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Policy
on
Age, Gender, and Diversity

Approved by: The High Commissioner

Signature: _____ Approval date: 08 March 2018

Contact: Deputy Director, Field Protection Service, Division of International Protection

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Contents

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to reinforce UNHCR's longstanding commitment to ensuring that people are at the centre of all that we do. This requires that we apply an age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approach to all aspects of our work. Through this Policy, we aim to ensure that persons of concern can enjoy their rights on an equal footing and participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities.

This Policy consolidates and updates our existing commitments to a strong AGD orientation, Accountability to Affected People (AAP),[1] and commitments to women and girls. These commitments complement and build upon one another.

This Policy also advances *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, which emphasize "putting people first" and commit us to: (i) draw on the rich range of experiences, capacities, and aspirations of refugee, displaced, and stateless women, men, girls, and boys; and (ii) be accountable to the people we serve, listening and responding to their needs, perspectives, and priorities.[2]

2. Scope

This Policy covers all persons of concern to UNHCR, and applies to all operations and Headquarters in all areas of UNHCR's work.[3]

Compliance with this Policy is **mandatory**.

3. Rationale

Forced displacement and statelessness impact people differently, depending on **age, gender, and diversity**.[4] Understanding and analysing the impact of intersecting personal characteristics on people's experiences of forced displacement or statelessness are necessary for an effective response.

Effective and accountable humanitarian responses therefore require: (i) continuous and meaningful engagement with persons of concern; (ii) understanding their needs and protection risks; (iii) building on their capacities; and (iv) pursuing protection, assistance, and solutions that take into account their perspectives and priorities.

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[1] For UNHCR, the terms "affected people" and "affected populations," common in inter-agency settings, refer to persons of concern, in line with the Organization's mandate for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless people, and the internally displaced.

[2] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021, 16 June 2016, page 13, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/590707104.html.

[3] For those UNHCR offices that do not directly engage operationally with persons of concern, the implementation of this Policy will be achieved through advocacy and partnership.

[4] For example, according to the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, 2017 trends indicate that the vast majority of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors reporting incidents are female (over 92 per cent) and adult (approximately 80 per cent). In 2016 and 2017, children were disproportionately affected by refugee crises, with children representing 51 per cent of the global refugee population, compared to only 31 per cent in the general population. Children who move across international borders face significant risks, including trafficking, forced recruitment into armed groups, SGBV, kidnapping, child labour, child marriage, and separation from parents and other family members.

For many years, UNHCR field teams have used the AGD approach to engage with persons of concern. They have used participatory methodologies to promote the role of women, men, girls, and boys of all ages and backgrounds as agents of change in their families and communities. UNHCR issued key policies and tools such as the 2006 Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations,[5] the 2008 Manual on a Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations,[6] and the 2011 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy,[7] and also organized global consultations with women[8] and youth,[9] to better incorporate their views into the development of policies and tools.

As part of its AGD approach, UNHCR has also made progress in **promoting gender equality** in its operations. Of note, UNHCR has mainstreamed the inclusion of women and girls in decision-making processes,[10] ensured individual registration for females,[11] and worked to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).[12] Yet challenges and barriers to achieving equality remain, especially societal attitudes that are often difficult to change.

UNHCR's Updated Commitments to Women and Girls out in this Policy expand upon the 2001 Commitments to Refugee Women to take into consideration new operational environments and good practices in gender equality programming,[13] and to incorporate the results of recent reviews such as the UNHCR Review of Gender Equality in Operations.[14] The Updated Commitments to Women and Girls outline concrete and measurable actions to strengthen our work in promoting gender equality.

Both the AGD approach and commitment to gender equality are key to ensuring our **Accountability to Affected People**. UNHCR is therefore supporting the strengthening of AAP, including notably protection from sexual exploitation and abuse,[15] within the wider humanitarian community. In 2011, the High Commissioner endorsed inter-agency

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[5] UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations, May 2006, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/462df4232.html.

[6] UNHCR Manual on a Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations, March 2008, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/47da54722.html.

[7] Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, 8 June 2011, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4def34f6887.html.

[8] UNHCR's Dialogues with Refugee Women, 14 February 2013, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/5231b1214.html.

[9] UNHCR, *"We Believe in Youth" - Global Refugee Youth Consultations Final Report*, 19 September 2016, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ff50c94.html.

[10] Sixty-six per cent of 58 situations reporting on female participation have achieved over 35 per cent of active female participation in leadership and management structures (UNHCR, 2015 Global Strategic Priorities Progress Report, 2016, 21, available at: http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2015per cent20Globalper cent20Strategicper cent20Prioritiesper cent20Progressper cent20Report.pdf).

[11] Seventy-nine per cent of 96 situations reporting on individual registration have achieved over 90 per cent of coverage of individual persons of concern (Ibid, 10).

[12] Comprehensive support was provided to known SGBV survivors in 70 per cent of 104 situations that reported on the indicator in 2016. 69 per cent of these 104 situations reported strong engagement of the community in SGBV prevention (Ibid, 12).

[13] This is also in furtherance of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular Goal 5 relating to gender equality, available at: http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/. The policy is also in line with the revised 2017 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, and its accountability framework.

[14] *UNHCR Review of Gender Equality in Operations*, October 2016, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57f3b5c14.html.

[15] The UN Secretary-General's Bulletin, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse* (ST/SGB/2003/13), entered into force in the UN on 15 October 2003, and was formally adopted by UNHCR with IOM/FOM – 77/2003 on 13 November 2003.

commitments to AAP, which were later revised and strengthened in 2017.[16] AAP is also central to the Grand Bargain Initiative's "Participation Revolution".[17]

Recognizing the progress we have made; cognizant of ongoing challenges and opportunities; and given the particular emphasis on a people-centred approach in *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021,* UNHCR aims, through this Policy, to promote further the empowerment of all persons of concern through a more robust integration of an AGD approach into its work; promotion of gender equality; and strengthening of mechanisms to ensure accountability to affected populations in all operations.[18]

4. Applying an Age, Gender, and Diversity Approach in our Work

Age, gender, and diversity considerations guide all aspects of our work, informed by the imperatives of promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, as well as by the best interests of the child. As we hold ourselves accountable to persons of concern, the views of women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds need to inform our interventions, advocacy, and programmes.

To achieve this, UNHCR will undertake core actions in the following areas of engagement:

1. AGD-Inclusive Programming
2. Participation and Inclusion
3. Communication and Transparency
4. Feedback and Response
5. Organizational Learning and Adaptation
6. Gender Equality and Commitments to Women and Girls

Taken together, these six areas of engagement comprise the framework for achieving accountability to persons of concern, within an age, gender, and diversity approach.

While there is significant guidance available to operations to implement an AGD framework in each of these areas, a set of 10 obligatory core actions that need to be taken at a minimum are set out in the table below:

Area of Engagement	*Core Action*
1. AGD-Inclusive Programming	*At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming.*

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[16] 2017 IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-56.

[17] Grand Bargain Initiative 2016, available at: http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861.

[18] See Strategic Directions "Empower": Hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve in all aspects of our work; Ensure confidential feedback mechanisms are in place; Ensure programme and activities take account of diverse, ethnic, gender and other identities; Recognize, utilize and build on the education, skills and capacities of forcibly displaced persons; Ensure refugees, IDPs and stateless have access to reliable information; and actively pursue innovative ways to amplify the voices of the people we work for.

Area of Engagement	*Core Action*
2. Participation and Inclusion	*At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes.*
3. Communication and Transparency	*At a minimum, all country-level protection and solutions strategies will detail the operation's approach to communicating with women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds, through means that are appropriate and accessible to all groups in a community.*
4. Feedback and Response	*At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.*
5. Organizational Learning and Adaptation	*At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from persons of concern, and document this in Country Operations Plans and Annual Reporting.*
6. Advancing Gender Equality:	
A. Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures, and committees of persons of concern.	*At a minimum, UNHCR operations will ensure 50 per cent female participants in management and leadership structures under UNHCR's authority, and will advocate the same with partners, including Governments.*
B. Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.	*At a minimum, UNHCR will provide women and girls of concern with protection documentation on an individual basis, and will advocate the same with partners, including Governments.*
C. Women and girls have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core-relief items, and cash-based interventions.	*Depending on the context, UNHCR operations will increase the percentage of women as the primary recipients of assistance within households receiving material and/or cash-based assistance.*

Area of Engagement	Core Action
D. Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, including decent work and quality education and health services.	*At a minimum, UNHCR will ensure women and girls have equal access to livelihood, education, and health programmes it delivers, and will advocate with partners, including Governments, for their equal access to public services.*
E. Women and girls have access to comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services.	*At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adopt and implement SGBV standard operating procedures, operationalizing the four main referral pathways for all survivors (safety/security, legal, medical, and psychosocial), and will promote the same with partners, including Governments.*

1. **AGD Inclusive Programming: The different capacities, needs, and exposure to protection risks of the women, men, girls, and boys with whom we work must be incorporated into assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation**.

AGD considerations and the views of persons of concern need to be captured in assessments and analyses, and inform actions and results in operational plans. Furthermore, targeted actions, such as applying the principle of the best interests of the child,[19] need to be monitored, evaluated, and appropriately resourced. Multi-functional teams must therefore work together continuously to ensure coordinated efforts across all areas of protection, assistance, and solutions work, including with partners.

Accurate population data is indispensable to inclusive programming. If data is disaggregated by age, gender, and diversity, the impact of UNHCR's programmes in ensuring protection for different population groups can be monitored and assessed, and course corrections implemented accordingly. Also, disaggregated data helps inform the scope and target of specific programmes.

Core Action: *At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age, sex and other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible,[20] for purposes of analysis and programming.*

2. **Participation and Inclusion: Women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully and are consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions.**

Modes of participation need to be in place throughout the operations management cycle. They need to be accessible to all groups in a community, with particular attention to at-risk groups such as minorities, people with disabilities, and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as under-represented groups such as adolescents, youth and older

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[19] Operational guidance on the best interests of the child is contained in the UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child, May 2008, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/48480c342.html.

[20] Further research and impact assessments may be needed in some contexts in order to safely gather diversity-related data. Furthermore, data collection and management must be undertaken in compliance with the *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*, May 2015, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/55643c1d4.html.

people. Giving a voice to all members of a community allows us to identify and incorporate the capacities and priorities of persons of concern in the development of programmes, thus minimizing the risk of excluding them. In turn, the quality of participatory processes will increase community ownership of programmes and allow monitoring and course corrections to be driven by the communities themselves.

Core Action: *At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes.[21]*

3. **Communication and Transparency: Women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds in all operations have access to timely, accurate, and relevant information on (i) their rights and entitlements, and (ii) UNHCR and its partners' programmes.**

Persons of concern have the right to be informed about issues and decisions affecting their lives. Information is a form of assistance in itself, as access to accurate information allows people to make informed decisions and to hold humanitarian actors accountable. Effective communication also serves to manage expectations about the type and level of assistance that can be provided. Therefore, we need to maintain continuous communication with communities,[22] using languages, formats, and media that are contextually appropriate and accessible for all groups in a community, including children and persons with disabilities.

Core Action: *At a minimum, all country-level protection and solutions strategies will detail the operation's approach to communicating with women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds, through means that are appropriate and accessible to all groups in a community.[23]*

4. **Feedback and Response: Formal and informal feedback from persons of concern is systematically received and responded to, and corrective action taken as appropriate.**

Feedback and response systems allow us to hear directly from persons of concern, to have a real-time understanding of the protection risks they face, and to gauge the effectiveness of our protection, assistance, and solutions programmes. Feedback includes comments, suggestions, and complaints. The design of feedback and response systems depends very

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[21] Operational guidance and tools are forthcoming. Until then see, for example: *Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents*, July 2012, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fffe4af2.html, *Toolkit for Consulting with Youth*, June 2016, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/59f986967, *UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, May 2006, First edition, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/462df4232.html, *UNHCR Manual on a Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations*, March 2008, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/47da54722.html, *Understanding Community-Based Protection*, 20 June 2013, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/5209f0b64.html.

[22] Communication with communities, or "CwC", "refers to activities where the exchange of information is used to save lives, mitigate risk, enable greater accountability and shape the response, as well as support the communication needs of people caught up in conflicts, natural disasters and other crises". See CDAC Network, available at: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20160718150112-bqkay. As such, CwC is cross-cutting and goes beyond "Communication and Transparency".

[23] Operational guidance and tools are forthcoming. Until then see, for example: *Community-Based Protection in Action - Effective & Respectful Communication in Forced Displacement*, 2016, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/573d5cef4.html, *Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents*, July 2012, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fffe4af2.html, *Toolkit for Consulting with Youth*, June 2016, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/59f986967.

much on the particular context and the input received through consultations with communities of concern. Key characteristics of feedback and response systems include:

- Multiple communication channels tailored to the different needs and capacities of persons of concern, including, for example, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. Such channels can take the form of face-to-face communications, help desks, call centres, dedicated e-mail accounts, two-way SMS systems, and social media.
- Confidentiality safeguards, to ensure that matters such as sexual exploitation and abuse are handled in a protection-sensitive manner.
- Standard operating procedures for the collection, acknowledgement, assessment, and referral of feedback, and operational response to it, setting out roles and responsibilities.

Core Action: *At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.[24]*

5. **Organizational Learning and Adaptation: Interventions, planning, priority setting, course corrections, and evaluation are informed on an ongoing basis by the views of persons of concern.**

Country programmes and organizational strategies are more effective if informed by and adapted to the capacities and needs articulated by persons of concern. This requires that we analyse input from individuals and communities of concern that we receive through feedback and response systems, participatory assessments, and community engagement, and other channels at field level. This input then guides the adaptation of country-level, regional, and global programmes and priorities.

Core Action: *At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from persons of concern, and document this in Country Operations Plans and Annual Reporting.*

6. **Advancing Gender Equality**

Gender equality is fundamental to the well-being and rights of all persons of concern; it is central to UNHCR's AGD approach; and it is relevant to every aspect of UNHCR's work. Our Updated Commitments to Women and Girls implicitly recognize the diversity amongst them, including older women; adolescent girls and female youth; women and girls belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities or indigenous groups; women and girls with disabilities; and women and girls of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Though the focus of these commitments is on women and girls, UNHCR recognizes that gender inequalities also negatively impact men and boys. Therefore, it is essential to promote equal rights, integrity, well-being, and equitable access to services for all persons of concern. Annex 2 provides further background and rationale for the emphasis on gender equality and the Updated Commitments to Women and Girls.

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[24] Good practices and examples of innovative feedback and response systems are being collected and will be shared with operations.

UNHCR's Updated Commitments to Women and Girls include:

A. *Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures, and committees of persons of concern.*

Creating conditions for the equal, meaningful, and active participation of women and girls is a basic requirement for upholding their rights, and their effective protection and future prospects. Equal participation and opportunities for leadership, in turn, require strengthened engagement with men and boys including through dialogue and awareness-raising on gender equality. It further requires collaboration and joint planning with humanitarian and development actors, including youth organizations and national organizations working on gender equality within host communities. This Commitment is essential to women and girls' ability to determine their own futures, and its implementation is necessary to meet all the Updated Commitments to Women and Girls.

Core Action: *At a minimum, UNHCR operations will ensure 50 per cent female participants in management and leadership structures under UNHCR's authority, and will advocate the same with partners, including Governments.*

B. *Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.*

Individual registration and relevant documentation through profiling, verification, identification, and prioritization processes undertaken by UNHCR make an important contribution to women's and girls' individual safety, freedom of movement, capacity to register and trace lost children, access to essential services, property and restitution claims, and access to political rights. While progress has been made, women and girls are still not systematically registered individually and too often lack access to civil registration and other legal identity documentation, including birth registration. Moreover, nationality laws in some countries still discriminate on the basis of gender in the acquisition of citizenship and other rights. Individual registration and documentation for women and girls of concern is fundamental to ensure the exercise of their basic rights and access to protection.

Core Action: *At a minimum, UNHCR will provide women and girls of concern with protection documentation[25] on an individual basis, and will advocate the same with partners, including Governments.*

C. *Women and girls have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core-relief items, and cash-based interventions.*

Guided by the "do no harm" principle, UNHCR must prevent and mitigate any negative impact of its actions on persons of concern. The lack of access to and control over services and resources can limit women's capacity to protect themselves and their community. Furthermore, when such situations arise, women and girls can be exposed to sexual

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[25] This can include documents related to UNHCR and government registration, civil registration, and other legal identity documentation, including birth registration. Processes through which protection documentation can be provided may differ based on populations of concern whom UNHCR is addressing. The processes include registration of refugees and asylum-seekers, which remains the responsibility of host States, with UNHCR assisting them when needed. In addition to registration, verification exercises allow UNHCR and Governments to collect accurate and updated information on persons of concern. UNHCR also undertakes profiling exercises, which provide an opportunity at an early stage to collect information from individuals travelling as part of mixed movements that include internally displaced persons.

exploitation and abuse. As such, the safe, prompt, and unhindered access and equal control and management of food, core relief items (including sanitary materials), and cash-based interventions by women and girls are foundational for safeguarding their rights and improving their well-being, as well as that of their families.

Core Action: *Depending on the context, UNHCR operations will increase the percentage of women as the primary recipients of assistance within households receiving material and/or cash-based assistance.[26]*

D. Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, including decent work[27] and quality education and health services.

Economic empowerment seeks to improve women's control over economic resources. Equal access to economic opportunities is fundamental to women's ability to respond to the challenges of displacement in a manner that allows them to move out and stay out of poverty. This requires efforts not just to increase women's equal access to decent work, but to also address the socio-economic obstacles to women's economic empowerment, such as gender disparities in education and unequal access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health. For example, collaboration with national humanitarian and development partners and access of refugees to relevant national systems can help address obstacles and ensure women have equal access to economic opportunities and decent work.

Core Action: *At a minimum, UNHCR will ensure women and girls have equal access to livelihood, education, and health programmes it delivers, and will advocate with partners, including Governments, for their equal access to public services.*

E. Women and girls have access to comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services.

SGBV disproportionally affects women and girls, but also men, boys, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Gender inequality is a root cause of SGBV, and we must consistently and effectively respond. We therefore will work closely with communities, including men and boys and national authorities, to promote the equal rights, integrity, well-being, and equitable access to SGBV prevention and response services for all persons of concern, from preparedness and the onset of crisis to solutions.

Core Action: *At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adopt and implement SGBV standard operating procedures, operationalizing the four main referral pathways for all survivors (safety/security, legal, medical, and psychosocial), and will promote the same with partners, including Governments.*

5. Measuring Results

We will strengthen our monitoring of results achieved, through the following measures, which will be elaborated in a forthcoming global implementation and monitoring plan:

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[26] Bearing in mind the contextual challenges that this Core Action may entail, it will be implemented incrementally and based upon ongoing protection analysis. Specific operational guidance for this Core Action is forthcoming.

[27] According to the International Labour Organization, "decent work" involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize, and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. See: http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm.

Results-Based Management (RBM) and Data Management
The ongoing review of UNHCR's results-based management system and tools will include actions to (1) define AGD-appropriate results and indicators, and (2) enable the default disaggregation of data by age, sex, and other diversity considerations, as well as AGD-sensitive processes in all stages of the Operations Management Cycle and appropriate qualitative data elements, to enable UNHCR's operations to understand the context and considerations for AGD programming and achievements.[28] In addition, UNHCR will improve data management systems to allow for analysis of disaggregated data related to needs assessments and situational analyses.

Mandatory Reporting
Country operations will report on progress in implementation of this Policy through the annual AGD reporting until the new RBM system is in place. In addition, the High Commissioner will select a number of country operations each year for deeper analysis of progress achieved through the core actions set out in Section 4 of this Policy.

Global Report
Based upon the reporting set out in this Section, the Division of International Protection (DIP) and the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) will produce a global report on progress in implementation of this Policy, annually beginning one year from the date of issuance. The findings in the report will be shared widely internally, and must form a basis for further prioritization and adaptation as required. A summary of the findings will be included in the report and/or made available separately in the public domain.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

This Policy is comprehensive in nature, and implementation must take place across the Organization, with key actors listed below:

Representatives and Heads of Offices are responsible for the implementation of this Policy and for reporting on the results achieved through the annual mandatory AGD report, as well as through mandatory indicators in UNHCR's results-based management framework. In addition, they consistently emphasise in all their communications with personnel, and advocacy with partners, the necessity of an AGD approach to advance implementation of this Policy.

The Division of International Protection (DIP) will devise a roll-out and support plan for field operations, providing standardised tools, advice and assistance to ensure that the AGD approach is implemented, with a particular focus on the core actions.

Division Directors will ensure that their policies, strategies, tools, guidance documents, and learning programmes are fully in line with and promote this Policy.

Bureau Directors will support country operations to implement this Policy, including throughout the operations management cycle. They will report major challenges encountered and progress achieved to the Senior Executive Team (SET).

The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, will oversee the implementation of this Policy and advise the SET on AGD considerations that require due attention when making strategic

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[28] Until the revised system is in place, UNHCR will take interim measures in the existing RBM system.

decisions, including in the Annual Programme Reviews and review of Multi-Year Multi-Partner Strategies.

The Deputy High Commissioner, who oversees the revision of the results-based management system, will ensure that the revision supports operationalization of this Policy, by defining AGD appropriate results and indicators and enabling a system that allows the default disaggregation of data by age, sex, and other diversity considerations, in order to fully understand the context and considerations for AGD programming and achievements.

7. Monitoring and Compliance

The implementation of and compliance with this Policy will be monitored by Bureau Directors for their respective regions. DIP will coordinate among Divisions and Bureaus, including DPSM, the analysis of AGD results at country level, report on overall progress, and ensure quality annual reporting on progress made and gaps in implementation, keeping the Senior Management Committee and SET updated on progress.

8. Dates

This Policy will be effective as of the date of release. DIP will regularly review the implementation progress, as well as challenges encountered by field operations, and share the findings with senior management, drawing their attention to situations where operations are not able to achieve the core actions. It will be reviewed and updated regularly by the Division of International Protection to reflect significant evolutions of UNHCR policies or practices.

9. Contact

The contact person for this Policy is the Deputy Director, Field Protection Service, Division of International Protection. The Field Protection Service is available to respond to questions related to implementation of this policy (hqts00@unhcr.org).

10. History

This Policy supersedes and replaces the 2001 Commitments to Refugee Women and the 2011 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy.

11. References

- o UN System-wide Action Plan for the Implementation of the CEB United Nations System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2012, available at: http://www.unsystem.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-swap
- o United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2122(2013), available at: http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions
- o UNHCR, UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations, May 2006, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/462df4232.html
- o Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (AAP/PSEA), 2017 IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual

Exploitation and Abuse, 11 December 2017, available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-56

- o Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 3 November 2017, available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc-revised_gender_policy_final_endorsed_12.27.2017_3.pdf
- o Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Accountability Framework for the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action 2018 - 2022, 6 November 2017, available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_revised_accountability_framework_final-endorsed_12.27.2017_0.pdf
- o Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action, 2017, available at: https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/51766/IASCpercent2C+The+Gender+Handbook+for+Humanitarian+Action+-+Second+Edition/7e6e7e9a-a43a-4631-ac5d-15e2afdb7ef1
- o UNHCR Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy 2011, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/4e1d5aba9.pdf
- o UNHCR, A Framework for the Protection of Children, 26 June 2012, (now expired) available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fe875682.html

Annex 1: Complementary Note on Age, Gender, and Diversity

Age, Gender, and Diversity unpacked

Age refers to the importance of taking into account where people are in their life cycle, as their capacities and needs change over time. Age influences, and can enhance or diminish, people's capacity to exercise their rights, and must be considered in all protection, assistance, and solutions programmes:

- **Children**[29] and **adolescents**[30] bring unique and valuable perspectives and solutions to problems confronting them and their communities. Female and male children and adolescents should be supported to participate and express their views in all matters affecting them in accordance with their age, gender, maturity, and capacity. Children and adolescents are entitled to special protection and assistance because they are at greater risk than adults of abuse, neglect, sexual and other forms of violence, exploitation, trafficking, and forced recruitment into armed groups.

- **Youth**[31] are frequently overlooked as a social group, and have the potential to make important contributions to protection and solutions for themselves and their communities, when given the opportunity to develop their talents and skills. [32] Displacement frequently forces female and male youth to take on new roles and responsibilities to try to meet their own and their families' protection and assistance needs. Displacement can lead to harmful coping strategies, such as sexual exploitation and sex work, the risk of forced recruitment in criminal and armed groups, and exploitation in the labour market.

- **Older persons**[33] may face heightened protection risks, as a result of aging factors alone, or in combination with other individual characteristics. The specific risks older persons face can be the result of physical and mental conditions, but can also result from obstacles encountered due to societal perceptions and the interactions of an individual with his or her environment. Older people can play vital roles in their households and communities, for example as transmitters of knowledge, culture, and skills.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles for women and men,[34] which are often central to the way in which people define themselves and are defined by others. Gender roles are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. Gender often defines the duties, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and privileges of women, men, girls, and boys in any context. Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment of rights,

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[29] Children are defined, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as "every human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".

[30] Although there is no internationally accepted definition of adolescence, the United Nations defines adolescents as individuals aged between 10 and 19 years.

[31] For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines youth as persons aged between 15 and 24 years, although UNHCR understands that the meaning of the term "youth" varies in different societies around the world, and flexibility is required to accommodate national and regional youth policies and directives, as well as different contextual realities.

[32] The Core Actions for Refugee Youth provide a framework to guide UNHCR's engagement with and for youth. See UNHCR, "We Believe in Youth" - Global Youth Consultations Final Report, November 2016, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/59dc80184.html.

[33] The United Nations defines an older person as someone over 60 years of age. However, ageing is not only a numerical designation, but a social construct based on custom, practice, and perceptions of the roles people play in their communities.

[34] "Sex" refers, in basic terms, to the biological differences between females and males.

responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Combatting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is inextricably linked to gender equality, as it challenges negative gender stereotypes and systemic discrimination arising from prejudice. Gender equality, a core commitment of UNHCR, implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of all genders are respected.

- **Women** and **girls** take on important roles in their communities and families, and contribute in various ways to strengthening protection and solutions. However, negative gender roles ascribed to them often ensure that they face specific, severe, and wide-spread barriers to accessing their rights, including fewer opportunities and resources, lower socio-economic status, less power and influence, numerous forms of discrimination, and heightened protection risks, including of SGBV.

- **Men** and **boys** can be agents of change for rights promotion, including increasing gender equality and preventing SGBV. Displacement creates protection risks for men and boys, including trafficking, forced recruitment, and certain forms of violence, including SGBV.

- **Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons** face complex challenges, threats, and barriers, and are often exposed to discrimination, abuse, prejudice, and violence due to their sex, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. This is often severely compounded in situations of displacement, where the nature of the discrimination they encounter can be particularly virulent, their isolation from family and community profound, and the harm inflicted on them severe.

4.3. **Diversity** refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, health, social and economic status, skills, and other specific personal characteristics. Diversity characteristics vary from person to person and intersect, making each person unique. These differences must be recognized, understood, respected, and valued by UNHCR in each context and operation in order to address effectively the needs of all persons of concern. Respecting diversity means recognizing and valuing those differences and creating a protective, inclusive, and non-discriminatory environment where everyone's rights are upheld.

- **Disability** arises out of the interaction between an individual's impairment and various barriers, including attitudinal and environmental barriers, which may hinder full and effective participation in society and access to opportunities on an equal basis with others. Due to those barriers, persons with disabilities are often excluded from programmes, lack support networks, and are denied participation in decisions that affect their lives. As a result, they may face heightened protection risks and be unable to access humanitarian assistance and programmes, such as education, livelihoods, and health care. Women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities have diverse needs and capacities, which need to be understood to inform programming, facilitate the identification and removal of barriers, and promote equal access and inclusion.

- Women, men, girls, and boys belonging to **national** or **ethnic**, **religious** and **linguistic minorities,** or **indigenous groups** often experience discrimination and marginalization. They are frequently excluded from participation and encounter obstacles to expressing their identity, factors which are compounded in displacement. They are likely to be affected both by the immediate events leading to their displacement and by the long-term legacy of discrimination.

An Age, Gender, and Diversity Approach throughout the Operations Management Cycle

Assessment: UNHCR will systematically gather, with active involvement of persons of concern, and analyse AGD-disaggregated information relating to persons of concern as part of assessment processes. This entails understanding and analysing the rights, needs, risks, and priorities of all persons of concern, the underlying causes of the challenges they face, and their capacities to address them.

Planning: Persons of concern should be consulted on the design of programmes and the corresponding decisions that are made. A multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategy, which includes AGD considerations, sets out operations' longer-term vision for the protection and solutions of persons of concern. It provides strategic directions and lays out AGD-related needs and risks and responses to them.

Implementation: Persons of concern are engaged during programme implementation, where possible, according to their priorities and capacities. Implementation modalities and interventions are designed and delivered to respond to the different risks, needs, and capacities of diverse women, men, girls, and boys.

Monitoring: Feedback from persons of concern indicates whether programmes are on track to deliver the expected results for all persons of concern. An AGD approach to monitoring also requires the collection and analysis of data for different groups, disaggregated data by age, sex, and other diversity considerations. Monitoring information on AGD is also used to adjust implementation, if necessary, and the next planning cycle.

Reporting: As is already required, UNHCR reports on the achievement of targets for different AGD groups, and explains challenges faced during implementation. Reporting also ensures transparency, including with persons of concern, about progress achieved and the ways that their feedback influences programming.

Evaluation: The views of diverse and representative groups of persons of concern are solicited for evaluations, and results are analysed to determine the specific impact on different groups.

Annex 2: UNHCR's Updated Commitments to Women and Girls

Background: UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women (2001)
UNHCR has been promoting gender equality for decades. We know that gender equality is fundamental to the well-being and rights of refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and stateless persons.[35] We also know that gender equality is relevant to every aspect of UNHCR's work. Women and girls of concern to UNHCR have priorities and capacities, but also face inequalities in accessing basic rights as a result of prevailing gender norms, and may have specific needs. This is why UNHCR, in 2001, adopted five institutional commitments to refugee women to advance their rights and implement concrete measures to improve their protection.

Why the need for the Updated Commitments to Women and Girls?
Following the adoption of the Commitments to Refugee Women (2001), UNHCR mainstreamed the inclusion of women in decision-making processes,[36] ensured individual registration for females,[37] and prevented and responded to SGBV.[38]

As the operational environment has evolved over the last fifteen years, new opportunities and challenges have arisen. With this in mind, UNHCR reviewed the Commitments to Refugee Women (2001), to determine what needs to be adjusted and how best to accelerate their implementation. The 2016 Review of Gender Equality in Operations involved consulting widely within the Organisation. This review was supplemented with separate external consultations, including with persons of concern, NGOs, UN agencies, and governments. The main conclusions are the following:

- **The Commitments to Refugee Women (2001) remain *the* most urgent areas for action to uphold the rights of women and girls of concern.** This is true despite the sustained focus and effort of UNHCR and our partners. These commitments remain crucial to all women and girls of concern, including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and stateless persons.
- **We want to ensure transformative change.** We want to build on our existing work and seek further opportunities for positive social change that will transform gender relations in the long-term. We want to challenge stereotypes and change unequal power relationships between women, men, girls, and boys.
- **We need to take into account age and diversity.** The populations of concern to UNHCR are numerous[39] and diverse. Effective implementation of the commitments requires that our actions promote the rights of all women and girls, including those of

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[35] UNHCR Strategic Directions 2017 – 2021. 13, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf.

[36] 66 per cent of 58 situations reporting on female participation have achieved over 35 per cent of active female participation in leadership and management structures (UNHCR, 2015 Global Strategic Priorities Progress Report, 2016, p.21, available at: http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2015per cent20Globalper cent20Strategicper cent20Prioritiesper cent20Progressper cent20Report.pdf.

[37] 79 per cent of 96 situations reporting on individual registration have achieved over 90 per cent of coverage individual persons of concern (Ibid, 10).

[38] Comprehensive support was provided to known SGBV in 70 per cent of 104 situations that reported on the indicator in 2016. 69 per cent of these 104 situations reported strong engagement of the community in SGBV prevention (Ibid, 12).

[39] By the end of 2016, UNHCR was responding to the protection needs of 67.7 million people, including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, as well as stateless persons (UNHCR Global Trends 2016).

different ages, abilities, diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities or indigenous groups.[40]

- **We must address forcibly displaced persons finding refuge in urban areas, involve host communities, and support access of persons of concern to national systems**. In addition to persons of concern living in camps or sites, we need to respond effectively to the growing number of women and girls of concern in urban and peri-urban areas.[41] We know that to work in a transformative way, we need to make sure that refugees living alongside host communities are included in national systems and structures to avoid parallel and unsustainable programmes,[42] and that host communities are supported, as well.

- **The time is *now* to make a breakthrough in realizing these commitments.** First, we now have the experience to capitalize on learning gained and to build on achievements. Second, recently agreed global standards and commitments on gender equality[43] require our focus and fullest attention.

UNHCR's Updated Commitments to Women and Girls
1. *Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures, and committees of persons of concern.*
2. *Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.*
3. *Women and girls have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core-relief items, and cash-based interventions.*
4. *Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, decent work, and quality education and health services.*
5. *Women and girls have access to comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services.*

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[40] Though the focus of the commitments is on women and girls, UNHCR fully recognizes that gender inequalities also negatively impact men and boys, and therefore promotes the equal rights, integrity, well-being, and equitable access to services for all persons of concern.

[41] By the end of 2016, for example, 60 per cent of refugees were living in urban areas (UNHCR Global Trends 2016).

[42] This is in line with the pledge to "leave no one behind" in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the New York Declaration on refugees and migrants and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

[43] For example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the World Humanitarian Summit Commitments, and the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.