiveness, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to fulfil its mandate on behalf of refugees and other displaced people. The work of the unit is guided by the principles of transparency, independence, consultation, relevance and integrity.

Executive Summary

Following three independent evaluations on refugee women, refugee children and the role of community services, UNHCR launched an age and gender mainstreaming pilot project in early 2004. This report presents the evaluation of the pilot project in Syria, where work has taken place in an urban refugee context over an eight month period.

The evaluation took place over a three day period and aims to be a learning tool, not only exploring impact on attitudes, work practice and accountability but also exploring the value of the methodology and ways in which it could be improved in the context of a roll out. Interviews were held with desk staff, staff in country, people of concern and partners.

Impact on attitudes and analytical approaches: Staff were already engaged in age and gender sensitive work. The mainstreaming pilot has, however, provided an additional incentive as well as necessary tools. Participatory assessment[1] is being used in a shortened format regularly and serves as useful monitoring and planning. Staff now have a better understanding of the needs and realities of the communities with whom they work and this has informed their analytical approaches. The attitudes of IP staff have also changed, and more participatory approaches are now used.

Impact on procedures and work processes: Progress has been made in terms of mainstreaming age and gender perspectives into the work of MFT members. This has not been translated as clearly into the work of non MFT member staff. Despite the increased workload due to the large influx of Iraqis, good progress has been made towards implementing the workplan, especially on the objective on Refugee Status Determination as well as on amendments of the agreements with partners which were refined to match more adequately the needs of the communities. A challenge, however, remains in gathering adequate and accurate data on education and livelihoods and subsequent follow up.

Management and leadership: The Representative has taken an active role in providing guidance to staff about the objectives and associated responsibilities for ensuring age and gender mainstreaming. He has also provided a supportive environment for staff to explore issues and approaches. The process of leading the initiative has also had professional and personal benefits.

Pilot methodology and delivery: Overall the pilot methodology is seen to be effective. The workshop, participatory assessment, multi-functional team approach and leadership by the representative are all seen to be sound ways of addressing age and gender mainstreaming. Preparation by HQ could be improved, however, as could conceptual clarity. Greater follow up could also be provided. The process approach is also seen as helpful in developing ownership.

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[1] Participatory assessment refers to the element of situation analysis that involves participatory discussions with refugee communities.

Learning: The Participatory assessment tool is valuable and supports participatory monitoring and planning. It improves communication with partners and refugees and has an impact that is wider than age and gender mainstreaming. Other learning is that leadership by the Representative is crucial to functioning of MFT and that sustained focus and capacity building is needed for non MFT members

 Recommendations:

The evaluation team recommends that the project continues in Syria, despite the heavy work burden being experienced due to the massive influx of Iraqis. Staff have been highly creative, competent and their work has had an important impact on internal processes, partners, and refugees themselves. In addition, staff interviewed and the evaluation team feel that there should be a roll-out of the age and gender mainstreaming initiative.

Introduction

Background to the evaluation

1.	Following three independent evaluations on refugee women, refugee children and the role of community services, UNHCR launched an age and gender mainstreaming pilot project in early 2004. To date, country assessments followed by capacity building and planning workshops have been conducted in Iran, North Caucasus, Guinea, Zambia, Greece, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, India, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Sierra Leone.

2.	The three key elements of the overall pilot project methodology are: Situation assessment using a participatory approach, integration workshop and the use of multi-functional teams. In Syria, the focus on participatory assessment2 has been ongoing and has primarily taken place since the workshop.

3.	Each country conducted a mid-term review of the work3 and it was agreed that a process evaluation would be conducted at the end of the pilot phase. Evaluations have taken place in Zambia, Colombia, India, Egypt, Syria4, Greece, Venezuela and Ecuador. These countries were recommended for the evaluation exercise as they represent diverse situations: camp setting, urban and internal displacement situations. This report presents the findings of the Syria evaluation.5

4.	It is worth noting the changing context of the Syrian Programme: from working with around 2000 refugees when the multi-functional team developed its work plan to the current situation whereby UNHCR has the temporary protection of over 700, 000 Iraqis.

Evaluation purpose and objectives

5.	The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the age and gender Mainstreaming pilot project and to use this learning to inform the planned rollout of the project in 2005. Four areas of impact are explored. These are analytical approaches; procedures and work processes; leadership; and pilot methodology.

6.	This evaluation is a process evaluation and is expected to be a learning tool. It has been designed to be a two way process, whereby the evaluation team and participants in the pilot project come together to explore learning and to build on experience. The evaluation is part of the wider mainstreaming project and as such is

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2 Participatory assessment refers to the element of the situation analysis guide that involves participatory discussions with refugee communities.

3 This evaluation should be read alongside the Mid-Term Reviews which contain additional examples of impact.

4 Meetings were also held with Jordan and Lebanon projects to explore impact and learning. Findings are presented separately as 'Notes for the File'.

5 The evaluators would like to thank the Representative and all staff, partners and people of concern who kindly gave their time to ensuring that this mission was a success.

one important step in the process. In this way, the evaluation differs from a conventional end of project evaluation, which focuses on measuring impact. The process focus also arises from the practical reason that a key focus of this project is to change attitudes and ways of working. The impact is thus less clear to measure than in a more quantitatively defined initiative.

7.   The objectives of the evaluation are:

- to document and explore progress towards age and gender Mainstreaming

- to examine the appropriateness/ effectiveness of the methodology used as a first step towards mainstreaming

- to highlight lessons and recommendations for the roll out of the project

Methods and approach

8.   This evaluation was based on semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. Interviews were conducted on a one to one basis as well as in groups.

9.   Stakeholders interviewed included:

- UNHCR desk staff in Geneva

- UNHCR field staff: members and non members of the MFTs and the Representative

- Relevant partners: Syrian Women's Union and Syrian Red Crescent Society

- Persons of concern: one group of five men and one group of two women.

10.   A document review was also conducted and included work plans, COPs, project submissions and other relevant documents.

11.   This evaluation was conducted over a four day period. While this limits the scale of analysis it was sufficient time for meeting key stakeholders as well as providing an opportunity for learning and exchange of ideas.

12.   In terms of measuring impact it is important to note that this is a process evaluation, taking place after only eight months of activities. Measuring the impact of the project on attitude change and sustained change in work practices is a long-term process. This evaluation can therefore only be the first step to measuring the sustainability of the initiative.

Findings

13.   The UN guidelines for gender mainstreaming suggest that attention needs to be given to three areas of work[6]: Analytical approaches; Procedures and work processes and; Leadership. These areas, and an additional area on the pilot methodology, formed the framework for this evaluation.

14.   The opinions of partners and people of concern are integrated within the reporting on the opinions of UNHCR staff. This allows for some triangulation of findings as well as for expanding on impact and process questions.

Analytical approaches

Findings regarding attitude change and the extent to which the age and gender mainstreaming pilot has encouraged the consideration of age and gender differences and inequalities.

15.   It is important to note that the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project is a continuation of work that had already started in Syria at the end of 2003. MFT staff interviewed felt that they were taking into account the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys prior to the pilot. Since the pilot, however, their awareness on age and gender has increased, particularly as a result of having to facilitate training on gender (but not age) mainstreaming.

16.   The participatory assessment (referred to as community visits) element of the pilot project has had the greatest impact on changing attitudes. Regular consultations with refugee communities has meant that staff are no longer relying solely on the Implementing Partners (IP) for information about the situation of refugees. Staff therefore feel that they know more about the global realities of refugee communities and this has improved relationships. Partner staff confirmed this:

> "The contact is real … Staff have better relations with refugees now.
> This is making their work better and I can see them opening up …
> UNHCR feels the refugees". IP staff member.

17.   UNHCR's programming and way of working now takes the needs of refugees into account more and uses that information in discussions with partners and in programming (e.g. agreements with IPs were amended to take into account the concerns of and solutions from refugees). The direct work with refugees has been inspirational to staff, but sometimes also frustrating:

> "It will leave marks, but frustrations. Marks that the role shouldn't
> be a limited one, but global interaction with all sections and daily
> involvement in daily lives of people. This will be kept but at the

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[6] UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender issues and the Advancement of Women, Division for Advancement of Women, Office of Human Resources Management. Undated. 'Facilitator's Manual Competence Development Programme on Gender Mainstreaming. P.4.

same time people are left with frustrations if the situation of large numbers of people that we can't help remains". Representative

"It has made us realise what we are not doing". MFT member

18.   As the pilot was on *age and gender* mainstreaming and not on women and children per se, it made one s/taff member realise that "we should not forget men". UNHCR therefore needs to have a holistic approach. As one IP put it:

"Generally speaking, we see you [UNHCR] as very worried about women and children, but you need to worry about all … How can you save women in a society where men are not saved, how can you save children in a society where parents are not saved?"

19.   One IP said that as a result of the community visits its own approach has changed and it now takes into account the views and ideas of refugees. Because of the meetings,

"we learned how to work with refugees, got new ideas and improved our work, we learned more about the situation of refugees and know where they are living, and we learned how to deal with complicated issues … and learned from UNHCR how to work on solutions with refugees".

Procedures and work processes

Findings regarding changes to practice and the extent to which the age and gender mainstreaming pilot has encouraged consideration of gender equality and age equality issues at critical decision-making steps of normal work routines.

20.   Mainstreaming: The launching of the age and gender pilot project fitted into a process of change that had already been initiated in 2003 and was therefore an ideal complementary project. This process started with the in-depth evaluation of the living conditions of refugees with the aim of identifying the main problems faced by refugees in Syria and to subsequently improve the protection climate and services provided[7]. The ideas of participatory assessment were thus not new. In addition, age and gender were to a large degree already taken into account in other areas[8]. Parallel to the mainstreaming project, staff have incorporated age and gender disaggregation

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[7] The method applied was interviews with all refugees assisted by UNHCR with the involvement of IPs. *Report of the Verification of the Beneficiary Population Registered with UNHCR Damascus*, Branch Office UNHCR Damascus-Syria, March 2004.

[8] For example, recognition letters were provided to all adult family members and female asylum seekers, when applying together with their partners, were interviewed separately. Furthermore, the creation of the Community Services post introduced the community focus not only within UNHCR but also within the IPs. The office also mentioned the neat complementarity between the new RSD procedural guidelines and the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project, which were launched simultaneously in the office. The RSD procedural guidelines had incorporated an age and gender perspective and it was a facilitating tool in the daily work. And lastly, the reconstruction of the office, which is almost finalised, has incorporated the need for a more confidential physical space in the reception area to improve the registration interviews and the collection of specific protection needs at the first encounter with UNHCR.

in the statistics and database management. Gender training has also been conducted with IPs and Government officials[9].

21.   MFT members feel that age and gender mainstreaming can not be achieved fully in a few months and so it has not yet become an integral part of office practice, although they have managed it to a certain degree. For example, age and gender have not been included in the CMS of all staff, although the MFT members felt that it should be.

22.   Implementing age and gender mainstreaming is seen as cost effective as so far it did not require additional financial resources (changes in the programme could be done within the existing budget) and it builds on mobilising existing resources. However, it is also seen as time consuming and requiring adequate human resources, which are not sufficient in Syria, especially as a result of the large influx of Iraqis. One MFT member therefore suggested that

> "the office needs to look at the available human resources and see what is feasible as part of the age and gender mainstreaming and how it fits into regular programming".

23.   The work plan was seen as relevant and useful although its implementation had been slowed down due to the influx of Iraqis. It is also a challenge to achieve progress on the livelihood objective as asylum seekers and refugees do not have the right to work. This leaves them with no other choice than to work illegally, which in itself creates protection risks, e.g. detention when discovered. Progress has, nevertheless, been reported on the different objectives, especially on RSD. A challenge remains with the gathering of accurate and adequate data on education and livelihoods and subsequent follow up as well as on mainstreaming age and gender perspectives into the work of non MFT member staff. The following examples of progress should, however, been mentioned (in addition to others mentioned in this report):

- The asylum seeker certificate has been standardised as part of the templates of the new individual case database and is distributed to all adult asylum seekers

- Asylum seekers with specific needs are systematically identified and referred to appropriate staff depending on the nature of the case

- An education questionnaire has been developed and distributed to gather information and feed into an education database

- A vocational training programme has been adapted as a result of the meetings with refugees (taking into account which courses refugees would like to do, stricter selection of institutions providing the courses, provision of certificates upon completion of the courses)

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[9] Participants decided to set up a joint working group on SGBV (UNHCR, Syria Women's Union, Syria Red Crescent Society) and a joint working group on women and children (which includes other UN agencies and NGOs) as well as look into establishing a gender hotline. One IP made the remark that it would have liked the workshop to have given attention to children as well.

- Data gathering on livelihoods has improved, e.g. through the SWU. A form was designed to be completed by refugee women reporting to and assisted by SWU, which will assist in identifying the capabilities and economic situation of refugee women.

24.   Gender and age have been taken into account in the work with Iraqis under the Temporary Protection Regime. For example, a community meeting was held with Iraqis to discuss their concerns and find solutions; a table was drafted with concerns of women and men asylum seekers in Syria, which includes the concerns of Iraqis under TPR; individual temporary protection letters are issued to Iraqis – adult family members – approaching the office; and the specific needs of those who require assistance is addressed wherever possible, e.g. medical needs.

25.   The age and gender mainstreaming pilot project has no doubt improved the coordination and cooperation with IPs and among IPs. Although the office already had a good relationship with IPs, it realised through the pilot project that the communication between IPs was not working optimally and this was modified subsequently, through joint community visits. The IPs confirmed that they have learned more about each other and UNHCR and acknowledge that there is more of a partnership between the three organisations, "solving problems of refugees together".

"We will see more, we will understand better, we will work better".
IP

26.   In addition, IPs appreciated the involvement of the UNHCR protection unit (as before they were only dealing with Programme and Community Services) and learned from that as well. SRCS also appreciated that UNHCR accompanies SRCS on some of its home visits.

27.   It may be too early to say that the project has enhanced the protection of refugee women and children. However, it is evident that the active outreach by the office and the improvements in the reception of asylum seekers at the office has increased UNHCR's knowledge of the situation of asylum seekers and refugees and has resulted in concrete responses to their concerns, which have been highlighted throughout this document.

28.   Participatory Assessment: The participatory assessment element of the project is seen as having had the most significant impact. The office already had contacts with refugees, but on an individual basis and of a reactive nature:

"The age and gender mainstreaming project requires UNHCR staff to be proactive, to go and see what the needs of people are, rather than being re-active. With this system, protection becomes something more global, not just RSD and avoiding deportation, but more related to the daily lives of people … [it] was highlighting the need for staff to leave the office". Representative

29.   The MFT drafted a summary of the situation analysis tool, which was used for the topics stated in the work plan, like education and livelihoods, during community visits and meetings with asylum seekers in the premises of the office. Nearly all staff from the functional units have been involved in the activities.

30.   Now the office engages in systematic discussions with refugee communities in their place of residence as well as with asylum seekers in the office premises. Staff are attempting to establish ties with persons of concern to identify obstacles that prevent them from living their daily lives according to basic human rights and protection standards ("before May the outreach was poor, limited" MFT member). Women and men asylum seekers were met separately to enable a focus on each gender's specific concern and building on this experience and that of the community visits the office needs to diversify this to meetings with persons of concern of different ages.

31.   Refugees also appreciate the community visits as they show that UNHCR is interested in refugees. According to one IP, refugees "feel that they can express their problems to UNHCR", while before they would say "UNHCR, this is up. We don't want to deal with UNHCR, they don't know …".

32.   In addition, the added knowledge gained through community visits has improved the credibility of UNHCR in relation to the IPs.

33.   The application of the situation analysis has resulted in changes in the vocational training programme (more based on what the refugees felt was useful), in the publication of a booklet with relevant information for asylum seekers and refugees, and in staff members realising certain issues: Afghan boys *and* girls go to school, Somalis are living in a close community and are assisting each other. The MFT assured the evaluators that the outcomes of the meetings with communities and age and gender mainstreaming in general will be reflected in the Annual Protection Report and the Country Operations Plan and should also be reflected in the work plans of the IPs.

34.   The SRCS stated that it will also continue with community meetings preferably together with others and it may also push UNHCR if necessary to continue as the meetings are benefiting UNHCR and the refugees. Refugees mentioned that they would like to have regular community meetings with UNHCR and its partners (once a month), so "people are aware of our common problems". The refugee men stated that it would also be good to have meetings for men only as "we have problems we do not want to discuss in front of women".

35.   Multi-Functional Team: The MFT consists of the following staff members, who were assigned by the Representative: Senior Protection Officer (international, male); Protection Officer (international, female); Assistant Community Services Officer (national, female); Senior Programme Assistant (national, female). The criteria laid down in the draft Terms of Reference have thus been met.

36.   Since the members of the MFT belong to different functional units and have different backgrounds and experience, diversity and richness is brought to discussions and different perspectives are deliberated upon during the meetings. Complementarity and synergy is visible in the functioning of the MFT. The MFT maintains its group dynamics and team spirit with actions initiated after a consensus is reached among the team members. The meetings are chaired on a rotational basis and different colleagues lead the discussions at different times on the basis of functional responsibilities and competence. The Representative is closely associated and informed of the initiatives of the MFT and his advice and support is available.

37.   Staff feel that MFT membership has strengthened the team spirit and made it more structured. The MFT approach was seen as a better approach than the focal point system and "a return to the focal point system is not an option" (MFT member). Looking ahead, members said that the MFT could also include the IPs, although the future direction needed more reflection.

Management leadership

Findings regarding changes in managerial behaviour and the extent to which management has taken an active role in providing guidance to staff about objectives and responsibilities for age and gender mainstreaming, and provided a supportive environment for staff to explore issues and approaches.

38.   In terms of impact on issues of leadership accountability for age and gender mainstreaming, the pilot project has played an important role, although it must be noted that the Representative was already committed to highlighting issues of age and gender prior to this initiative. In fact, the pilot project is seen to be a continuation of the direction in which the office was already going and the Representative was thus keen to be involved in the initiative:

> "The project encourages us to do things we wanted to do and had started to do. It legitimated us to do more of what we were doing usually".

39.   The Representative has taken an active role in providing guidance to staff about the objectives and associated responsibilities for ensuring age and gender mainstreaming. He has also provided a supportive environment for staff to explore issues and approaches.

40.   The Representative himself sees his role as "initiator, engineer who makes things happen and full member of the team." He has taken the pilot project very seriously and personally feels that it is important to look at the situation of refugees from their own perspectives, particularly in terms of looking at UNHCR performance:

> "I wanted the pilot to be successful. I put all my energy into it as I felt that the selection of Syria was a reward for the performance of this office and the good asylum situation that we have … We wanted it to succeed "

41.   The Representative is also committed to the continuation of the initiative, despite the pressures currently faced in terms of increased workload caused by the massive influx of Iraqi people.

42.   The process of leading the initiative has also had professional and personal benefits for the Representative himself: "I felt closer to colleagues, this was something we could do together, working with team and learning how to do situation assessment".

43.   In terms of accountability, the Representative feels his involvement is crucial to such an ambitious agenda as mainstreaming:

"I believe that it is something very important that needs the strong presence of the Representative. I believe we need to change our way of doing things. If you don't get involved colleagues will see the initiative as secondary. Involvement of the Representative gives strong meaning to it. " Representative

44. In terms of leadership weaknesses, the Representative in Syria did not feel that there have been any specific leadership challenges as his staff is very enthusiastic and motivated. The team felt that they had been well supported by the Representative, as one MFT member stated: "He has taken a deep interest in our work".

45. MFT members have seen positive changes in the leadership approach but these will need to be sustained. As one MFT member stated:

"The managerial approaches have changed but they need to be sustained. The focus of the Representative has been important. He did talk with refugees before during other activities but now he has been involved more in going to the community to talk with people".

46. The Regional Adviser on Community Services was seen to play an important role in the early stages of the pilot project, particularly to: "Educate, sensitise, draw attention and help us with issues and to organize workshops". There has been little involvement by the Regional Adviser, however, in the later stages of the project and this could have been helpful.

Pilot methodology and delivery

Findings regarding the extent to which the age and gender Mainstreaming pilot was delivered effectively and appropriately, highlighting areas of learning and for improvement.

47. Overall, the pilot methodology and delivery are seen to have been good and effective. As staff informed us:

"If you like it and you see the difference between now and before it won't be forgotten. Not at all. It is very effective and has become part of our work." MFT member.

"I always look at things from the perspective of age and gender now. That is reality." MFT member.

"We are fully convinced it is a good thing". Representative

48. The methodology would be enhanced if the preparation phase were improved. Staff felt that not enough notice was given and the purpose of the initiative was not clear.

49. In terms of the participatory assessment methodology, the in-country assessment that took place before the workshop was seen to be an HQ assessment with the office facilitating the mission. As such, it was not felt to be owned by the MFT. Participatory assessment is seen as an on-going process and a regular part of daily work. The methodology has thus "added value to our work. It is now part of

the monitoring and evaluation and planning process". In addition, it has "made me look at issues in more clear manner, find truth from different angles". However, the method has also "made us realise what we don't do. What could be done … but we simply don't have the people or the time to make this fully effective."

50. The situation analysis tool was seen as too complicated, containing too many questions and while staff are aware that it should be part of the programming cycle, it was still perceived as time consuming and requiring additional human resources. In addition, staff found it very challenging to apply a community development approach in an urban context and how to link the approach with the approach of an office that is structured around Refugee Status Determination and individual case management. Staff would have liked more guidance on this.

51. The regional workshop held in Jordan was seen to be an 'excellent' workshop, despite initial scepticism:

> "On my part I had opposition at the beginning. I thought it was just another outside initiative. Through the presentations though they made it clear that this was a necessary thing to do. They were very successful in creating motivation, we got very excited about implementing what was in the training. They were inspiring" MFT member.

52. However, it is felt that the concept of situation analysis could have been expanded on as time for discussion was limited and people were not clear enough around why the proposed methodology was being suggested.

53. Furthermore, the concepts and approaches could have been better defined as could the linkages between the concepts and how they relate to age and gender mainstreaming. MFT members felt overwhelmed at the regional workshop in Jordan ("it was like a big cocktail").

54. The requirement that the MFT hold a <u>national follow up workshop</u> to capacity build staff was met. However, when interviewed the non MFT were unable to recall the details of the workshop. Thus, in terms of methodology, it would appear to not be sufficient to expect the MFT to have one workshop and to then present the workshop in a manner whereby other staff are able to take on board the complexity of the age and gender mainstreaming agenda.

55. In terms of the relevance of the pilot to specific work roles and needs, it is important to note that the flexibility in the approach was helpful:

> "It is good to have a manual but it shouldn't be a bible as there are different situations. We need to be able to adapt to realities. We need to be inventive, continuous thinking to adapt selves." MFT member.

56. The other side to the process approach, however, is that:

> "We have had to invent the methodology by ourselves, adjusting it and re-adjusting it. It is a process that needs to go on improving". Representative.

57.   Staff would have liked more <u>follow-up from HQ</u> as they felt that the information exchange was a one way process with no response on reporting provided. Staff would have preferred more interaction as well as advice on progress.

58.   In terms of further support needs from HQ, it is felt that a forum for exchanging ideas with other pilot projects and for learning from good practices would be helpful. It was also suggested that it would be helpful if HQ could streamline this initiative with others, such as the standards and indicators work.

59.   However, the Representative also made the point that "we can't ask more because the ultimate responsibility is with the office".

Learning and Recommendations

Learning

60.   The key learning to arise out of the pilot project in Syria is as follows:

Participatory assessment:

- An additional task but with added value. The tool provides a community context and allows staff to 'feel' the refugees' situation. As such, however, it also gives rise to frustration and feeling of impotence in view of limited resources available. Despite this, however, staff have succeeded in finding 'cost free' solutions.

- Use of participatory assessment encourages and supports participatory monitoring and evaluation as well as participatory planning. Thus programming cycle is more participatory

- Findings do influence UNHCR's and partners' work

- Involving partners in the assessment leads to improved relationships between and with partners

- The communication channel between refugees and UNHCR has been strengthened and refugees feel that UNHCR is now more interested in their concerns. Finding refugees/refugee communities to interview in an urban context and engaging them in the assessment is, however, difficult and must be recognised

- Gaining information on livelihoods is difficult and more complex than education, for example

Pilot methodology:

- Training staff during one workshop is inadequate to ensure mainstreaming, regular follow up is needed

- High impact for limited financial input

- Reporting is time consuming and response from HQ would help with motivation

- Staff have skills and the methodology should reflect this more through first gaining a clearer understanding of in-country capacity and ongoing activities regarding age and gender. It is also important to recognize that UNHCR staff do often talk with refugees and that while the methodology of participatory assessment may be new, communication in some form is not.

61.   The requirement that the MFT hold a national follow up workshop to capacity build staff was met. However, when interviewed the non MFT were unable to recall the details of the workshop. Thus, in terms of methodology, it would appear to not be sufficient to expect the MFT to have one workshop and to then present the workshop in a manner whereby other staff are able to take on board the complexity of the age and gender mainstreaming agenda.

- Relevant concepts and tools and their linkages (the *mainstreaming* of age and gender, community development approach, rights based approach, participatory assessment, work plan) need to be clarified more effectively.

Multi-Functional Team:

- Value of involving all staff, not just the MFT, in the participatory assessment

- Involving the Representative in the participatory assessment and other activities helps integration into the team

Representative:

- Leadership has been key to the implementation of the pilot project. The Representative has been supportive of his team and has also benefited personally and professionally from his involvement.

62.   Additional:

- Gender and age mainstreaming cannot replace the political changes that are needed to bring about real changes in the legal status of persons of concern (from: Reflections on age and gender Mainstreaming – UNHCR Pilot Project in Syria September 2004).

- Despite the impact on the country operation of the massive influx of Iraqi people, the multi-functional team have successfully modified asylum seekers certificate and temporary protection letter to ensure that age and gender issues are incorporated, a successful example of age and gender mainstreaming. This is also reflected in the mapping of Iraqis residing in Damascus and of the resource capacity in the neighbourhoods they are living in.

Recommendations

The evaluation team recommends that the project continues in Syria, despite the heavy work burden being experienced due to the massive influx of Iraqis. Staff have been highly creative, competent and their work has had an important impact on internal processes, partners, and refugees themselves. Recommendations are as follows:

Multi-Functional Team:

> Build on good work. Some extremely good tools have been developed and impact has been high in terms of changing attitudes and work practices

> Develop a new work plan for 2005. This should include an increased focus on internal mainstreaming and capacity building of other staff, including staff of partners, on both age and gender

> Share experiences with other countries in region, through regional meetings

> Ensure adequate hand over, de-brief and capacity building of new Senior Protection Officer

> Expansion/rotation of members: this is important for ensuring mainstreaming. An eligibility/durable solutions officer should be involved in the MFT.

Non- Multi-functional Team staff:

> Work plans and other relevant documentation should continue to be shared with the office team

> Office meetings should be used as an opportunity to highlight MFT activities and for other staff to talk about how they are mainstreaming age and gender into their work

> Additional training of all office staff on age and gender mainstreaming strategy and relevant tools

> All staff should continue to be involved in participatory assessment

Participatory Assessment:

> This should continue as is seen to be extremely valuable. The added value is that it is also being used as a tool for participatory monitoring and evaluation and planning. This should be encouraged by the Representative.

> Build on community meetings and diversify to meetings with people of concern of *different ages*

Representative:

> The commitment of the Representative has been extremely valuable. His personal interest and expertise should continue.

> Time needs to be allocated/prioritized for the participatory assessment / community development work of the multi-functional team. Most other activities do not require additional time, as they can be mainstreamed into the regular workload.

Staff interviewed and the evaluation team feel that there should be a roll-out of the age and gender mainstreaming initiative. Recommendations are as follows:

Concepts:

➢ WCCDS needs to clarify relevant concepts and tools and their linkages (the *mainstreaming* of age and gender, community development approach, rights based approach, participatory assessment, work plan).

➢ It is important that UNHCR in the next phase attempts to design pilot project strategies adapted to the different operational settings that UNHCR staff are faced with in the field. For example, the strategy for mainstreaming age and gender considerations cannot be the same in Syria as the one in the DRC. One fault line could be rural/urban or camp population/dispersed population; another could be pertaining to the legal conditions in the country of implementation, e.g. is the state a signatory to the 1951 Convention (from: Reflections on age and gender Mainstreaming – UNHCR Pilot Project in Syria September 2004)

Participatory Assessment:

➢ WCCDS needs to provide clearer understanding of why POP is no longer being used and the added value of the participatory assessment tool

Multi-Functional Teams:

➢ In Syria, the team are very self-sufficient but greater clarity would have been helpful in terms of the 'what next'. Guidance from HQ on sustaining the process after the initial phase will be needed in the proposed roll-out.

HQ linkages:

➢ Field staff experience two conflicting sets of requirements: on the one hand RSD and individual case management requirements and on the other community engagement and development approaches. Overstretched staff feel pressurized to prioritise and guidance is needed from high up in the organization as to how to balance these two elements of the UNHCR mandate.

➢ Linkages also need to be developed within DOS. Staff felt that the age and gender mainstreaming approach and Standards and Indicators need to be more consistent and clear.

Role of the Senior Regional Community Services Officer (CSO):

➢ The Senior Regional CSO should review the present situation in the region, identifying gaps concerning age and gender mainstreaming within the programmes as well as procedural aspects of the activities of various offices in the region.

Documentation and Information Sharing:

➢ WCCDS needs to be more systematic about the collection and storing of progress reports and other documentation. The Syria office has invested substantial energy in documenting its work. These documents were not made available, however, to the evaluation team by WCCDS.

- Exchanging of experiences with other countries is to be encouraged (requested by partners as well as by staff)

- Recognise existing work in offices and build on these in roll-out

- In Syria, staff were already talking with refugees and conducting age and gender sensitive work before the project. It is important that this is valued and built on

63.   Additional:

- The pilot project is about more than just mainstreaming age and gender, it attempts to strengthen the relation between UNHCR and persons of concern. This could perhaps be reflected in a revised title and also be emphasised from the outset

Overall conclusion

64.   The Syria team have been extremely enthusiastic in embracing the age and gender mainstreaming strategy. They and partners have found the participatory assessment and multi-functional team tools very useful. Partners and refugees have commented positively on the changing attitudes and practices of HCR staff. Greater focus needs to be placed on mainstreaming age and gender internally, with more capacity building of all staff. Important learning has come out of this pilot which will be very helpful for the roll-out.