



Country evaluation
of the age and gender
mainstreaming pilot project

Greece

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EPAU/2005/3-4
April 2005

Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

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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 Greece, where work has taken place in an urban refugee context over a 10 month period.

The evaluation took place over a two 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: Age and gender were already considered to be part of the priorities of the office. The pilot project has provided a more structured approach and better prioritisation of the issues faced by the office. The participatory assessment tool¹ has been simplified and adapted to the Greek context, but has, however, only been used during the in-country assessments and limited its focus to identifying problems. The office nevertheless reports that it has a better understanding of the situation of refugees.

Impact on procedures and work processes: A change in the practice of the office can be seen in the broader participation of agencies, as part of the Multi-Agency Team, as well as refugees, but did not lead to a structured dialogue with refugees. Age and gender perspectives have been incorporated into the action plan, which is largely based on earlier identified priorities by UNHCR Athens with the exception of domestic violence, and sub-project submissions, but so far the progress in the implementation of the action plan has been modest due to the lack of political will of the government. Apart from one NGO partner, the office has not been successful in getting the full commitment from other partners, which remains a huge challenge. However, the pilot project has led to an agreement to work collectively on the four priority issues of the action plan.

Management and leadership: It is evident in Greece that the former Representative's active leadership and commitment to promoting age and gender mainstreaming allowed the pilot project to take place. He had to devote a lot of time to developing and implementing the project mainly because HQ was not ready with all the tools when the former Representative started the project in Greece in February. Other staff became more involved later on and when he retired in October, the Deputy Representative took over as the facilitator of the project providing continuity.

Pilot methodology and delivery: In general, the pilot methodology and delivery were regarded as good and effective, although initially seen as very theoretical. The participatory assessment (although regarded as time consuming), workshop, and

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

MAT are seen as useful elements of the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project. Preparation by HQ should, however, be improved and it would be useful to have more time to analyse the information from the in-country assessment. HQ support (Europe Bureau's Senior Regional Advisers and DOS), however, has been strong throughout.

Learning: The age and gender mainstreaming pilot project is seen as a valuable initiative having brought UNHCR closer to refugees and NGO and government partners and provided a more structured approach to the issues the office was faced with. Active leadership by the Representative was crucial in developing and implementing the age and gender mainstreaming initiative, but this must be balanced with input and ownership by UNHCR staff and in addition, HQ needs to be well prepared.

Recommendations:

- The evaluation team recommends that the project continues in Greece, despite challenges caused by the political climate in Greece and limited commitment of partners. The work has had an impact on the way the office works and on partners. 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 pilot project methodology are: Situation assessment using a participatory approach, integration workshop and the use of multi-functional teams. In Greece, the office established a Multi-Agency Team (MAT) incorporating its partners, both NGOs and the Government, with the Office of the Ombudsman as an observer.

3. Each country conducted a mid-term review² of the work 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, Syria³, 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 Greece evaluation (urban context).⁴

4. It has to be noted that the office in Greece is a small office with a limited number of staff and a Protection, Public Information (PI) and private sector fundraising focus. Greece is a country with relatively few NGOs, which are committed, but have limited capacity and funding and are not on the cutting edge of developments including access to tools and resources that would enhance their work with refugees. In addition, the office works in a challenging political climate in relation to the issue of refugees which translates into a very low recognition rate, limited funds and basic issues not being addressed or implemented. Furthermore, xenophobia is high with Greece reported to rank first in xenophobia in European Union countries in 2003.

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 roll out of

² This evaluation should be read alongside the Mid-Term Reviews which contain additional examples of impact.

³ Meetings were also held with Jordan and Lebanon projects to explore impact and learning. Findings are presented separately as Notes for the File.

⁴ The evaluators would like to thank the Representative, the former Representative and all staff, partners and people of concern who kindly gave their time to ensuring that this mission was a success.

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 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 and on the reply received from UNHCR Athens to the Evaluation Framework.⁵ Interviews were conducted on a one to one basis as well as in groups.

9. Stakeholders interviewed included:

- UNHCR staff in Geneva (Bureau and WCCDS)
- UNHCR field staff: members and non-members of the MAT, including the Representative and former Representative
- Relevant partners who are members of the MAT in a focus group discussion: Greek Council for Refugees, Hellenic Red Cross, Social Work Foundation
- Relevant partners in individual interviews: International Social Services (MAT member), Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (MAT member), Office of the Ombudsmen (MAT observer), Social Work Foundation (MAT member)
- Persons of concern: two women, one a recognized refugee, the other an asylum seeker

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

⁵ UNHCR Athens completed the Evaluation Framework that was sent to the countries, which were going to be evaluated, to prepare them for the evaluation. The answers to the evaluation questions incorporated to a large extent the information provided in the mid term review of September 2004.

11. This evaluation was conducted over a two 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. The evaluation, however, could have been enriched through on-site interviews with partners and refugees at a reception centre. It also helped the evaluation team that UNHCR Athens had already provided most of the answers to the questions in the Evaluation Framework in writing. The findings build on those answers.

12. In terms of measuring impact it is important to note that this is a process evaluation, taking place after only ten 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 sustainability of the initiative.

Findings

13. The UN guidelines for gender mainstreaming suggest that attention needs to be given to three areas of work⁶: Analytical approaches; Procedures and work processes and; Leadership. These areas, and an additional area on the pilot methodology, formed the framework for this evaluation.

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.

14. The concept of age and gender mainstreaming is regarded as relevant to the work of UNHCR Athens. However, while the former Representative was very eager to pilot age and gender mainstreaming in Greece, other staff have been concerned about being a pilot country for several reasons: the first concern was about the utility of the concept – how to move from a theoretical to a concrete, practical approach; secondly, concerns were raised about the (perceived) time-consuming aspect of the project and whether it was necessary for a small office like UNHCR Athens to engage in it as it was already dealing with a number of other priority issues. These concerns have largely been overcome as its value became clearer with the “breakthrough in June with the team coming from Geneva and working together on the in-country assessment and workshop. Before June it was too theoretical” (former Representative). Nevertheless more work and thinking needs to be done to ensure that age and gender mainstreaming is not seen as an additional task, but becomes part of the office practices and a natural aspect of UNHCR’s work generally without adding work to an already overstretched staff.

15. The office sees several strengths in age and gender mainstreaming:

- The participatory assessment brings UNCHR closer to refugees and therefore UNHCR has a better understanding of refugee issues
- It provides a structured approach and helps to really prioritise, e.g. in focusing on, and agreeing to work together on, the four identified issues in the action plan
- The multi-sectoral, Multi-Agency Team (MAT)⁷ brings UNHCR closer to government and NGO counterparts, which facilitates common awareness of issues, team building and team work

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.

⁷ UNHCR Athens established a Multi-Agency Team which also includes representatives from NGO and government partners.

16. One partner added that age and gender mainstreaming helps to focus on taking into account that different groups have different vulnerabilities. The partner was, however, concerned that UNHCR's focus has mainly been on the vulnerability of women and children.

17. Bringing UNHCR closer to refugees was one of the main objectives for the former Representative to get involved in the pilot phase.

"We exist because of refugees ... the real danger is that we look inward, while UNHCR has to work with and have contact with refugees ... age and gender mainstreaming and the community development approach get us closer to refugees, to groups UNHCR was not so much involved with, aware of."

18. One staff member remarked that UNHCR staff had tended to view interaction with refugees as the sole responsibility of implementing partners, that UNHCR was "washing its hands" of the refugees without recognizing the need for direct interaction and communication.

19. No weakness has been identified in the mainstreaming itself, although it was stated that the tools to assist the implementation were either too complicated and arrived too late (situation analysis) or not developed (indicators and accountability mechanism) and therefore the former Representative had to put in a considerable amount of time to in-country development of these tools. The office also employed an intern specifically for the pilot project to assist with the organisational part, e.g. organising meetings, taking minutes.⁸

20. While stating that the concept of age and gender mainstreaming can only strengthen the work done in the area of refugees and asylum seekers, one partner said that it took time to grasp the concept of age and gender mainstreaming, but that it became clearer along the way. She, however, emphasised that it will require additional efforts to get government staff on board as they are not as advanced in new concepts as NGO staff, lacking the opportunities to get in-service training or international training. They are nevertheless eager to learn.

21. It was acknowledged that impact on attitudes of staff and partners has been limited so far and that it may be too early to assess impact on people of concern to UNHCR. Real impact depends on the progress in the implementation of the four priorities identified during the pilot project, which requires cooperation from both government and NGOs. It needs to be noted that the focus of UNHCR Athens and its partners before the pilot project was already on prioritising issues related to people most at risk (including women, and (separated) children) and in empowering women, like for example the EVA project by SWF⁹ and the shelter established for unaccompanied children in Anogia, Crete.

22. The understanding of the different approaches and how it fits in with age and gender mainstreaming seem to be understood as we noticed during interviews and

⁸ The office had initially requested HQ to hire a consultant to assist, but this request could not be honoured.

⁹ Through the EVA project, guidance, advice and psychosocial support are provided to women in order to empower them, stand up for their rights and become self-sufficient. The project includes activities aimed at developing their skills and their capacity.

by reading some of the documents. However, at the same time the office needs to avoid that age and gender are seen as equivalent to children and women only. In addition, the work plan is very UNHCR driven, reinstating existing policy priorities for the office with slight tweaks and does not look into root causes. Furthermore, the community development approach has not been optimally used: the in-country assessment limited itself to meetings with refugees in June, but structured dialogue with refugees did not continue and no feedback was provided to the refugees UNHCR met with; and solutions, root causes and refugee capacities/skills were not discussed during the in-country assessments.¹⁰ For age and gender mainstreaming to succeed the office needs to ensure further engagement of refugees (and partners, including government) in a structured way.

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.

23. Many of the key issues/problem areas related to the protection of refugee women and children were already part of the strategic objectives and the ongoing protection activities of the office as can be read in the Country Operation Plan (COP) and Annual Protection Report (APR). However, the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project, in particular through the participatory assessment and Multi-Agency Team, “managed to get the office to focus more, to identify achievable issues from 30 earlier issues identified [in Protection Paper]” (former Representative), which was confirmed by other UNHCR staff. In addition, it assisted in identifying the key actors through the Agency Analysis Tool.¹¹

24. A change in practice can be seen in the broader participation of agencies (“age and gender mainstreaming has given the opportunity to have structured, regular meetings with partners” non-MAT staff) as well as refugee groups (“[before UNHCR’s] only contact with refugees was through the Appeals Board, training and visits to detention and reception centres” former Representative) in the pilot project which has assisted in the identification, understanding and recognition of protection concerns of persons with specific needs within their communities. One has to remark, however, that the commitment of the agencies has been limited (apart from the Social Work Foundation (SWF)).

25. Partners appreciated to be included in the MAT as “no such forum existed before” (partner member MAT). One partner highlighted that there is a lack of overall coordination in Greece and that the establishment of the MAT was a “good initiative by UNHCR to get us all together.” The MAT assisted the agencies to get to know each other better and work more closely together.

¹⁰ This was confirmed by one of the partners who participated in the in-country assessments as well as the two refugee and asylum seeking women we interviewed. The partner said that she was not adequately briefed about the methodology to be used in the meetings with the communities, but learned the methodology from observing the UNHCR staff. She noticed that the focus of the discussion was on identifying problems, not on solutions, root causes or refugee capacities/skills.

¹¹ The Agency Analysis Tool was based on the Stakeholder Analysis chapter of the draft Situation Analysis tool developed by UNHCR HQ.

26. UNHCR's outreach to persons of concern, which according to one partner was made clear from the start as being one of the main elements of the pilot project, was also seen as important by the partners, including the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (MoHSS),¹² and especially the involvement of the Representative and the Deputy Representative.

“[It was] really important that the Representative and Deputy Representative had contact with the people of concern ... UNHCR knows what's really happening” (partner member MAT).

27. Partners confirmed that UNHCR did not have regular, intensive contacts with persons of concern and that since it has started it should continue with its visits to reception centres and with structured dialogue and not limit it to the in-country assessment meetings held in May-June last year. One partner stressed that “people of concern have concerns and would like contact with UNHCR”. The two refugee/asylum seeking women that we met with confirmed this and were interested in “structured meetings [with UNHCR] if that leads to results.” Although one of them acknowledged that for many “the first solution is legal status”, which is not an easy issue to address.

28. Age and gender perspectives are incorporated in the work through the Action Plan, the project sub agreements, and will be applied in the COP¹³ and through continued cooperation with agencies and refugee groups in Greece. Furthermore, an objective was added to the Career Management System (CMS) of the former Representative in February 2004 (‘Age and gender mainstreaming - successfully carry out pilot exercise as part of global Headquarters initiative, for benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in Greece’). The three other UNHCR MAT members have also included either an age and gender mainstreaming objective or activity in the CMS, but this was not extended to other staff members in the office, although they were expected to take part in activities related to the pilot project (e.g. reception centre visits) and have contacts with partners. Since age and gender mainstreaming should be everybody's responsibility, as was also mentioned by the Representative, it is important that staff members have an age and gender objective in their CMS and receive guidance on what is expected of them. For small offices like Greece this may also mean active involvement of all staff members in age and gender initiatives and a further clarity of roles in the mainstreaming process of age and gender.

29. Taking into account the limited human¹⁴ and financial resources of the UNHCR office in Greece, the main challenge lies in getting full cooperation and

¹² The evaluation team met with representatives of the department within the MoHSS that UNHCR works with. The meeting was more a courtesy call, since the representative of the MoHSS on the MAT is not working in this department. It became clear that this representative did communicate with the department on the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project, but seemed not to have shared all documents and information. Therefore the concept of age and gender mainstreaming was not fully clear and our questions on this, unfortunately, embarrassed especially the senior representative of the department. However, one of his colleagues mentioned that it had observed UNHCR's active outreach to people of concern throughout the country and appreciated the cooperation with UNHCR and its sharing of information on the visits to the border areas and reception centres.

¹³ Due to the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project the COP 2006 will be more realistic than the COP 2005, which was over ambitious, according to UNHCR MAT member.

¹⁴ The office tries to address this by working with interns and informed us that the protection assistant post was approved which will go some way to address the human capacity issue. However, one UNHCR MAT member expressed concern that expertise is not available for all the aspects of age and

participation of agencies and in particular the government, while also realising their limited human and financial capacity, and the difficult political environment for asylum seekers.

30. An Agency Action Plan for Priority Problems was drafted by the MAT and contains four priority problems¹⁵ as well as goals/objectives, responsibility, activities, progress/constraints/follow up, progress indicators and timeframe. The priorities are relevant to all asylum seekers and refugees, but in particular on unaccompanied/separated children and asylum seeking and refugee women. The MAT appointed lead agencies for the different activities, although extensive support from UNHCR to NGO lead agencies may still be required. The Action Plan allowed UNHCR to prioritise, although most priorities in the plan had already been identified earlier by UNHCR with the exception of domestic violence. Nevertheless, partners agree with the priorities set as “[these] were the most pertinent to Greece” and that the action plan is achievable.

31. Progress on the action plan has so far been modest and more remains to be done. Much of this, however, relies heavily on the cooperation and political will of the government and in particular the Ministry of Public Order (MPO, the main refugee ministry) and the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (MoHSS) as well as continued priority and follow up by UNHCR. The lack of political will and lack of recognition that there are problems also translate in a lack of funding to address the issues identified¹⁶ and in the lack of committed involvement in the MAT. Both the Representative and Deputy Representative are of the opinion that the MAT could however be a useful tool to engage the government by using the results of the MAT meetings in bi-laterals with ministries,

“[through] setting up a subgroup consisting of the MPO and UNHCR, which will follow up, discuss issues coming out of the larger group [MAT]”. Representative.

32. UNHCR has already managed to get the MPO on board the Sub-Group on Separated Children, which is part of the Agency Action Plan. A meeting was held in October 2004, which was the first time that all agencies were involved. Follow up is now required with UNHCR taking on the role of advocating at senior ministerial level.

33. Based on the situation analysis tool developed by HQ, the office in Greece developed its “Suggested Operational Approach” which includes an agency analysis, documentation review, gathering of socio-economic data on refugees, and identification of core *problems* (our italics) through an in-country assessment and workshop. This approach helped in drafting the Agency Action Plan and identifying key actors, but did not look into root causes, involve refugees in identifying solutions or assess the capacities and skills of refugees. Since the office strives to include situation analysis in the planning and implementation of the programmes through its

gender mainstreaming, for example the office does not have a community services staff or staff with a community services background.

¹⁵ The four priority problems are: inadequate screening, identification, referral of separated children and women at arrival points, inadequate legal aid mechanisms, insufficient information/action on domestic violence, and inadequacy of reception centres.

¹⁶ This lack of funding may even get worse since the government is pressed to cut public spending, which affect both government and NGOs and will lead to even more staff turnover.

partners and its own contacts with refugees these elements need to be taken into account.

34. The in-country assessment and subsequent workshop reconfirmed already identified UNHCR priorities, but in addition identified the issue of domestic violence. The issue was not new to SWF, which had identified the issue through its EVA project.¹⁷ Having it as part of the Action Plan, means that it can now be acknowledged and dealt with collectively. Another partner would have liked to see a stronger emphasis on the issue of trafficking in the Action Plan as it is an important issue which especially affects women and children.¹⁸

35. The situation analysis and the full involvement of refugees also come with a challenge:

“How to find solutions to the identified problems ... to get things done ... expectations may have been raised [by this approach] and the challenge is to follow through” Representative.

36. The MAT was established in March 2004 with four staff members from UNHCR (former Representative - male, international, Deputy Representative - male, international, Protection Officer - female, national and Public Information Officer - female, national) joined by the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Social Work Foundation (SWF) and the International Social Services (ISS). It was expanded along the way with the Hellenic Red Cross (HRC), Voluntary Work Athens (VWA) and the MoHSS with the Office of the Greek Ombudsman agreeing to participate as an observer. One partner also suggested that IOM should get involved in the MAT as “it has a long history in Greece, is active in the area of trafficking and has a dynamic Chief of Mission.”

37. UNHCR Athens decided to include the PI Officer in the MAT as PI and Protection are the main areas of work. Since PI is so important in the Greek context (high level of xenophobia, lack of political will, need for public awareness on refugee/migration issues) and a powerful PI strategy is seen as core to achieving protection objectives, the participation of PI will allow for age and gender mainstreaming in UNHCR’s PI messages and approach and may also lead to highlighting issues of “neglected” groups (e.g. at the time of the evaluation UNHCR was working on a documentary on unaccompanied children with the Mega TV channel).¹⁹

38. The main strengths of the MAT were the personal and active involvement of the Representative, the more structured way of dialoguing with partners and

¹⁷ A UNHCR staff member also mentioned that UNHCR was already aware of domestic violence through its partners and briefly reported on it in the APR 2003: ‘NGOs are monitoring more closely incidents of domestic violence and GCR has reported an increase in cases reported to the authorities. UNHCR has distributed to NGOs and other actors the newly issues Guidelines for the Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2003), including a translation into Greek of key elements of the Guidelines.’ Apart from further disseminating the Guidelines the issue of domestic violence was, however, not given more attention in the Review and Outlook chapter of the APR.

¹⁸ Trafficking is mentioned as part of the activities in the Action Plan, but not as a priority problem.

¹⁹ Since the PI Officer was on sick leave for an extended period during 2004 this approach could not fully materialise. 2005 is therefore an important year to further strengthen PI in its protection work, including ensuring mainstreaming of age and gender in PI.

increased information sharing between partners. It has helped UNHCR to work together better as a team with its partner agencies and get closer to refugees, while bringing into clearer focus women's and children's issues within the context of mainstreaming. Partners confirmed that being a member of the MAT assisted in working more closely with each other and that a team approach is necessary to address the issues identified. Stronger involvement from government (and especially MPO) is, however, necessary, but also the NGOs (apart from SWF) have to show a stronger commitment.

39. Regular monthly meetings were held during the first part of the year, but this did not continue on a regular basis in the later part of 2004. As all members of the MAT appreciated the meetings this should be picked up again with UNHCR taking the lead. This is supported by the Representative who acknowledged the necessity of regular, but most of all structured meetings. This could lead to a change in approach, to doing things differently taking into account increased participation of refugees and age and gender. As NGOs look to UNHCR for leadership and guidance²⁰ and the government looks to UNHCR for assistance "we need to join forces, with UNHCR taking the lead and not forgetting age and gender" (Representative).

40. The first strength of the MAT can also be seen as its weakness: the former Representative was a driving force with some other staff reluctant to be involved initially (as they felt already overburdened)²¹ so the project was from the start a top-down approach. Staff needed to be convinced and encouraged to participate. While the strength of the MAT was also in improving cooperation with partners it remains a challenge to get them fully on board and committed (except the SWF), especially the government. For instance, the MoHSS was only represented through a consultant, who was neither a senior staff member, nor working for the relevant department in the Ministry, though he worked for the Secretary General for Social Solidarity. The MPO was only invited to the MAT in October as it would not have been useful to have them participate from the start since it would probably have slowed down the process due to lack of political will, according to the former Representative.

41. With the retirement of the Representative, his role was taken over by the Deputy Representative. This has allowed for continuity, but also meant less regular meetings of the MAT, since the Deputy Representative is not only the Senior Protection Officer, but is also responsible for programming tasks. It is not clear what momentum would have taken place, if not for the visit by the evaluation team and requests for information from HQ (progress report).

42. MAT members felt that it was too early to say that the work done has impacted on the protection of women and children. Impact depends on progress made on the four priority problems stated in the Agency Action Plan and that progress has so far been modest. This response should be considered in the context of the challenges indicated above, in reaching the goals of the work plan (need for government participation; NGO skills) and whether the issues selected for the work

²⁰ One reason for this was mentioned by a partner member of the MAT: "UNHCR is seen by the authorities as an organisation with more validity than NGOs and NGOs should take advantage of that".

²¹ We have to note here that staff mentioned that they were and are not against age and gender mainstreaming as such, but felt that Greece was not in a position to be among the pilot countries for age and gender mainstreaming for the reasons mentioned earlier.

plan were adequately balanced in long-term (policy and legislation initiatives) and immediate refugee needs.

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.

43. It became evident from the documents received before the evaluation, the interviews with staff and the former Representative, that the latter played an extremely active leadership role, guiding and leading the age and gender mainstreaming project and the team from the beginning. When discussions on age and gender mainstreaming started in December 2003, the former Representative immediately expressed interest:

“I jumped on age and gender mainstreaming as it would address contact with refugees ... I wanted Greece to be involved to be a model for other country offices in Europe” former Representative.

44. He was confirmed in his initiative to pilot mainstreaming of age and gender during the workshop on this topic at HQ in February 2004, and went ahead with the preparations despite the reluctance and concern from some staff in the office. There were concerns regarding how to practically do it and if it was necessary for a small office like UNHCR Athens, already dealing with a number of priority issues, to be involved as well as the realization that HQ was not fully ready in February. Staff concerns and the fact that HQ was not ready were overcome, but it meant a lot of extra work, especially for the Representative, who drafted several different documents (see Annex 1 of documents related to the project). With the establishment of the age and gender mainstreaming team and particularly at the time of the in-country assessment and workshop other staff became more involved and in particular the Deputy Representative. He has continued to play a catalysing role, especially after the retirement of the former Representative in October, which allowed for continuation. The current Representative is committed to age and gender mainstreaming, but

“the whole office needs to lead, needs to take this on”.

45. A view that is also shared by the Deputy Representative, who added that it may be necessary to have one person playing a facilitating role, but in such a way that this person does not become the focal point. One staff member commented that the office rushed into the multi-agency framework before the broader UNHCR office understood what was being introduced, noting that in such a small office “the whole office was affected, whether or not they were on the team...there was, and is, a lack of clarity on the role of staff beyond the three or four people that participated”. Therefore it is vital that the discussion the office plans to have on the role of the Representative and others in the continuation of age and gender mainstreaming takes place as early as possible.

46. The former Representative faced quite a few challenges in providing leadership: trying to demonstrate to NGO and governmental partners (and at times, UNHCR staff) the importance of age and gender mainstreaming (not always with success); trying to build a viable team; attempting to spend adequate time on the project with so many other competing priorities. Much time was spent in the early stages on developing the “Suggested Operational Approach”, as it was thought from the beginning that the age and gender mainstreaming concept and application had to be simplified.

47. The UNHCR MAT members were chosen by the Representative. The criteria laid down in the Terms of Reference for the MFT had to be adapted as the office is small, has no Community Services staff, and has a Protection and PI focus. UNHCR Athens believed that the foundation for the team should be multi-agency (involving the Government as well as NGOs) as well as multi-sectoral. Accordingly, three NGOs joined UNHCR to form the initial composition – GCR, SWF, and ISS. Subsequently HRC, VWA, and MoHSS joined, and the Office of the Greek Ombudsman agreed to participate as an observer. Coordination mechanisms were affected through monthly meetings, and through liaison on specific initiatives (such as the in-country assessment and workshop in June, as well as the age and gender mainstreaming “sub-group meeting” on separated children, held in October).

48. The Senior Regional Adviser for Refugee Women in the Europe Bureau was seen to have played a pivotal role in advocating for Greece to become a pilot country, while the former Senior Regional Adviser for Refugee Children in the Europe Bureau²² is praised for her excellent and continuous support throughout. The latter was also a member of the HQ-team which came to Greece for the in-country assessment and the workshop in June 2004 and participated in the third meeting of the MAT in May 2004.

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.

49. In general, the pilot methodology and delivery were regarded as good and effective, although one partner expressed that it feared that it would be too theoretical with “terminology sounding academic” despite UNHCR’s assurance from the start that the project will have tangible goals. The partner was therefore relieved to see that an Action Plan was drafted.

50. It remains, nevertheless, important that the concepts are clear and that UNHCR has to move away from complicated jargon/terminology according to a partner member of the MAT. In addition, concepts should be linked with impact from the outset – tangible benefits to applying the methodology through using examples should be a part of describing the concept up front and in simple terms.

51. It was mentioned a few times that the pilot phase was perhaps started prematurely. As the former Representative stated:

²² This post no longer exists and has been merged with the post of Senior Regional Adviser for Refugee Women into the post of Senior Regional Adviser for Refugee Women and Children.

“The HQ workshop in February 2004 should perhaps have been delayed by 2-3 months, in order to allow time for the Situation Analysis tool, indicators, and accountability mechanisms to have been further developed. As it turned out, inevitably more experimentation and in-country development of age and gender mainstreaming processes and tools took place – which in itself is not a bad thing”.

52. With HQ assistance and facilitation, participatory in-country assessments were organised with the involvement of almost all office staff and partners. The assessment consisted of direct meetings and dialogue with persons of concern. Five meetings were already carried out prior to the arrival of the HQ team²³, but the majority took place with their participation. While in-country assessment visits and involvement by NGOs and refugee groups were generally seen as positive, it was felt that NGO members of the MAT could have been more active in the in-country assessment (with the exception of SWF). It was also noted that the different dialogues and meetings should have been better documented, as some visits were not reported on at all.

53. An analysis of the findings of the participatory assessment was then carried out through the mechanism of a Workshop, again with HQ support.²⁴ UNHCR MAT members, including the Representative and Deputy Representative²⁵, as well as some non-MAT members participated in the workshop throughout. One partner MAT member also participated consistently, while others took turns or only came for some sessions. Almost all UNHCR staff attended the last day.

54. One partner expressed that it would have liked to have had more social workers present at the workshop as the workshop mainly had management as participants.

“If social workers would have been present other issues may have been identified” (partner member MAT).

55. The age and gender action plan was fine-tuned, as a first draft already existed as early as February. With hindsight and prodding by the evaluation team on root causes and priority-setting:

“more time should have been spent on the in-country assessment – its conclusions and analysing the information ... perhaps we have been too quick to agreeing on what UNHCR already knew and the question arises on how much has been imposed by UNHCR”.
UNHCR member MAT.

56. In this regard, priorities emerging from the workshop (which was done by consensus of participants) may have been different had there been stronger

²³ The team consisted of the Senior Regional Adviser Refugee Children of the Europe Bureau, the Senior Education Officer and Senior Adviser Refugee Children from the Women, Children and Community Development Section.

²⁴ The HQ team that participated in the in-country assessment was joined by a staff member from UNHCR Turkey, an office that has experience in working with a multi-functional team. A facilitator from the desk in the Europe Bureau was supposed to have joined, but this did not materialise.

²⁵ The UNHCR MAT members facilitated some sessions as well.

representation by persons directly interacting with refugees rather than management/policy staff and further analysis of the in-country assessment.

57. The process was very quick and maybe went too fast, according to one partner. However, the process also led to priority setting in less than a year with various participants, which in itself is an accomplishment.

58. The evaluation of the workshop showed that the results were generally positive and that it provided a useful forum for discussion, although the role of partners was not very clear in the workshop. The change of participants from day to day, and the irregularity of their participation, were mentioned as problems, hampering continuity and progress. This is part of a general trend during the pilot project which saw the constant change of participation of team agency staff in mainstreaming meetings and activities. This remained and will remain a constant challenge for the office, especially since the project is not seen as a one off event either by partners or by UNHCR ('...the AGM concept will become institutionalised in UNHCR thinking and operations in 2005' Sub-project 2005).

Learning and Recommendations

Learning

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

Participatory assessment:

- Adequate preparation by HQ is crucial to avoid that UNHCR offices have to spend a considerable amount of time to develop processes and tools, which can result in overlooking key elements in for instance the participatory assessment.
- More time is needed on the analysis of in-country assessments, which could lead to other priorities in the action plan.
- It is imperative to document in-country assessments to allow for better analysis even at a later stage.
- While dialoguing with communities in an urban context may be difficult, the in-country assessments in Greece proved that it is possible.

Pilot Methodology:

- Putting age and gender mainstreaming into concrete action through the in-country assessments, workshop and drafting of an Action Plan moves the project from the theoretical to the practical level.

Workshop:

- As the workshop serves as a team-building process, all members of the MAT should be present during the whole workshop as a minimum requirement.
- The participation of a staff member from UNHCR Ankara was seen as very useful as concrete examples from the experiences of the office in Turkey demonstrated how issues are being dealt with in a team.
- Due to the different level of participants in terms of the age and gender mainstreaming process in Greece (i.e. some had participated in related activities, others had not) it was difficult for facilitators to cater to everyone's needs. It is therefore important that agencies should appoint one staff member as their representative in the MAT and limit replacements/rotation.

Multi-Agency Team:

- Involving partners in the MAT leads to improved relations between UNHCR and partners and especially among partners.
- The multi-agency concept is preferable to a UNHCR-only multi-functional team concept – in associating NGOs and the government as partners in the activities undertaken.

Representative:

- The leadership of the former Representative and his commitment to age and gender mainstreaming have been key to the implementation of the project. Since the other staff in the office were reluctant to be involved, the project would not have advanced as fast without the former Representative's active lead. Yet the role of the Representative must be balanced with inclusiveness and ownership of other staff, in order to prevent backlash and help to ensure quality, sustained program change.

Additional

- Age and gender mainstreaming and its tools/approaches brings UNHCR closer to refugees and leads to a better understanding of their issues, it provides a structured approach and assists in prioritising, it helps in identifying key actors, and strengthens cooperation between UNHCR and partners.
- Involving management, apart from the Representative, in the pilot project as a member of the MAT/MFT ensures continuity.

Recommendations

60. The evaluation team recommends that the project continues in Greece, despite its challenges due to the political climate in Greece and limited commitment of most partners. The work has had an impact on the way the office works and on partners. Recommendations, including those made by UNHCR and partner staff, are as follows:

Multi-Agency Team:

- While there is a multi-agency team, the whole office needs to take on age and gender mainstreaming. Since UNHCR Athens is a small office, it may be useful to involve non-MAT members as much as possible in the work it is doing, which could also include having all staff in the office including age and gender objectives into their CMS.
- The regular, structured meetings of the MAT should continue. Since the NGOs look to UNHCR for guidance and leadership, and given a lack of existing fora to discuss refugee issues (such as inter agency working groups on gender, age, protection) UNHCR will have to take the lead

- As the relevant ministries are not very committed (yet) to age and gender mainstreaming, the work of the MAT should be further discussed by UNHCR with ministries bi-laterally.
- Even more efforts needed to go into getting *all* partners, NGOs and in particular the government, interested and committed to age and gender mainstreaming.
- UNHCR Athens may wish to look beyond the present members of the MAT and also invite IOM to the meetings.

Participatory assessment:

- Since being closer to refugees was seen as one of the major results of the pilot project, participatory assessment needs to continue with all partners and refugee men and women of different ages and not be limited to identifying problems, but include identifying root causes, solutions and existing resources, capacities and skills in the communities. Using a Community Development Approach needs to be further explored with the involvement of all partners and refugee communities.
- Since there is a wealth of information from the in-country assessments conducted in June 2004, the office should use that information for further analysis and as a basis for prioritising activities by considering 'root causes' more broadly (for example access to education, income generation in the case of domestic violence).

Representative:

- To convene a meeting as early as possible on the future direction of the office regarding age and gender mainstreaming.

Work plan:

- UNHCR Athens needs to avoid the impression that age and gender mainstreaming is equivalent to enhanced protection of women and children only. This may require further attention by HQ, to the technical capacity of staff. It should also be supported by sharing of tools and resources in achieving their work plan including the objective on domestic violence (some of the proposed interventions may not be the most effective in advancing protection).
- Given work already underway by the office on issues linked to gender and age (for example the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women) the office should consider how to incorporate these in the mainstreaming work.

Staff interviewed and the evaluation team feel that the age and gender mainstreaming initiative should be rolled out. Recommendations are as follows:

HQ:

- To be adequately prepared and to develop simplified mechanisms, tools and concepts which are built into existing requirements and are shared

well in advance with countries participating in the roll out. UNHCR has to move away from complicated jargon/terminology.

- The concept of accountability needs to be further developed.
- Maybe there is a need to have two "operational approaches" – one for a Europe-type situation, where UNHCR tends to be less "operational" and have fewer implementing arrangements, and one for other, more operational parts of the world.
- To recognize that countries have existing expertise, which should be built on.
- To develop a set of concrete, measurable age and gender mainstreaming indicators.
- To establish a set of criteria to determine the positive impact of age and gender mainstreaming: degree of innovation, involvement of refugees, involvement of the agency, cost effectiveness, gender/age focus and results.
- To clearly describe the role of all players in age and gender mainstreaming, including the role to be played by Bureaux/Desks as their role is critical.
- To set up "communities of practice" which allows for sharing of information, lessons learned and experiences between countries on their implementation of age and gender mainstreaming, to seek advice from others and possibly work together in finding solutions to challenges faced.

Multi-Functional Team:

- Instead of having an MFT consisting of only UNHCR staff, a Multi-Agency Team should be established as this may ensure commitment from partners and strengthens partnerships between UNHCR and partners as well as between partners.

Participatory assessment:

- Enough time should be allowed for analysing the in-country assessment information, which also requires adequate documentation. Therefore the workshop should not necessarily take place immediately after the assessment.

Role of the Representative:

- The Representative should lead and coordinate the MFT/MAT, but role should be prescribed adequately.

Additional:

- It is important and useful to document as much as possible during the process.
- UNHCR Greece and Greek NGOs should assist other countries in Europe in developing age and gender mainstreaming – missions, assessments, workshops (view of former Representative and evaluation team).

Overall conclusion

61. The age and gender mainstreaming pilot project in Greece has been a process driven by the former Representative, who put a considerable amount of time in the implementation of the pilot project. While the other staff members were not against age and gender mainstreaming as such, they felt that UNHCR Athens should not be a pilot country, especially since it was already overstretched. However, the pilot project through the participatory assessment, workshop and Multi-Agency Team has brought UNHCR closer to refugees and government and NGO counterparts, has given UNHCR a better understanding of the refugee issues, has provided a structured approach and helped to prioritise the issues. Nevertheless, even more efforts need to be made to ensure all the partners and especially the government are fully on board as well as all staff in the office take on age and gender mainstreaming.