

The background of the cover is a warm, orange-toned photograph. In the center, there is a silhouette of a woman in profile, facing right. She has her hair tied up and is wearing a dark, sleeveless top. To her left and right, there are faint, semi-transparent silhouettes of two other people, possibly a man and a woman, standing in a similar pose. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet strength and solidarity.

# UNHCR REVIEW OF GENDER EQUALITY IN OPERATIONS

SUMMARY VERSION  
2016



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Cover photo: A refugee woman walks past men playing soccer at sunset in the Tongogara refugee camp in Zimbabwe. ©UNHCR/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/2015

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## Acronyms

<b>AGD</b>	Age, Gender and Diversity
<b>CBI</b>	Cash-Based Intervention
<b>CRI</b>	Core Relief Item
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>HIS</b>	Health Information System
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HLP</b>	Housing, Land and Property
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
<b>NFI</b>	Non-Food Item
<b>RSD</b>	Refugee Status Determination
<b>SADD</b>	Sex and Age-Disaggregated Data
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>STI</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infections
<b>SWAP</b>	System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied or Separated Children
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WRC</b>	Women's Refugee Commission



Turkish Kurd refugees find shelter and access to education in Northern Iraq. ©UNHCR/A. Eriksson

# INTRODUCTION

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has promoted gender equality among its staff and persons of concern<sup>1</sup> for over four decades.<sup>2</sup> Current efforts to integrate gender equality into operations are guided by two policy documents, the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Policy (2011)<sup>3</sup> and the Commitments to Refugee Women (2001)<sup>4</sup>. The objective of this report is to assess how gender equality provisions in these policies are being implemented at the operational level and establish the evidence base to guide UNHCR's future work on gender equality, including the updating of the Commitments to Refugee Women.

The information included in this report is drawn from a survey of 55 UNHCR field operations, as well as interviews with key informants in 15 countries, four field missions and an extensive literature review. In particular, the report incorporates recommendations arising from the 2010-2011 UNHCR dialogues with 1,400 individuals – refugees, displaced and stateless women, girls, boys and men.<sup>5</sup> The report highlights needs and challenges, as well as promising field practices, and provides recommendations on how to improve gender equality throughout UNHCR's work.

The main sections of this report focus on UNHCR's:

- 1** Implementation of the Commitments to Refugee Women.
- 2** Integration of gender equality into other services.
- 3** Capacity on gender equality.
- 4** Monitoring and evaluation.
- 5** Policies on gender equality.

<sup>1</sup> 'Persons of concern' to UNHCR refer to asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, stateless persons and persons who have integrated into new communities. See UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls* (Geneva: UNHCR, January 2008), 1. Available from <http://goo.gl/qd1tOr>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, *From 1975 to 2013: UNHCR's Gender Equality Chronology* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2013). Available from <http://goo.gl/tIglAP>

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy 2011. Available from <http://goo.gl/ebvwtE>

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women 2001. Available from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/479f3b2a2.html>

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2011). Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/50f919f39.pdf>





Internally displaced South Sudanese women play the drums at the closing of a workshop on gender-based violence run by UNHCR partner Africa Humanitarian Action. ©UNHCR/Andrew McConnell/2014

# 1

## UNHCR'S COMMITMENTS TO REFUGEE WOMEN

In 2001, UNHCR announced the five Commitments to Refugee Women in order to advance their rights and improve their protection. The commitments were based on concerns raised by refugee women during consultations at the local, regional and headquarters levels.<sup>6</sup> Fifteen years have passed since the commitments were first announced, and this comprehensive review informs the evidence base for updating the 2001 Commitments.

### Meaningful participation

UNHCR has taken numerous steps to increase the meaningful and active participation of women with the aim of ensuring greater influence over decision making that impacts them, their families and their communities. A catalyst behind these initiatives is the engagement of most UNHCR operations, even in what are considered conservative cultures, in implementing annual participatory assessments. In the UNHCR AGD Accountability Report 2015, operations state that they are successfully using strategies adapted to their particular contexts to ensure the participation of women in consultations and decision-making. The strategies include organizing women-only discussions, training women in leadership skills, raising community awareness of the potential

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, *Respect our Right: Partnership for Equality – Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2001). Available from <http://goo.gl/Ysxwhd>

positive dividends of promoting gender equality and enrolling women as refugee outreach volunteers.<sup>7</sup> These measures are in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on women, peace and security, which stress the importance of women's equal and full participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in sustaining peace and security.<sup>8</sup>

#### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICES

### Inter-connected projects

To reach the goal of equal and meaningful participation by women in decision-making structures in refugee camps, the Bangladesh operation works directly with women to support them to develop their decision-making and leadership skills. Men and boys, meanwhile, are given training on women's empowerment and gender equality. A system of elections in the camps that encourages the participation of women has been developed in collaboration with the national authorities and camp leadership. These efforts are complemented by initiatives to increase educational opportunities for all refugees, but especially women and girls, and devising school curricula that include modules on prevention and response to harassment, discrimination and violence.

## Needs and challenges

Despite the notable progress, numerous operations highlight difficulties in ensuring that women play a meaningful role in leadership and management structures. Among the largest obstacles to participation are the socio-cultural norms that enforce restrictive gender roles. Also hindering women's participation, according to the AGD Accountability Report 2015, are high illiteracy rates, language barriers and domestic responsibilities.<sup>9</sup> The 2011 UNHCR dialogues with persons of concern outlined several additional challenges faced by women. These include being marginalized by men in their families and communities; tokenistic inclusion; negative stereotyping of refugee women; and lack of access to child care, transportation and compensation for lost income.<sup>10</sup>

Operations highlight in the survey that women's committees often lack sufficient influence to have an impact on decision-making. Though women are frequently included in the assessment phase, their participation in the programme design and implementation phases is less common. In some cases, this might be because UNHCR community-based protection staff do not have the authority to facilitate the meaningful participation of women. Certain operations fault budget cuts for reducing the number of community-based protection positions, making outreach to women difficult. In some urban areas, the wide dispersal of persons of concern makes it difficult to bring women together to participate in decision-making structures.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2015*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016) 14. Available from <http://goo.gl/OZhZgm>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960(2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015).

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR AGD Accountability Report 2015*, 14.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 7.

# Individual registration and documentation

## PROMISING FIELD PRACTICES

### Individual documentation including children

A significant step forward in equal access to registration is seen in Rwanda, where following a 2015 verification exercise conducted by the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR in all camp locations, all women, girls, boys and men above age 12 were given individual biometric documentation. Previously, registration was indicated by a single document for an entire household or family. This could lead to abuse, as when a male head of family retained the document in case of marital separation. The biometric verification makes it easier for UNHCR to identify a person, replace his or her documents and adjust family composition as needed.

The majority of operations note that, in principle, they provide both men and women with equal access to registration. The operations also report that during registration they identify and update specific needs, risks and capacities to ensure that protection responses are tailored to individual requirements. Operations highlight that when registration is done through proGres,<sup>11</sup> UNHCR's registration software, rather than by national authorities, it is always done individually for each person of concern. Registration processes often give priority to women deemed to be at heightened risk.

## Needs and challenges

Women and girls face numerous challenges in gaining access to individual registration, documentation and refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, threatening their ability to avail of rights and services. Among the difficulties highlighted in the 2011 UNHCR dialogues with persons of concern was the length of time registration can take.<sup>12</sup> UNHCR's 2014 AGD Accountability Report states that the lack of identity documents leads to unemployment, exploitation and harassment, besides making it difficult to obtain food, shelter, health care and social services.<sup>13</sup> Persons of concern without birth certificates could find themselves stateless, and consequently unable to gain access to basic national services such as health care and education.<sup>14</sup>

Lack of documentation can mean denial of legal redress, creating an environment of impunity. Even in countries where identity documentation is provided, it is not always accepted by local authorities. In urban areas, lack of documentation can lead to arrest and detention. These challenges are particularly significant for female-headed households as they can give rise to a heightened risk of exploitation and abuse.<sup>15</sup> The practice of registering only men as heads of families poses an additional challenge, while gender discrimination in national citizenship laws can cause statelessness.

<sup>11</sup> ProGres is a standardized system for refugee registration. Through proGres, refugees are registered systematically upon arrival, improving camp management by accurately determining the size and composition of refugee populations and helping with assistance needs.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR AGD Accountability Report 2014*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2015) 15. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/548180b69.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR AGD Accountability Report 2014*, 15.



## Food and core relief items

UNHCR operations are occasionally directly responsible for the distribution of food and core relief items (CRIs).<sup>16</sup> In other contexts, distribution is done in collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme and/or implementing partners, or controlled by national authorities. A recent multi-country study shows that giving priority to women in food distribution is strongly correlated with greater dietary diversity. For example, in one country, the prioritization of women in food distribution led to a 37 per cent reduction in the prevalence of hunger.<sup>17</sup> There is a distinct trend towards cash-based interventions (CBIs) in the distribution of food and CRIs. Additionally, several operations report that they provide sanitary materials, with the method of distribution depending on the specific context, including through cash vouchers.

## Needs and challenges

The long distances women have to travel to distribution centres and/or extended waiting periods pose various risks. Women interviewed in one operation say they feel unsafe walking long distances in the dark, especially in areas with no street lighting, and that they are constantly worried about their children. They also speak of the lack of crowd management in distribution situations – similar to that witnessed first-hand at the height of recent refugee crises<sup>18</sup>.

Budget cuts have also had a serious impact on food and CRI distribution. Concerns have been raised about the lack of food diversity and its effect on children's health, while almost all operations that report providing sanitary materials state that they have had to reduce distribution. In some operations, only persons with specific needs are provided with sanitary materials, leaving out large numbers of women and girls.

## Economic empowerment

The vision of UNHCR's 2014-2018 Global Strategy for Livelihoods is "to ensure that all persons of concern are able to make a safe and sustainable living that meets their basic needs, contributes to their dignity, and provides for the full enjoyment of human rights."<sup>19</sup> In order to meet this vision, livelihoods programmes include skills and vocational training, business development, language courses, agriculture and other labour-based activities, and cash or grant assistance. More than 87 per cent of the operations surveyed have livelihood programmes in place, with several targeting women in particular. Some operations highlight that economic empowerment facilitates the meaningful participation of women in decision-making. Economic empowerment is also a part of multi-sectoral response that certain operations provide to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

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<sup>16</sup> Previously referred to as non-food items (NFIs).

<sup>17</sup> UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* (USA: UN Women, 2015), 85. Available from <http://goo.gl/w4h3v4>

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR, UNFPA, WRC, *Initial Assessment Report: Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migrant Crisis* (Geneva: UNHCR, UNFPA and WRC, 2016), 10. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/569f8f419.html>

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2014), 2. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf>

## PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

### Graduation approach

UNHCR is piloting the Graduation Approach, whereby as refugees improve their ability to support themselves they can move off cash assistance, in **Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt and Zambia**. For a pilot study of the approach in Cairo, 500 participants were chosen from among those already receiving direct cash assistance, with priority given to survivors of SGBV, youth and women. Along with monthly cash-based assistance and food vouchers, participants are given training and mentoring that will enable them to be self-employed or find wage employment. All participants will continue to receive protection assistance.<sup>20</sup>

## Needs and challenges

Despite the large scale engagement that UNHCR operations have with livelihoods programming, sustainable livelihood opportunities for women and adolescent girls of concern remain limited, specifically in terms of fully leveraging their transformative potential. Livelihood programmes are frequently based on restrictive assumptions linked to cultural gender norms. These assumptions about gender-appropriate livelihood activities limit women's possibilities for self-reliance. Both refugees and implementing partners highlight that income-generating activities such as sewing or craftwork are often designed to keep women busy, rather than to help them generate sustainable income.

In situations where governments do not give refugees the legal right to work, women are drawn to unregulated labour markets where they are at heightened risk of exploitation and abuse. Operations also raise concerns about a lack of market analysis and insufficient funding for livelihood programmes. Additional challenges include the absence of child care, limited access to education and training, and constraints on women's ability to own productive assets and control their own income. The lack of adequate economic opportunities heightens the risk of discrimination, SGBV, exploitation and abuse of women and girls, including sexual assault and harassment, forced and early girl child marriage, child labour and human trafficking.<sup>21</sup>

## Sexual and gender-based violence

SGBV threatens displaced women, girls, boys and men in all regions of the world.<sup>22</sup> Displacement often serves to exacerbate pre-existing forms of SGBV, including domestic violence, sexual assault, forced and early marriage, torture, sexual harassment, human trafficking, forced sex work, female genital mutilation and homophobic violence. Given the high prevalence of SGBV in displacement contexts, UNHCR has strengthened SGBV prevention and response mechanisms throughout its operations, through the deployment of dedicated staff to address SGBV, support to survivors to access justice, health including access to post exposure prophylaxis kits, psychosocial and safety services which include access to safe spaces. In addition UNHCR supports community based prevention programming to change knowledge, attitudes and practices

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, *The Graduation Approach* (Geneva: UNHCR). Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/55005bc39.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006). Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/4423fe5d2.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> UNHCR, *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2011), 5. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/4e1d5aba9.pdf>

that condone violence, and has also initiated programmes on safe alternatives to cooking fuel, lighting, and livelihoods. To deliver these services, UNHCR has established strong partnerships with NGOs including with the *Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies*, multi-stakeholder initiative.

#### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICES

### Improving SGBV prevention and response

In **Zambia**, collaboration between UNHCR, the Government of Zambia, UNDP and other UN agencies has resulted in the establishment of two Fast Track Gender Based Violence and User Friendly Courts. The general court environment is conducive to the emotional well-being of survivors and uses innovative court practices to protect confidentiality and well-being of victim-witnesses. In **Ethiopia**, twelve men and boys groups were formed and were linked to other active community structures, including members of the traditional court system, women's associations, youth committees, and community policing groups. Members of these structures were provided training on SGBV prevention and response, national laws, refugees' rights and responsibilities, and international protection. The strengthening of linkages between community structures and the accompanying capacity building created a space where socio-cultural norms that place refugees at risk of SGBV could be challenged. In **Afghanistan** UNHCR opened a women's only community technology access (CTA) centre in collaboration with a women's organization that provides support to women and girls, including survivors of domestic violence. Women accessing the centre are also provided monthly training in word processing. When users log on to the computers at the centre, they are shown informative messages on addressing SGBV. Additionally, the creation of this space has led to the identification of SGBV survivors and referral to support and counselling services.

### Needs and challenges

Key challenges noted by operations include impunity for perpetrators of SGBV and the particular protection risks facing women and children living in urban areas. These include SGBV linked to detention, *refoulement*, exploitation and inadequate and/or overcrowded shelter. Both urban and camp settings suffer a shortage of safe shelters, weak and overburdened identification and referral systems, and a shortage of UNHCR staff and partners with SGBV expertise.

Another challenge is the conflation of SGBV and gender equality – where SGBV work is understood as the sum total of all gender equality programming. This confusion contributes to an agency-wide lack of engagement with broader gender equality concerns. Another critical challenge lies in ensuring SGBV prevention and response is built into protection responses at the very onset of emergencies.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations in order to strengthen UNHCR's implementation of the Commitments to Refugee Women include:

- Strengthen the equal (50 per cent) and meaningful participation of diverse women and adolescent girls in all decision-making bodies through targeted and context specific actions aimed at women and girls, their families and communities.
- Support the implementation of national action plans on UNSCRs on women, peace and security, especially the equitable participation of women and adolescent girls of concern in peace negotiations, peacebuilding, security and reconstruction.
- Strengthen screening mechanisms to identify and respond to women and girls who are at heightened risk of sexual violence and other forms of gender based violence.
- Strengthen targeted action for those who may lack access to registration facilities due to disability, age, location or other obstacles.
- Implement measures to ensure the right of women and girls to adequate food, in line with Principle 5 of the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (2015).<sup>23</sup>
- Strengthen measures to ensure that women and girls have equal and safe access to food, CRIs and CBIs through context specific measures including appropriate transfer modalities; the location of distribution sites; the timing of distribution periods; the separation of pick-up areas for women, men and persons with specific needs; the management of crowds; and the provision of safe child care arrangements.
- Guarantee that all persons of concern who need them have access to sanitary materials, by designating them as a CRI requirement that is protected from budget cuts.
- Ensure equal access for women and adolescent girls to sustainable and market-oriented vocational and technical training programmes, employment opportunities, cash-for-work initiatives, microcredit schemes, child care and educational assistance.
- Embed without any delay SGBV response strategies in all emergency situations UNHCR works in, including through the deployment of qualified staff and the provision of SGBV identification and response training to relevant staff.
- Implement effective SGBV prevention programming including with men and boys, and in schools.
- Build a strong cadre of staff across the organisation to support SGBV prevention and response programming and to promote gender equality.
- Ensure that support for the survivor, in terms of timely access to legal aid, health services, and counselling services, is given due precedence.
- Ensure that women, men, boys and girls are meaningfully engaged in community based programming to address SGBV.

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<sup>23</sup> Committee on World Food Security, Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA) 2015, Principle 5: Empowering women and girls, promoting gender equality and encouraging gender sensitivity through various measures, 6. Available from <http://goo.gl/NNXZph>





UNHCR staff conduct a registration interview in Aceh, Indonesia, where asylum-seekers and refugees find refuge after being rescued by fisherfolk. ©UNHCR/Fauzan Ijazah/2015

## 2

# GENDER EQUALITY INTEGRATION IN OTHER PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE SERVICES

This section examines six areas of operational work that are currently not included in UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women.

## Assessment, data and information collection and analysis

Adequate collection and analysis of data that is age, sex and diversity-disaggregated is indispensable if UNHCR's protection and assistance programming is to be effective. UNHCR's tools to collect AGD data<sup>24</sup> include mandatory participatory assessments, registration through the proGres database, annual reporting through Focus, and other data collection platforms such as TWINE, and health information system (HIS) (see *below for more information*). In addition, many operations reported that protection monitoring and incident reporting is one of their main data collection activities.

<sup>24</sup> AGD data refers to age, gender and diversity disaggregated data. As per UNHCR's AGD policy (2011) 'Age' refers to different stages in one's life cycle; 'Gender' refers to socially constructed roles for women and men, which are often central to the way in which people define themselves or are defined by others; 'Diversity' refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics. Available from <http://goo.gl/ebvwtE>

## Needs and challenges

There are numerous challenges to comprehensive collection and analysis of AGD disaggregated data, including obstacles arising from the nature of humanitarian crises, as well as structural, coordination and capacity gaps.<sup>25</sup> Among the structural challenges is the scarcity of sex-specific and sex-disaggregated indicators in Focus (see the *Monitoring and Evaluation* section for more information). The failure of government counterparts to either collect and/or share sex-disaggregated data is another hurdle to sound programming.

When access to persons of concern is limited, there is an overall lack of reliable, accurate information to programme protection and assistance responses. Operations also report that staff lack knowledge and capacity in the collection and analysis of sex and age-disaggregated data (SADD). A 2012 Division of International Protection review of UNHCR's participatory assessments identified a need to strengthen the incorporation of assessment results into protection strategies and operational planning and ensure the participation of persons of concern in implementation.<sup>26</sup> As such, even when AGD data is collected it is not always effectively analysed and used to inform policy and practice.

## Refugee status determination

RSD is a core protection function with profound implications for the life and security of women, girls, boys and men. As such, it is vital to ensure not only that age- and gender-related forms of persecution,<sup>27</sup> including persecution against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, are uniformly recognised by states and UNHCR offices, but also that all women and girls are able to access RSD procedures and that these are implemented in an age and gender-sensitive manner.<sup>28</sup>

### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

#### Due process for LGBTI asylum claimants

The UNHCR Regional Representation for Northern Europe, based in Sweden, has trained government staff in all the Nordic countries that it covers to improve due process for LGBTI asylum-seekers. UNHCR also helped the Swedish migration agency to introduce special procedural safeguards for LGBTI applicants. These include the stipulation that RSD decisions are always made by a panel of three, including one expert on LGBTI issues trained and certified by the agency.

<sup>25</sup> Dyan Mazurana, Prisca Benelli, Huma Gupta and Peter Walker, *Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies* (USA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2011). Available from <http://http://goo.gl/wmMqDI>

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, *A Review of UNHCR Participatory Assessments in 2012* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2013). Available from <http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/unhcr-participatory-assessments-2014.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> The 2002 UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution provides guidance on a gender-sensitive interpretation of the 1951 Convention as well as relevant procedural practices. See: UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002). Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/3d58ddef4.html>

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2008), 137. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/47cfa9fe2.html>

## Needs and challenges

The challenges to fair RSD range from the lack of adequate age and gender-responsive legal advice and insufficient information sharing with governments to discriminatory national legislation. Operations highlight gaps in RSD procedures, including lack of access to counselling and psychosocial support and the scarcity of female interviewers and interpreters. Other challenges include a tendency to consider the claim of only the “principal applicant”; the difficulties women and girls have in discussing their experiences and establishing the credibility of their claims; and the reluctance of authorities to accept gender-related forms of persecution as the grounds for seeking asylum.<sup>29</sup>

## Public health

### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

#### Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services that UNHCR and partners provide in camps comprise family planning, maternal and infant care, safe motherhood services, and services related to sexual violence, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV. The distribution of supplies is monitored to ensure that service providers reach women and girls and men and boys, and that the composition of the emergency kit reflects the needs of girls and women (such as appropriate clothing and sanitary supplies).

UNHCR’s 2014-2018 Global Strategy for Public Health aims “to ensure that all refugees are able to fulfil their rights in accessing life-saving and essential health care, HIV prevention, protection and treatment, reproductive health services, food security and nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene services.”<sup>30</sup> Women, girls, boys and men of varying ages, and diverse backgrounds face different health risks and vary in their ability to access health services. As such, quality services must be available, accessible and appropriate throughout all stages of displacement.

Key health risks in displacement contexts include lack of sexual and reproductive health care including HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs); malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies; measles, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and malaria; and mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are critical in the prevention of both communicable diseases and SGBV.

<sup>29</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Public Health: Public Health – HIV and Reproductive Health – Food Security and Nutrition – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Wash)*, A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2014). Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/530f12d26.pdf>

## Needs and challenges

Given the chronic underfunding of reproductive health care in emergency settings,<sup>31</sup> gender equality concerns regarding health – especially sexual and reproductive health – need to be given higher priority by UNHCR. During assessment missions as part of this review, refugee women repeatedly pointed out that the existing maternal health facilities fell short of basic requirements. Operations also highlighted the need for interventions to address cultural barriers that prevent access to sexual and reproductive health care, including the shortage of female health personnel.

Humanitarian organizations often fail to provide comprehensive abortion services, despite there being a need for safe alternatives to high-risk, unsafe abortions.<sup>32</sup> UNHCR's policy framework on reproductive health does not address access to comprehensive and safe abortion care where it is possible, despite the realities faced by forcibly displaced women and girls.

In addition, according to the UNHCR global strategy for public health, “many operations still need to increase their efforts to ensure access to comprehensive HIV protection, prevention, care and treatment programmes.”<sup>33</sup> Another gap raised by operations is the need to provide comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support.<sup>34</sup> Finally, UNHCR operations and external reports speak of the need to ensure the availability of adequate gender-sensitive WASH facilities.<sup>35</sup>

## Shelter, housing, land and property

The goal of UNHCR's 2014-2018 Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter is that “all refugees are able to satisfy their settlement and shelter needs in a safe, dignified and sustainable manner wherever they live.”<sup>36</sup> Shelter assistance can range from the provision of furnished apartments, placement in government shelters, cash grants and rental subsidies to access to safe houses for survivors of SGBV. Numerous operations report that they assess and give shelter priority to persons facing particular protection risks, including single women, single mothers, LGBTI individuals, women with disabled children, women suffering extreme trauma or violence, and unaccompanied or separated children (UASC). Housing, land and property (HLP) support can help reduce discrimination against women and girls, as well as SGBV.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> WHO, UNFPA, Escuela Andaluza de Salud Publica, *Sexual and Reproductive Health During Protracted Crises and Recovery* (Geneva: WHO, 2011). Available from [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/70762/1/WHO\\_HAC\\_BRO\\_2011.2\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/70762/1/WHO_HAC_BRO_2011.2_eng.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Therese McGinn and Sara E. Casey, “Why Don't Humanitarian Organizations Provide Safe Abortion Services?”, *Conflict and Health* (2016) 10:8. Available from <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-016-0075-8>

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Public Health 2014-2018*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR, *Operational Guidance Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Programming for Refugee Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2013). Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/525f94479.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Francisca Vigaud-Walsh, *Women and Girls Failed: The Burundian Refugee Response in Tanzania* (USA: Refugees International, 2015), 6. Available from <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/tanzania>

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2014), 2. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/530f13aa9.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter 2014-2018*, 20.



## Needs and challenges

Whether they live in urban slums, refugee settlements or with host families, refugees and displaced persons report major problems in finding suitable, safe accommodation. “Housing is often overcrowded, unsafe, unhealthy and not weather-proof.”<sup>38</sup> According to the 2011 UNHCR report *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, most displaced persons have very limited means to improve their housing conditions, and thus face many protection risks. This is particularly the case for women with disabilities, older women and LGBTI persons.<sup>39</sup> Women and girls in camps face security risks, including SGBV, due to the ongoing lack of simple security measures, such as locks on doors and lights. Displaced families from minority groups also face discrimination, exploitation and racism by owners and landlords.<sup>40</sup> Some operations report that vulnerable men and boys, including LGBTI and disabled persons, lack access to safe shelter and services.

In return situations, women and girls often face discrimination and difficulties in accessing their right to HLP. In some cases this is due to discriminatory national or customary laws on women’s and children’s right to inherit, own or use land and property. Even when laws give the right to inherit to women or children, individuals may lack the documents and the means to pursue these claims in court. Widows are particularly at risk, including of forced marriage, in order to have access to homes and land. UASC and orphans also face great difficulties in accessing HLP.<sup>41</sup>

## Education

UNHCR supports the right of displaced girls, boys, women and men to gain access to high quality, safe and age and ability-appropriate education in order to build healthy, productive lives and gain the skills for self-reliance.<sup>42</sup> This includes girls’ and boys’ access to primary and secondary education as well as tertiary education, non-formal education and training opportunities for young women and men. It also includes displaced women’s and men’s access to education as well as accelerated, non-formal and skills training opportunities. Education was raised by operations as one of the most important issues to improve in order to empower girls and achieve women’s equal and active participation. UNHCR’s Education Strategy 2012-2016 aims at equal educational opportunities for women, girls, boys and men, with all education data disaggregated by sex.<sup>43</sup>

### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

#### Promoting gender equality in schools through data collection and information management

Disaggregated data collection and analysis based on age, sex and other relevant factors using the education management information system (EMIS) allows UNHCR in Chad to know the number of female and male school-aged children and their attendance rates, resulting in improved planning and response. For instance, participatory assessments have shown a low school attendance rate among young mothers and a high rate of absenteeism among female teachers with babies. In response, UNHCR introduced child care facilities in camp schools. As a result, young mothers improved their access to education and female teachers with young children were able to continue working.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 320-331.

<sup>42</sup> UNHCR, *Education Strategy 2012-2016* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2012), 7. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/5149ba349.html>

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR, *Education Strategy 2012-2016*, 8.

## Needs and challenges

Ongoing challenges to quality education include overcrowded, inadequate school buildings, some lacking water and sanitation; unqualified and poorly trained teachers, of whom not enough are women; and violence, including rape and sexual abuse.<sup>44</sup> Girls, in particular, face the risk of sexual assault on the way to school.<sup>45</sup> UNHCR's Education Strategy recognises how girls, children with physical and cognitive disabilities, overaged learners and children associated with armed groups face challenges in accessing quality education.<sup>46</sup> In certain contexts, male community leaders and heads of family impose restrictions on the ability of women and girls to avail of education and training and girls sometimes drop out of school early to get married.<sup>47</sup>

The inability to collect and analyse SADD through FOCUS hinders UNHCR's education programming. Furthermore, vocational training and education for adults, when available, often targets men or is given at times when women cannot participate due to domestic responsibilities. Adult education rarely targets illiterate women.<sup>48</sup>

## Comprehensive solutions

### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

#### Peer support for integration

Finland's Vertaiskoto project, a peer support group for integration, was designed to support and guide immigrants and refugees in the early stages of their resettlement. The project included small discussion groups for women, men and elderly persons organized in the native languages of the participants. Courses were also run on topics ranging from health care and sexuality, gender equality and religion to Finnish history. The success of the Vertaiskoto project prompted Finnish municipalities to incorporate peer support into their ongoing integration work after funding for the project ended.<sup>49</sup>

An important aspect of UNHCR's mandate is to secure comprehensive and durable solutions for all persons of concern.<sup>50</sup> There are traditionally three solutions for refugees: voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum, or resettlement in a third country. For internally displaced persons (IDPs), the solutions are to return home, integrate into the host community, or relocate to another area. The current comprehensive approach to solutions recognizes that persons of concern may require additional support beyond the three traditional solutions in order to become self-reliant.

<sup>44</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*.

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR, *Education Strategy 2012-2016*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR, *Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR, *Speaking for Ourselves: Hearing Refugee Voices – A Journey Towards Empowerment* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2014), 57. Available from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/537afd9e4.html>.

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 145.

## Needs and challenges

Comprehensive solutions are increasingly hard to achieve for displaced women, girls, boys and men. Particularly for women and girls, voluntary repatriation may not actually be voluntary either because they lack access to information on which to base an informed decision, or because the decision has been made for them by a male family member.

Women face an increased risk of insecurity during the journey home and upon their arrival, including domestic violence. They also confront difficulties if they return as female heads of households and attempt to secure their property. Those at particular risk during the return process include UASC, children in foster families, women and girls who are survivors and/or witnesses of human rights violations in their place of origin, pregnant and lactating women, older or disabled women, and those in need of medical attention.<sup>51</sup>

Local integration in the country of asylum is a complex process where persons of concern can face discrimination as well as lengthy asylum processes, limited freedom of movement, poor access to livelihoods and barriers to retrieving their property. Changes in culture and gender roles in the country of asylum can pose both opportunities and challenges. Children whose births are not registered are at risk of becoming stateless if not permitted to acquire the nationality of their asylum country.

Women and girls may face additional difficulties in gaining access to resettlement programmes because staff may fail to identify that they are at heightened risk or face additional challenges due to marital status and child custody.<sup>52</sup> Resettlement may be the only protective solution available to women and girls who are victims of domestic violence, but many of these individuals may not want to be resettled without their children or other dependants. Additionally discriminatory laws and lengthy procedures may prevent women from obtaining a divorce or custody of their children, or even if divorce and/or custody has been granted, refugee women may not have documentation that confirms this.

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<sup>51</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 151.

<sup>52</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 160-168.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations in order to strengthen UNHCR's integration of gender equality into other protection and assistance services include:

- Advocate with governments and build the capacity of UNHCR staff for strengthened implementation of RSD procedures that are gender-sensitive and recognize gender-based persecution.
- Strengthen the access of women and girls to comprehensive health care through strengthened linkages with national governments, and through partners. This should include access to contraception; comprehensive and safe abortion care where legal; maternal, neonatal and child health services; STI and HIV prevention, treatment and care services; mental health and psychosocial support; and through increased availability of female doctors, nurses, midwives and interpreters.
- Increase the provision of safe and dignified living conditions for women and girls, including by strengthening measures to prevent SGBV.
- Advocate for governments and communities to change discriminatory national and customary laws and practices to ensure returnee women's and girls' right to HLP.
- Ensure sex and age disaggregated data collection and analysis of education programmes to ensure they are safe, accessible and meet the different needs of women and girls.
- Ensure equal access for girls to educational opportunities, including by increasing access to national education services; targeted family and community sensitization programmes to support girls' education; and the application of various gender sensitive measures such as safe sex-segregated WASH facilities, provision of sanitary materials, recruitment of qualified female teachers, gender sensitive curriculum development, creation of safe spaces, provision of child care and flexible hours, developing teachers' capacity to work with disabled students, and teacher codes of conduct, complaints mechanisms and disciplinary procedures.
- Ensure all solutions programming integrate gender equality measures in a manner that is equal and inclusive of women and girls.
- Improve the identification of women and girls eligible for resettlement and ensure that those at risk are identified and represented in an equal manner in resettlement submissions.
- Increase the access of women and girls to justice through legal assistance and advocacy for gender-equitable national legal systems and customary justice mechanisms.





UNHCR staff and a committee of recently arrived refugees welcome and inform new arrivals in Lagkadikia, Greece. ©UNHCR/Yorgos Kyvernitis/2016

### 3

## CAPACITY ON GENDER EQUALITY

UNHCR staff require more support to effectively integrate gender equality into their work. Seventy-three per cent of UNHCR operations responding to the survey say they face challenges in identifying and responding to gender equality concerns in humanitarian situations. Multiple forms of support are needed in order to effectively integrate gender equality into operations. UNHCR staff specifically request training, financial resources, information and tools, human resources, targeted programmes and projects, up-to-date internal policies and guidance, strategic and expert partnerships and increased coordination.

### Awareness and understanding

In the survey and interviews, UNHCR staff demonstrate a clear awareness of the AGD policy and recognize that it should be applied in all their work. There is also a good level of awareness of SGBV prevention and response strategies and an increasing understanding of the rights of LGBTI individuals. In the survey, 73 per cent of the operations were aware that the impact of emergency/humanitarian situations on persons of concern differed depending on gender. Of these operations, 48 per cent exhibit a detailed understanding of gender-related impact of emergency/humanitarian situations, 43 per cent a basic understanding and five percent a poor understanding.

## Needs and challenges

Despite the reported large scale awareness amongst operations about the gender differentiated impact of emergency/humanitarian situations, there is a high level of confusion in understanding the difference and linkages between SGBV, AGD and gender equality. The survey and interviews indicate that gender equality programming is often conflated with SGBV interventions, while there is a limited understanding of how gender equality is part of AGD integration. This is apparent in the responses of some staff, who say they do not work on gender equality as their focus is on AGD integration. AGD mainstreaming is also widely understood as being limited to participatory assessments rather than being an approach that needs consistent mainstreaming in all programme areas. A few staff state that gender equality is not part of UNHCR's mandate, nor is it the place of the organization to change local culture. Numerous operations report active resistance to working on gender equality, and in some cases to supporting the rights of LGBTI persons. Some operations also report that gender equality concerns are side-lined in emergencies or simply forgotten in the absence of dedicated gender equality advisers.

## Training

### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

#### Consistent training and mentoring

The Ecuador operation included 60 people from its field offices and partners in a year-long initiative to build capacity on SGBV prevention through working with men. An external consultant facilitated a workshop every two or three months; between workshops the consultant mentored participants to implement what they had learned. In addition, the operation has established collaboration with national LGBTI organizations, whereby “we train them and they train us.”

Only half of the operations surveyed report that some of their staff had received training on gender equality. The responses demonstrate that sessions on gender equality are most often included in SGBV or AGD training. Operations also highlight that gender equality is being integrated into standard training provided to UNHCR staff, covering induction, the heightened risk identification tool, conflict management, and the mainstreaming of protection principles. Stand-alone capacity-building initiatives on gender equality are rarely reported, but a few training and coaching initiatives conducted by GenCap advisers are mentioned.

## Needs and challenges

The review demonstrates that approximately 78 per cent of UNHCR field staff in the operations that responded to the survey had not received training on gender equality.<sup>53</sup> Those who did were likely to have taken a course on SGBV or AGD mainstreaming which included a session(s) on gender equality. In the survey, the largest number of requests for support (76) are for regular training on gender equality for all staff and partners, including mandatory induction training and targeted training for senior staff and sector staff.

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<sup>53</sup> This calculation is based on the data from the survey. Twenty operations provided numbers of staff “trained on gender equality considerations” (569 total) compared against the number of OL staff listed for each operation in 2015 (2,536 total). The average is that for each operation 22 per cent of staff were trained.

## Tools and research

Seventy-five per cent of operations responding to the survey state that they use policies, tools, manuals or guidelines on gender equality to strengthen protection and service delivery. A wide range of tools are currently being employed.

### PROMISING FIELD PRACTICE

#### More accessible tools and training

Several operations are using gender equality tools in innovative ways. The **Brazil** operation is using the Portuguese-language UNHCR website to integrate gender equality by providing the relevant tools, adopting a new gender-sensitive vocabulary and making the website more accessible to government partners and refugee women. The **Ukraine** operation reports that all personnel deployed in the east of the country had taken the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) online course on Gender in Humanitarian Action.

#### The most frequently cited UNHCR tools were:

- UNHCR's Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations (8)<sup>54</sup>
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and IDPs: Guidelines for Prevention and Response (7)
- UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls (6)
- UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women (5)
- Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy (3)

#### External tools used by operations include:

- The IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action (5)
- The IASC Gender Marker (4)
- The UN Women I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN Staff (2)

## Needs and challenges

There is a high demand for UNHCR tools, guidance and good practices on gender equality, but it appears that a majority of participants in the review are not aware of existing resources. Some operations request practical tools on gender equality, including checklists, for instance to guide work with men on SGBV prevention. The majority of operations express the need for gender equality assessment and situation analysis as well as research on how to promote women's participation and empowerment and prevent discrimination, in particular in urban settings and challenging cultural contexts. Additional research was also requested on topics related to gender equality in livelihoods, laws and statelessness, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

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<sup>54</sup> The survey included a question on what gender equality tools operations currently use. This number reflects the number of operations that mentioned using this specific tool.

## Structures and staffing

The AGD policy mandates that all UNHCR staff take responsibility for implementing AGD mainstreaming. It also stresses the need to allocate adequate human and financial resources to achieve the desired outcomes. Sixty-seven per cent of the operations responding to the survey state that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for protection and programme staff include responsibilities on gender equality. In the detailed responses, it emerged that when gender equality is included in the ToR, it is most often as a reference to AGD or gender and cultural awareness and that it is more commonly included in the ToR of protection staff in comparison with programming staff.

A dedicated Gender Equality Unit is part of the Division of International Protection at headquarters. The unit currently consists of one Head of Unit (P4) and one Junior Professional Officer, with the latter position filled through donor interest. Increased staff capacity is provided through short-term consulting arrangements that are dependent on the availability of funding and interns. The division also has an SGBV Unit, with one Head of Unit (P4), a Monitoring and Results based Management officer (P4) and a Senior Protection Project officer dedicated to the Safe from the Start Initiative (P4). There are six roving SGBV senior protection officers (P4), one headquarters-based SGBV/Child Protection officer (P3), and two Gender-Based Violence Management Information Management Consultants.

SGBV and gender equality advisers and focal points also exist at the operational level. Gender equality and SGBV officers at the P2 level are occasionally deployed through the surge protection capacity roster. UNHCR currently has one gender equality adviser working at the operational level. In addition, as part of the GenCap, several advisers are currently deployed to support the cluster system. In 2015, UNHCR hosted GenCap advisers in the Central African Republic, Jordan and Ukraine.

Of the operations that participated in the survey, 48 per cent report having a gender equality focal point and 90 per cent report having an SGBV focal point. However, the responses indicate that SGBV focal points are sometimes categorized as also being gender equality focal points. Community-Based Protection Officers and Protection Officers are identified as gender equality focal points, as are a few Senior Protection Officers.

## Needs and challenges

The lack of clearly assigned responsibility, authority and accountability for the integration of gender equality into UNHCR's work, combined with an ad hoc gender focal point system and the paucity of dedicated staff focussed specifically on gender equality pose serious challenges to achieving gender equality through UNHCR programmes. ToRs that do not contain consistent language reflecting staff accountability for implementation of the AGD policy hinder implementation. For the existing gender equality focal points there are no standardized ToR, limited capacity building, no specific time allocation for gender equality work, and no set level of seniority.

The survey yielded 36 requests from operations for strengthened human resource capacity on gender equality. This includes requests for Community-Based Protection Officers with gender equality, including LGBTI, expertise as well as dedicated gender equality experts in the field and at headquarters. Technical expertise on gender equality was requested 13 times by operations; these requests are largely for support from the UNHCR HQ Gender Equality Unit, which currently has very limited capacity.

## Partners and coordination

Numerous operations state that they work in partnership with implementing and operational partners with expertise in gender equality work, including government ministries, UN Women, UNFPA, and civil society organizations. Some 88 per cent of operations that responded to the survey state that they are currently engaged in one or more interventions with implementing partners that have a specific component on gender equality. The areas of intervention are on SGBV (22)<sup>55</sup>; livelihoods (17); education (16); health (12); core relief item distribution (5); HLP (5); child protection (4); legal assistance (4); food distribution (3); and WASH (1).

## Needs and challenges

The challenges in working with partners on gender equality include resistance, lack of capacity and difficulties in coordination. In one operation, where many of the operation's implementing partners are faith-based, UNHCR is working with Catholic organizations, among others, to raise awareness of SGBV and LGBTI concerns. Other forms of resistance mentioned include the non-prioritization of gender equality by partners, who often say it is more important to focus on basic needs or women-only activities.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations in order to strengthen UNHCR's internal capacity on gender equality include:

- ▶ Develop gender equality learning programmes and integrate practical information on gender equality into other UNHCR online training.
- ▶ Develop and disseminate targeted and practical gender equality tools, including guidance notes, gender assessment tools, and gender equality good practices.
- ▶ Develop and formalize an agency wide gender equality facilitators system, including through standardized ToR, appointment criteria, capacity building and time and resource allocation.
- ▶ Strengthen gender equality integration responsibilities, in all UNHCR staff ToR and appraisal systems.
- ▶ Strengthen the staffing and resourcing for the Gender Equality Unit, including through donor assistance, to help support and monitor gender equality integration in all UNHCR operations.
- ▶ Increase the deployment of gender equality experts to field operations.
- ▶ Increase efforts to build gender equality capacity among partners.
- ▶ Establish new partnerships with international, regional and national civil society organizations working on gender equality, including women's organizations.

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<sup>55</sup> These numbers indicate the number of operations that mention an intervention together with a partner in this specific area, which includes a focus on gender equality.





F. sought asylum in a European country after fleeing his country of origin after persecution due to his sexual orientation. ©UNHCR/Bradley Secker/2015

## 4

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

UNHCR has various monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure implementation of gender equality in programmes. These include protection monitoring and incident reporting, mandatory participatory assessments, annual AGD reporting in Focus, annual UN System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) reporting and the IASC Gender Marker application. This section covers AGD reporting in Focus and the IASC Gender Marker, as other mechanisms have been covered in other sections.

Of a total of 837 (180 impact indicators + 657 performance indicators) indicators, UNHCR's result-based management tool Focus includes 188 related to AGD and accountability. Among these are 49 (24 sex-disaggregated and 25 sex-specific) that specifically request sex-disaggregated or sex-specific information on women, girls, boys and men.

Selection of these indicators is voluntary. The UNHCR Global Strategic Priorities for 2016-2017 include two impact indicators that explicitly request sex-specific or sex-disaggregated data, one on the percentage of female participants in leadership/management structures and the other on gender balance in UNHCR's workforce.<sup>56</sup>

The IASC Gender Marker is an interagency tool that is used to code, on a 0-2 scale, "whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way."<sup>57</sup> In 2015, of the 66 projects proposed by

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategic Priorities 2016-2017* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2015). Available from <http://goo.gl/FGiUpX>

<sup>57</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *The IASC Gender Marker Report*. Available from <http://goo.gl/p749s0>

UNHCR, 53 were marked as 2a (potential to contribute significantly to gender equality) and nine were marked as 2b (project's principle purpose is to advance gender equality). The marker is currently under revision and will be finalized in 2016-2017.

## Needs and challenges

Despite the existence of various accountability mechanisms, some challenges remain to effective monitoring and evaluation of gender equality integration in UNHCR's work.

Focus does not request or enable the collection of sex-disaggregated or sex-specific data for a vast majority of the indicators (some 94 per cent) and even when such data is available in the field, the current configuration of Focus means that it is not possible to input this data and analyse it. Without disaggregated data, accurate AGD monitoring and evaluation is limited, leading also to greater reliance on qualitative reporting. Comparison of data from one year to the next is also challenging as operations choose indicators each year based on the specific contexts and situations that they work in. Alternative databases such as TWINE, and HIS have been established to address the need for more detailed collection and analysis of information, including SADD.

UNHCR applies the IASC Gender Marker largely to project proposals that it submits to the IASC Consolidated Appeals Process in IDP cluster settings. The marker has also been applied to sector response plans, such as under the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan in response to the Syria crisis. There is no other marker in place that tracks UNHCR projects, programmes or financing with regard to gender equality. An IASC review of the gender marker coding found several problems with the tracking function, with codes being applied incorrectly and, critically, no comprehensive view of how gender issues are reflected in project implementation.<sup>58</sup> Staff in operations currently using the marker state that there is a lack of knowledge on its correct use.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Key recommendations for strengthening monitoring and evaluation of gender equality integration include:**

- ▶ Ensure that all UNHCR monitoring and evaluation exercises include gender equality analysis.
- ▶ Strengthen the collection and analysis of AGD-disaggregated data through all UNHCR data collection tools, including Focus.

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<sup>58</sup> Irish Aid, GenCap, UNDP, IASC Gender Marker Assessment: Findings and Recommendations (June 2014). Available from <https://goo.gl/FpBUVN>





An outreach meeting of the Butterflies with New Wings network; Nansen Refugee Award winners in 2014 for their work providing protection and support to internally displaced women in Buenaventura, Colombia. ©UNHCR/Juan Arredondo/2014

# 5

## POLICIES ON GENDER EQUALITY

UNHCR staff are accountable for implementing UNHCR and UN-wide gender equality policies, as well as international laws and policies. This section provides an overview and analysis of the implementation of key policies.

### Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

The 2011 AGD Policy guides UNHCR's work with people and communities for equality and protection, and builds upon the organization's work related to women and gender equality.<sup>59</sup> In the survey, 96 per cent of operations affirm that they currently integrate the AGD policy into their work. UNHCR operations and divisions also report annually on AGD policy implementation.

#### Needs and challenges

Survey and interview responses show that many UNHCR staff often equate AGD mainstreaming with the mandatory participatory assessment. Indeed, a lack of practical understanding regarding how AGD can, and should, be fully mainstreamed throughout the work of UNHCR operations seems to be a widespread. There is also considerable confusion regarding the relationship between AGD and gender equality; numerous operations claim to address AGD but not gender equality, illustrating a fundamental misconception about

<sup>59</sup> UNHCR, *From 1975 to 2013: UNHCR's Gender Equality Chronology*.

the AGD policy. This supports the assertion of some respondents that the AGD approach has made gender equality work less visible. Key UNHCR policy and guidance documents refer to AGD as a guiding principle, but do not include any further information on how AGD or gender equality should be implemented.

## UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP)

UNHCR is currently implementing the 2006 UN System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the following 2012 UN SWAP. Currently, UNHCR meets and even exceeds some of the 15 performance indicators for UN SWAP.

### Needs and challenges

There are some crucial gaps that exist currently in meeting some of the UN SWAP indicators, including on programme quality control systems, gender architecture and gender equality capacity building. UN SWAP requires gender equality integration throughout the operational cycle at all stages, including assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This is currently inconsistent within UNHCR.

UN SWAP also mandates financial resource tracking mechanisms to quantify the disbursement of funds that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. UNHCR currently does not engage in gender budgeting, nor does it have a way within its existing systems to accurately track funding spent on implementing the AGD Policy and the UNHCR Commitments to Refugee Women.

Lastly, UNHCR does not have the gender architecture in place that is mandated by UN SWAP, including an official system of gender focal points and a fully resourced gender unit, nor does it have mandatory gender equality training in place.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations for this section include:

- Include participatory assessment results in all protection strategies and through all phases of the programme management cycle.
- Integrate UN SWAP performance indicators into the UNHCR results based framework, including to enable financial tracking of gender equality activities, and into all future AGD or gender equality policies, strategies and guidance.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms for UNHCR and its partners, including to UNHCR's policies on AGD, SGBV, sexual exploitation and abuse.





Displaced Ukrainian teenager outside of the student dorm where she has found safety and a chance to study. ©UNHCR/Emine Ziyatdinova/2014

## CONCLUSION

UNHCR remains steadfastly committed to the concept that investing in gender equality improves the protection environment for all persons of concern, and significant progress has been made through the years in a number of areas in this critical area of work. It is clear, however, that sustained and focused effort is needed if these gains are to be maintained, and further progress is to be made.

Going forward, UNHCR intends to build upon the key strengths and promising field practices that have been identified throughout this review. Information from this document has informed the Standing Committee paper on Gender Equality issued in June 2016, and it will also serve as an overall guide for UNHCR's work on gender equality, including the updating of the organization's Commitments to Refugee Women. UNHCR will also use the findings of the review to as a basis to invest further, in a targeted way, in improving its capacity to ensure systematic and consistent gender equality integration across operations. This will include the development of guidance and other learning tools, as well as strengthening a range of initiatives that are essential to the self-reliance of women and girls. UNHCR will also increase efforts at the community level by addressing the role of men and boys in efforts to achieve gender equality.

Many of the issues identified in the course of this review require the committed engagement of persons of concern, NGOs, national women's organizations and other civil society actors, as well as hosting States and communities. It is only through a sense of shared responsibility that meaningful progress in the area of gender equality can be made.







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