



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



Putting People First

UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity
Accountability Report 2018-2019



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Cover photo: Fifteen-year-old Somali refugee Fatuma attends the special needs unit of the Hormud primary school in Dadaab. She dreams of becoming a teacher and helping others with hearing difficulties.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

"The best way to fight misconceptions is for people to see you engaged in life. When they see me teaching or playing with the band, they begin to understand that I'm not defined by my disability. "

A Syrian refugee with visual disability teaches music in a community centre in Azraq refugee camp - Jordan.

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List of Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected people	LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons
AEP	Accelerated Education Programme	LNOB	Leaving no one behind
AGD	Age, gender and diversity	MENA	Middle East and North Africa
BIP	Best-interest procedure	MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
CBP	Community-based protection	MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
CCCM	Camp coordination, camp management and governance	NGO	Non-governmental organization
CFS	Child friendly spaces	OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
CO	Country operation	OMC	Operations management cycle
COP	Country Operations Plan	PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
CPMS	Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action	OPD	Organization of persons with disabilities
CSO	Civil society organization	OVC	Other vulnerable children
CWC	Communication with Communities	PA	Participatory assessment
C4D	Community for Development	PAG	Protection action group
EAC	Educate A Child	PEP	Post-exposure prophylaxis
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative	POC	Person of concern
DER	Division of External Relations	PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
DESS	Division of Emergency, Security and Supply	REF	Refugee Engagement Forum
DIP	Division of International Protection	RIADIS	Latin American Network of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
DMT	Data management tool	RBM	Results-based management
DHR	Division of Human Resources	RMRP	Refugees and Migrants Response Plan
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	R4V	Situation Response for Venezuelans
FGD	Focus group discussion	SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
FRRM	Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism	SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
FSS	Field Safety Service	SH	Sexual harassment
GBV	Gender-based violence	SHWS	Staff Health and Welfare Service
GRF	Global Refugee Forum	SMS	Short Message Service
GYAC	Global Youth Advisory Council	SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
HQ	Head quarters	SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health rights
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	TRSN	Tertiary Refugee Student Network
IDAHOT	International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia	UASC	Unaccompanied and separated children
IDP	Internally displaced person	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IEC	Information-education-communication	UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross	WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
IGO	Inspector General's Office	WGQ	Washington Group Questions
IOM	International Organization for Migration	WSAT	Women's security awareness training
LAS	Legal Affairs Services	YIF	Youth Initiative Fund
		YPEC	Youth Peace Education Club

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

► Key Findings

This report reviews data on the implementation of the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy for the period 2018 until the end of 2019. The Policy outlines the commitments given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in respect of age, gender and diversity (AGD), accountability to affected people (AAP) and gender equality. It sets out the minimum standards and ten core actions against which progress can be measured. Both the implementation and the reporting on the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy are mandatory requirements within UNHCR.

A summary of the key findings for each core action is provided below. These key findings highlight important lessons learned and priority areas for follow-up. The report also contains six spotlight sections on specific groups of concern to UNHCR, as well as two promising practices of relevance to the Age, Gender and Diversity approach.

Core Action 1

At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and where possible, for the purposes of analysis and programming.

The collection of data disaggregated by age and sex is standard practice across all UNHCR operations. Data disaggregated by other diversity elements is, however, less systematic. A more prevalent focus is on disability, in line with the most recent global standards. In 2019, 28 operations reported progress with disaggregating data by age, sex and diversity. Moreover, all three UNHCR-led or co-led clusters — protection, shelter and camp coordination, camp management and governance (CCCM) — ensured that data collected for needs analyses and response planning was disaggregated by age, gender and, increasingly, disability. Progress has also been observed with disability disaggregated data, for example in field testing for the Washington Group Questions (WGQs) to improve the identification of persons with disabilities in the **Middle East** and **North Africa** (MENA) region. Further expansion of the implementation of the Washington Group Questions to forced displacement is scheduled for 2021. Efforts to improve the disaggregation of data in respect of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) has been observed in the Americas region.

Age, gender and diversity data are collected during assessment, monitoring, registration, protection monitoring and other exercises, and used to identify protection gaps and risks, along with trends that need to be addressed through UNHCR programmes and interventions.

Reporting indicates that age, gender and diversity disaggregated data are used to develop and inform programmes, resulting in more targeted and relevant interventions for displaced women, men, girls and boys.

Core
Action 2

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.

Conducting participatory assessments (PAs) which engage communities of concern is a mandatory activity that all the operations undertake at least once a year. In 2019, UNHCR-led 510 participatory assessments, encompassing all people of concern. These were mostly in the form of focus group discussions, with various groups expressing their needs and concerns; however, they also involved community meetings, structured interviews, surveys and home visits with persons at heightened risk. A few operations reported employing specific approaches and tools to engage diverse groups, such as children and youth. Reporting however indicates that participatory methodologies are primarily used in the assessment phase, and less consistently in other phases of the programme management cycle. Some progress in this area was seen in a number of operations, for example refugees in **Lebanon** were engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Although remote monitoring was already in place in some operations, such as those in the **Ukraine, Kenya** and **Afghanistan**, the essential value of this practice was reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Core
Action 3

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.

Communicating with persons of concern is central to UNHCR's core protection activities. Communication is enabled through proximity to displaced populations, which is facilitated by UNHCR's community-based protection approach, and is confirmed through the organisation's commitment to accountability to affected people. Operations rely on a wide variety of channels for communication and information sharing; these include community outreach volunteers, counselling channels, home visits, radio broadcast, leaflets and other communication materials, bulk text messaging, dedicated e-mail addresses or phone lines, social media and other web-based platforms. Access to, the use of, and the participation of persons of concern in choosing and designing these mechanisms is, however, not consistent among operations, nor across the varying age, gender and diversity groups. This is of particular concern when examining inequality as regards access to digital technology of women and girls. Very few operations specifically highlighted consulting communities on the effectiveness and accessibility of the various modes of communication that exist in order to ensure access and use for all.

Core
Action 4

At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.

In line with UNHCR's commitments to accountability to affected people, the vast majority of operations reported the establishment of feedback and response mechanisms for persons of concern, these mechanisms most commonly taking the form of hotlines/helplines, focus group discussions, open receptions, surveys, complaint boxes and post-distribution monitoring exercises.

One issue that remains problematic is the fact that feedback and response systems are often designed without the involvement of the various groups among the affected populations, nor an understanding of the information they require and preferred mechanisms to ensure their accessibility.

Questions on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) are now included in many participatory assessments. However, a systematic effort is required across all operations to organise more structured consultations on the risks, communication needs and channels to inform the design of communication tools for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Core
Action 5

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.

UNHCR has a long-standing policy aimed at ensuring inclusiveness and supporting meaningful participation in its approach to programming. Most operations conducting participatory exercises reported integrating the views of persons of concern in making improvements to ongoing activities and planning their future strategies more effectively. However, more documentary evidence is needed on how the inputs of persons of concern are used to shape and adjust programmes.

Core
Action 6

A: *At a minimum, UNHCR operations will ensure that 50 percent of participants in management and leadership structures falling under UNHCR's authority are female, and will advocate the same with its partners, including governments.*

All operations reported engaging women in leadership structures, committees of persons of concern and community management structures. A priority was to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures, as well as in committees of people of concern. Of the 46 operations reporting on UNHCR's global strategic priority indicator for female participation, 56 percent had either improved or maintained the percentage of female participants in leadership and management structures, although the representation of women was almost always less than that of men. Discriminatory social and cultural norms, limited literacy and education, and burdensome household and caring responsibilities are among the reasons that continue to prevent women from participating, particularly at the decision-making level, in most of the countries where UNHCR operates.

Core
Action 6

B: *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.*

Individual registration and documentation of women, men, girls and boys is common practice across most UNHCR refugee operations, with many offices establishing mobile and/or fast-track registration systems for particularly vulnerable applicants, such as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), unaccompanied and separated children, persons in detention or with medical conditions, women at risk, older women and men, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex (LGBTI) persons. In countries where registration of asylum seekers, refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees or stateless persons is carried out by the national authorities, UNHCR advocates that this to be done in accordance with internationally accepted standards and with due consideration of the protection risks of all the different groups.

UNHCR is also mandated to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness around the world. Efforts on this include mapping studies, capacity building for national stakeholders, such as immigration officers, legal professionals and judges, to identify and address statelessness, and verification exercises for the identification of those at risk of statelessness.

Core
Action 6

C: *Depending on the context, UNHCR operations will increase the percentage of women who are the primary recipients of assistance within households and receive material and/or cash-based assistance.*

In most operations, women are generally the preferred recipients of assistance, unless there is a reasonable concern that this could put them at risk, of intimate partner violence for instance. For example, women were 43 percent of the direct beneficiaries of cash-based interventions. In such cases, the support of a SGBV specialist is usually sought to analyse the context and prevent, respond and mitigate the protection needs and risks through a survivor-centred, do-no-harm approach.

Core
Action 6

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 the livelihood, education, and health programmes it delivers, and will advocate with its partners, including governments, for their equal access to public services.*

Evidence indicates that slightly more than half of the participants of livelihood initiatives are women. A large number of operations reported working on enhancing women's economic empowerment through vocational training and income-generation activities, mostly tailored to the needs of women.

In all operations, UNHCR strives to guarantee school education for both boys and girls, including through their inclusion into the national education system. Girls are accorded special attention, as cultural barriers and traditions, a lack of separate hygiene facilities, compounded with the tendency of parents to prioritize boys' education, often prevent them from accessing and benefiting from educational opportunities. Despite these efforts, however, about 3.7 million refugee children are still estimated to be out of school.

Finally, only a few operations mentioned implementing reproductive health and maternity services for women and girls.

Core
Action 6

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 its partners, including governments.*

UNHCR has strengthened and expanded SGBV prevention and response programming by ensuring that SGBV Prevention, Risk Mitigation and Response Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are in place or developed through an inclusive and transparent process. Priority has been given to the response to SGBV incidents; the capacity building for key stakeholders and awareness raising of communities, in particular women and girls and groups at risk, and the sharing of information on where and how to access safe services, such as health, psychosocial, safety, security and legal services. With the launch of the new "Policy on the Prevention, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence" and the accompanying operational guidance in 2020, comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services will be further reinforced.



I. Introduction

Malian refugee women carry their belongings through Mbera refugee camp in Mauritania. **Photo credit:** © UNHCR/Sylvain Cherkaoui

In March 2018, the UNHCR updated its Age, Gender and Diversity Policy.¹ The policy consolidates, revises and renews UNHCR's long-standing commitments to an age, gender and diversity approach, accountability to affected people and gender equality, and establishes mandatory core actions to help strengthen these commitments and extends their reach to all persons of concern, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless persons, and those at risk of statelessness.²

The Policy is mandatory for all UNHCR bureaux, operations, and divisions. It strengthens organizational accountability, clearly defining specific responsibilities

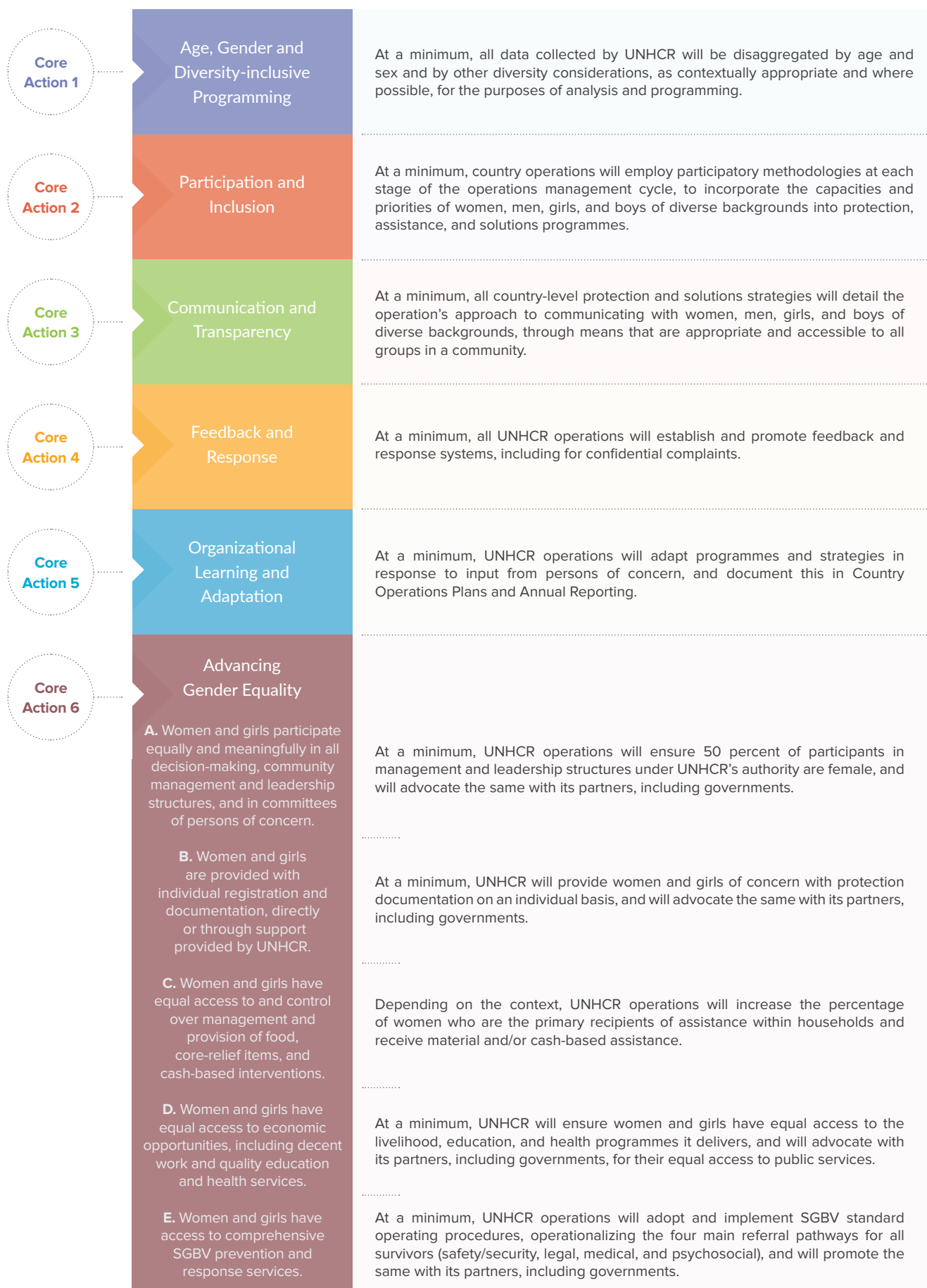
across senior management and staff, and calling for consistent monitoring and regular evidence-based reporting through a set of standard indicators.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the areas of engagement and related core actions as outlined in the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. The core actions defined establish a set of obligatory minimum standards to be met in fulfilling the commitments given for the respective area of engagement.

¹ UNHCR (2018) AGD Policy. <https://www.unhcr.org/5aa13c0c7.pdf>

² This Policy builds on the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming approach, which has long been at the core of UNHCR modus operandi, and is essential to ensure understanding and response to the needs of all persons of concern. Reference to the previous Age, Gender and Diversity Policy can be found here: UNHCR (2011), Age, Gender and Diversity Policy <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4def34f6887.html>. Moreover, reference to the 2001 UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women, which were superseded by the 2018 Policy, can be found here: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/479f3b2a2.html>.

Figure 1: Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, UNHCR (2018).



This introductory section is followed by a summary of the sources and the analysis methodology on which this report is based. Chapter II gives an overview of progress on the implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy that describes the state-of play for each area of engagement and the related core actions. Chapter III on organizational accountability provides an account of the organization-wide efforts made to promote protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and to create an environment that enables full and effective implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. Finally, Chapter IV on the conclusions reached and ways forward summarizes the achievements to date and explores ways to move the age, gender and diversity agenda forward.

Implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy calls for an approach that is both systematic and methodological across all operations and functions. Here, the report can only analyse what is currently in place and which will serve as a baseline for developing future UNHCR actions.

▶ Methodology

The Age, Gender and Diversity Report for the 2018-2019 biennium provides an overview of the action taken to implement the 2018 Policy.³ This report is primarily based on analysis of the year-end reporting by UNHCR country operations, regional offices and headquarters for 2018 and 2019, a literature review of relevant practices, available researches and studies, and consultations with informants from the relevant technical units at headquarters level. Data from the Global Strategic Priorities Reports 2018-2019 were used to complement this information. A number of promising practices were selected to showcase the reality of the age, gender and diversity approach in UNHCR operations from March 2018 until early 2020 and supplement those already documented that are of relevance to age, gender and diversity.⁴

This report sets out the state of play as regards the areas of engagement and core actions set out in the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy after the first two years of implementation, and gives due consideration

for all the work being undertaken to equip UNHCR staff – and partners - at different levels and exercising different functions for consistently and effectively implementing, monitoring and reporting on the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. The report is descriptive rather than exhaustive. A pragmatic approach has been taken that combines reported information, with a number of promising practices and operational highlights that focus on specific groups among the population of concern.

Importantly, this report has been drawn up in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has called for unprecedented containment measures and restrictions to be introduced in almost all countries around the world. UNHCR has been ramping up efforts to increase capacity to prevent, mitigate and respond to the potential spread of COVID-19 among the forcibly displaced populations in the world, with a particular focus on those living in crowded conditions, without adequate access to information, water and sanitation facilities, and in countries with fragile health care systems. To render this report relevant to the current realities of operations around the world, this report pays tribute to these efforts.

The exceptional situation at the time of writing required a degree of flexibility in relation to information collection and validation. In this regard, the limited interactions made possible by the COVID-19 pandemic, aggravated by the amount of work and extra effort it generated for all staff across the organization, resulted in a need to creatively build on the synergies, intersections and complementarities that the age, gender and diversity approach naturally entails, harnessing the work of colleagues across the organization, particularly in relation to the selection and documentation of practices. Thus, this report has made the best use of the information available at the given time and under these particular circumstances.

³ Annual reporting on progress made and gaps in implementation is, in fact, a monitoring requirement laid down in the Policy.

⁴ More specifically, the existing compilations of relevance to this report were: UNHCR (2020) Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Prevention, Risk Mitigation and Response – Promising Practices; UNHCR (2017) Learning from experience to advance Gender Equality: Promising Practices in Asia; UNHCR (2017) Gender Equality promising practices Syrian Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa; UNHCR (2019) Age, Gender and Diversity Good Practices. UNHCR Europe.



II. Progress on the implementation of the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

Amal (left), a refugee from Syria, Marth (centre), a refugee from South Sudan, and Howaida (right), a refugee from Sudan, work at the UNHCR supported MADE51 project in Cairo. **Photo credit:** © UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

► Age, Gender and Diversity-inclusive Programming

Core Action 1

At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and where possible, for the purposes of analysis and programming.

This action refers to all operational data that pertain to the persons affected by a crisis and the response provided. In line with global standards,⁵ data should, in principle, be disaggregated by sex, age, and disability and other diversities where appropriate and feasible.⁶ As per this core action, the purpose of collecting data disaggregated by the relevant dimensions is both analysis and programming.

Collection of data disaggregated by age, sex and other diversities is essential to understand the different and specific capacities, needs and exposure to protection risks of the women, men, girls and boys with whom UNHCR and its partners work in order to ensure that the response is relevant and appropriate. A review of age, gender and diversity operational data

⁵ For example, the new SPHERE standards refer to the disaggregation of data by sex, age and disability (page 11), and the IASC (2019) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action recommend sex, age and disability as the minimum disaggregation, and provide extensive guidance on how to do it.
⁶ UNHCR Guidance Note on CAI.

conducted in 2019 in eight field operations revealed the existence of some level of age, gender and diversity disaggregated data collection across all operations and for all population types.⁷ Yet, there is little to no standardization of terminology, categories or data structures, including definitions for age, gender and diversity data disaggregation, which makes consistency and comparison of data challenging.

Evidence from operations shows that the collection of data disaggregated by age and sex is now standard practice across all UNHCR-led operations and is advocated for in places where data are collected by others, as is the case, for example, in **Europe**. In 2019, 28 operations reported progress with disaggregating data by age, sex and diversity. Moreover, all three UNHCR-led or co-led clusters — protection, shelter and camp coordination, camp management and governance — ensured that data collected for needs analyses and response planning was disaggregated by age, gender and, increasingly, disability.⁸

Understanding the need to adapt data collection methods to the different groups of concern, operations in **Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Mauritania, Ecuador, Jordan, and Morocco** integrated tools for the systematic collection of data on disability, such as the Washington Group Questions⁹ and accompanying guidance, into their standard data collection tools and processes, including at the level of registration, reception and during community outreach.¹⁰

A considerable number of operations also disaggregate data based on other characteristics relevant to a particular context, such as legal status, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education level, and work experience. For example, in 2019, UNHCR **Ecuador** established an information management team to work alongside Protection and Programme to ensure data disaggregated by age and gender, gender identity, and disability is collected and properly analysed so

that it can inform programmes and advocacy actions. In **Costa Rica**, data are disaggregated by gender (including people who do not categorize themselves as either male or female), legal status, country of nationality and origin, disability, specific needs, education level and work experience, among other categories.

Age, gender and diversity data are commonly used to identify trends and specific issues that require UNHCR intervention, to profile persons of concern and to identify protection gaps, in the context of vulnerability assessments, and for monitoring and reporting purposes.

For UNHCR programming to be age, gender and diversity inclusive, it is not sufficient that data on age, sex and other diversity dimensions are collected; they also need to be used in planning exercises, project design and implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.



Mekombo and her husband Hassan, both members of the minority Pemba community, recently attended a UNHCR workshop in Shimoni, Kenya to share their experiences of statelessness.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Roger Arnold

⁷ Eight UNHCR country operations were selected to participate in the Review. The selection of these countries was designed to cover the main population groups of concern to UNHCR (refugees, IDPs, stateless persons, and mixed situations), as well as different operational environments (emergency, post emergency, return and protracted situations).

⁸ UNHCR (2019) Global Strategic Priorities Report.

⁹ The Washington Group of Questions is a tool to identify persons with disabilities. It consists of a set of six questions, initially developed for use in censuses and later recommended for disaggregating the Sustainable Development Goals by disability status. For more information on the establishment and purpose of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) refer to: <http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/about/history/>. The recent UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Operational Data Review revealed that only 9 percent of the eight operations surveyed reported using the Washington Group set of questions to identify and classify disabilities, while 77 percent indicated using other means.

¹⁰ This reflects a commitment undertaken by UNHCR at the Global Disability Summit in 2018. Data from the Vulnerability Assessment Framework, using the Washington Group Questions, ultimately revealed a prevalence as high as 21 percent of Syrian refugees living with a disability, and 45 percent of households with at least one individual who has a disability.

What does diversity really entail?

First coined in the late 1980s, the term intersectionality was formalized by UNHCR in 2011 in the context of the first Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. As such, UNHCR has been a pioneer in the implementation of an intersectional approach in crisis situations.

Simply defined, intersectionality is “*the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination.*”¹¹ An intersectional approach recognizes that each person is unique, and values differences between persons, whether actual or perceived, as defining characteristics of a person’s capacities, needs, and exposure to risks.

In the context of the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, diversity refers to the different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, health, social and economic status, skills, and other specific personal characteristics that make each person unique in their needs and concerns.¹²

Diversity characteristics vary from person to person and intersect to shape an individual’s experience of displacement. For example, in **Ecuador**, a meeting was organized by UNHCR to discuss challenges faced by indigenous populations living with disabilities.¹³ **Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt** have conducted an analysis of systems for ensuring accountability to affected people in order to identify barriers to people with specific needs of different ages, genders and backgrounds, accessing feedback, response and complaint mechanisms.

The age, gender and diversity approach requires consideration to be given to how age and sex intersect with other characteristics, such as disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, income level, education, etc., and how such intersections may lead to different capacities, experiences and aspirations. In addition, recognizing, understanding, and respecting diversity means valuing those differences and creating a protective, inclusive, and non-discriminatory environment where everyone’s rights are upheld, barriers to equal access and participation are identified and addressed, and the specific needs of all are met.

The participatory approaches and methodologies used by UNHCR and its partners ensure that the rights, needs, priorities and capacities of all are captured and incorporated in programmes and in other initiatives without discrimination on the basis of age, sex, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other characteristics.

The concept of intersectionality also underlies the Leaving no one behind (LNOB) principle and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which recognizes the multiple and intersecting inequalities that so often prevent the full and equal enjoyment of specific groups’ rights in practice. While intersecting inequalities exist everywhere, the identities and experiences of those furthest behind differ widely across countries and regions, and are typically further exacerbated by crisis situations.

Most of the operations also generically reported using those data to inform programming. Confirmation of this came from the 2019 age, gender and diversity data review, with 80 percent of the eight operations surveyed reporting having used age, gender and diversity-disaggregated data across the entire operations management cycle.¹⁴

Although evidence of this is rather limited when compared to experiences of data collection, the information available suggests that where age, gender and diversity data are analysed and used for planning, implementation and monitoring, interventions are more targeted and directly relevant to the groups they are intended for.

UNHCR **Tunisia** ensures that data collection is disaggregated by age and sex, as well by other diversity considerations, and analyses them for adequate planning and provision of services to persons of concerns applying an age, gender and diversity-sensitive approach. Through its protection partners, the operation ensures that births are registered and persons with statelessness status are recorded so that the cases can be identified on v4 case management system and solutions can be advocated with the Government.

¹¹ UN Women (2019) Turning Promises into Actions: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

¹² UNHCR (2018) Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. <https://www.unhcr.org/5aa13c0c7.pdf>

¹³ UNHCR (2019) UNHCR’s approach to persons with disabilities in displacement <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%27s%20Approach%20to%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20-%20November%202019.pdf>

¹⁴ UNHCR (2020, forthcoming) Age, Gender and Diversity Operational Data Review.

In **India**, data disaggregated by age, sex, and disability were used to design cash-based interventions and to better plan the distribution of items to Rohingya refugees, and, in particular, to project the numbers, in specific locations, of possible recipients, such as girls of school age, women who could benefit from hospital deliveries, older persons and people with disabilities without effective family support. In **Malawi**, the analysis of disaggregated data helped to identify gaps in school enrolment and attendance of children and to tap funding opportunities, such as Educate a Child.¹⁵ In **Mauritania**, disaggregated data enabled the prioritization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons for refugee status determination and ensured timely and effective protection and assistance. The continuous update and registration of disaggregated data also facilitated monitoring and the provision of assistance. Persons with reduced mobility, such as older persons, were provided with support through general food and cash distributions, including home delivery.

In **Venezuela**, age, gender and diversity data were used to set up mapping for community structures, including female community members, minority groups, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, indigenous people and older persons. UNHCR is implementing a protection monitoring tool to collect information on the profiles of displaced persons in **Venezuela** and the protection incidents those persons encounter. The tool is aimed at gaining a better understanding of displacement trends and the protection needs and risks in order to inform programming and response.



Gabriela, a 32-year-old Venezuelan refugee, who is six months pregnant, spends time with her mother Graciela and one-year-old niece, also Gabriela, after arriving home from work in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Gabo Morales



Mohammed Asim 11, a Rohingya refugee child jumps during International Day of Education 2019 at the Seagull Primary School for informal education at Kutupalong Registered Camp for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Firas Al-Khateeb

Other important considerations arising from the 2019 age, gender and diversity operational data review are as follows. 1. The lack of systems, standard approaches and processes and guidance is a common challenge to the collection, analysis and use of data across operations. 2. There is a need for a standard information management process coordinated with protection across the operation management cycle (OMC). 3. Data on programme design elements, such as access to and the safety of schools, health, and bathing facilities, and cultural and contextual barriers that may prevent the inclusion of at-risk groups, emerged as critical for age, gender and diversity-sensitive programmes and need to be more systematically collected.¹⁶

¹⁵ Educate a Child is a global initiative, launched by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar, which aims to significantly reduce the numbers of children worldwide who are missing out on their right to education. More details can be found here: <https://educateachild.org/about>

¹⁶ UNHCR (2020, forthcoming) Age, Gender and Diversity Operational Data Review.



Working with Persons with Disabilities

Why does it matter?

Disability inclusion is an institutional commitment at UNHCR, as outlined in the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. It is rooted in the human-rights-based approach of the organization, and is in line with global standards, including the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) launched by the UN-Secretary General in June 2019. UNHCR has been an active contributor to the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and is committed to strengthening the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in programming and coordination.

Forcibly displaced persons with disabilities have the same basic needs as other persons and can contribute in different ways to the wellbeing of their families and communities. In humanitarian crises, persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) can play critical roles as responders, technical experts, advocates and conduits for information and services. In the context of mass displacement, organizations of persons with disabilities are well-placed to contribute to the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

At the same time, however, difficulties with moving, hearing, seeing, communicating or learning, coupled with the physical, environmental and attitudinal barriers that marginalize and discriminate against them, may hinder the access of persons with disabilities' to protection, assistance, and solutions, as well as their capacity to fully and effectively participate in society on an equal basis with others.¹⁷ Hence, persons with disabilities are more likely to be left behind or abandoned during displacement; they are often at higher risk of violence, exploitation and abuse; they face barriers to access basic services, and are often excluded from education and livelihood opportunities.

Examples of what UNHCR does

In collaboration with the Latin American Network of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (RIADIS), UNHCR organized a conference in **Ecuador** on asylum and disabilities in which organizations of persons with disabilities from all over Latin America participated, as well as refugee representatives and local government.¹⁸

Site infrastructure and affordable transport options are improved to strengthen access to services in many operations, including in **Kenya**. Assistive devices are provided in many locations, including **Chad, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syrian Arab**

Republic, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe, helping to facilitate the access of persons with disabilities to information and services.

In **Libya**, psychosocial support services and physiotherapy are delivered to people with disabilities and their care givers to reduce distress, contribute to overcoming behavioural difficulties, support emotional control, support the process of acceptance of disability and improve communication with the care giver/family, and support a suitable family environment. In 2019, 1,519 persons with disabilities and caregivers were provided with psychosocial support (PSS) and 861 persons with disabilities or functional limitations received rehabilitation services.

In **Bangladesh**, UNHCR has supported the establishment of the Age and Disability Task Team, whose purpose is to keep the spotlight on the intersectionality of disability with age together with other factors, like gender and sexual orientation.

UNHCR **Venezuela** has worked in close coordination with organizations with experience in sign language and other tools for communicating with persons with disabilities with the aim of including these tools in UNHCR programming. The operation has also contextualized accessibility assessment tools to conduct regular accessibility reviews of UNHCR and partner premises, and services have been developed that have become part of the UNHCR Venezuela age, gender and diversity action plan.

Globally, two new UNHCR resources on working with persons with disabilities in forced displacement have been released: an e-learning tool on Working with Persons with Disabilities in Forced Displacement, developed jointly with the Women's Refugee Commission, and a revised version of the Need to Know Guidance, developed in conjunction with the International Rescue Committee, Humanity & Inclusion and Under the Same Sun.

In order to enhance the capacity of various field operations to ensure the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in education, four webinars were delivered by the UNHCR HQ Education Section in late 2019. The webinars focused on successful approaches to inclusion and awareness raising and on the terminology that is appropriate when talking about refugee children with disabilities. In addition, complementary written guidance on appropriate terminology was produced based on the webinar.

¹⁷The Middle East and North Africa Bureau conducted a research on refugees with disabilities "The Power of Inclusion. Mapping the Protection Responses for Persons with Disabilities Among Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa" to identify key gaps, good practices and opportunities to enhance protection responses to and with refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities across the region.

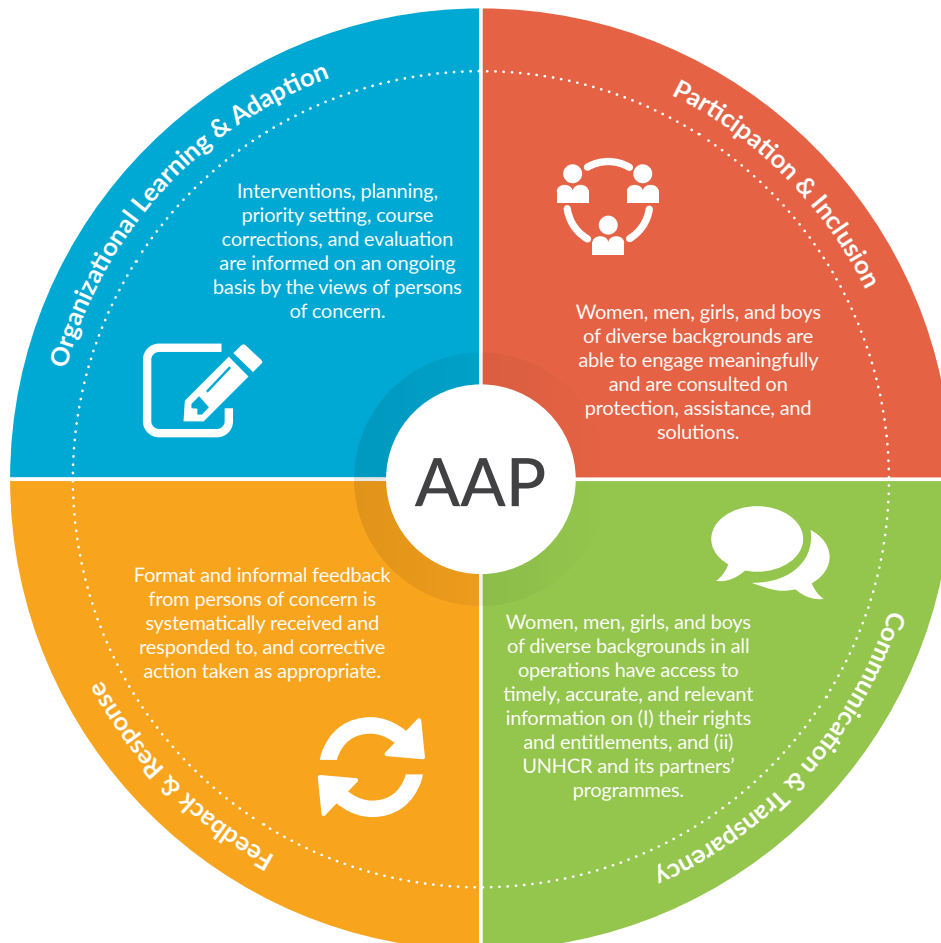
¹⁸ UNHCR (2019) UNHCR's approach to persons with disabilities in displacement. <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%27s%20Approach%20to%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20-%20November%202019.pdf>

▶ Accountability to affected people

This section sets out the progress achieved in relation to Areas of Engagement 2-5 reflecting UNHCR's commitment to be accountable to the people it protects and assists by implementing its programmes through community-based and participatory approaches, ensuring two-way communication through the community's preferred means, establishing accessible and easy to use feedback and response mechanisms and adapting programmes to the needs and priorities of the community. Combined, these four areas of engagement ensure that UNHCR takes account of (participation and inclusion), gives account to (communication and transparency), and is held to account by the persons

of concern (feedback and response; organizational learning and adaptation). This is done by ensuring that women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds are actively and meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives, and that programmes are responsive to their needs, capacities and concerns. This culture of accountability is underpinned by a zero-tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and the efforts made to operationalize the commitment to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at regional and operational levels through awareness raising and by enhanced detection and response.¹⁹

Figure 2: Accountability to affected people, UNHCR Operational Guidelines (forthcoming).



¹⁹A survey on accountability to affected populations conducted in 2018 indicated the need for institutional standards and guidance on systematization and programming for accountability to affected people; formalisation of processes related to documentation, analysis, and feedback reporting; and support for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, the need to reformat the Annual Age, Gender and Diversity Report also emerged to better capture implementation of core actions for accountability to affected people. As a result, Operational Guidelines on Accountability to Affected People were developed in 2019. Other age, gender and diversity-related organization-wide efforts are referred to Chapter III. Organizational Accountability.

Overcoming barriers faced by persons with communication disabilities

Overview

In January 2019, UNHCR began collaboration with HelpAge on the development of innovative communication tools for persons with communication disabilities. Since then, the two organizations have worked with Burundian refugees with communication disabilities in Western Tanzania to identify communication barriers and design new tools and possible

solutions to overcome them. While the initiative is still in the testing and refining stages, anecdotal observations indicate that it has been having a positive influence on UNHCR staff, service providers and refugee community members, who now believe that communication with persons with communication disabilities is possible.

What makes it a promising practice?

The following features were identified as making this practice promising:

Process-wise:

- Innovative tools, such as objects, pictograms and photographs, to augment communication when paired with gestures; written text and signs are designed to address the limited access to and awareness of services in camps and dependency on others for persons with communication disabilities.
- The versatility of the new tools, which resulted in improved communication with persons with communication disabilities as well as in the acquisition of new skills, e.g. taking photographs, and enhanced interactions between them and other community members.
- The potential usage of the tools in other settings: camp's hospital, police station and other service points.

Age, gender and diversity specific:

- Capacity to identify and include the diverse communication requirements of a heterogeneous group, including hard of hearing persons, deaf persons and persons with cognitive and psychosocial disabilities who used French, American, Kirundi and 'home sign' (a pidgin form of sign language), as well as gestures, movements and vocalization to communicate.
- The sense of ownership and empowerment that resulted from the engagement of persons with communication disabilities in the creation of the new visual vocabulary.
- Their participation in all phases of the initiative, from the identification of communication barriers, to the formulation, design and testing of possible solutions.
- The involvement of technical sectors and service providers to further refine the tools to support persons with communication disabilities to voice their needs, enhancing two-way communication and stronger inclusive programming.



Taking photo of common objects used every day in Nduta refugee camp in Tanzania.

Photo credit: © Edina Kimata, HelpAge International

Participation and Inclusion

Core Action 2

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.

The majority of the operations reported conducting participatory assessment exercises at least once a year to allow for each group among the population of concern to express their needs. 510 UNHCR-led participatory assessments, encompassing all people of concern, were reported across operations in 2019.²⁰

For the most part, participatory assessments take the form of focus group discussions with various groups according to their sex, age and other relevant criteria, such as disability status. Other methods of engagement include community meetings, structured interviews and home visits with persons at heightened risk.

A few operations reported employing specific tools to engage with children and youth. In **China**, for example, children had the possibility of actively participating in the participatory assessment through the use by UNHCR staff of pedagogical tools, such as drawing, to help them describe their life in a safe and protected manner. Similarly, **Peru** developed and tested age-appropriate assessment tools for adolescent boys and girls. UNHCR **Russia** met separately with groups of refugee children (mostly aged 10-17, with two participants being aged 5 and 8) to learn about the challenges they face and conducted the participatory assessment that took the form of recreational activities in museums and community centres.

Examples of participatory assessments with other groups were found in the **UK**, where a participatory assessment with 143 resettled refugee women, including LGBTI persons, was conducted and the results used to inform the advocacy strategy. In **India**, UNHCR and its partners organized sessions with the care givers of children at risk and persons with disabilities to identify common challenges and discuss a way forward.



Rohingya children participate in Essence of Learning activities in one of Caritas's child-friendly spaces in Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh. Photo credit: © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

²⁰ UNHCR (2019) Global Strategic Priorities Report.



Refugee student delegation holds a two-day workshop in Germany to work on setting up a new Tertiary Education Student Network.
 Photo credit: © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

Evidence suggests the use of participatory methodologies primarily in the assessment phase and less consistently in other phases of the operation management cycle. There were a few notable exceptions. UNHCR **Philippines** utilizes a whole-of-society approach whereby the active involvement of persons of concern is ensured in support of policy and planning development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes. Inputs then feed into dialogues and advocacy initiatives with a wide range of stakeholders, from government agencies, civil society and faith-based organizations, private sector, and academia, to collaboratively strategize on means to address key needs and concerns.

In **Europe**, UNHCR is often engaged in building the capacity of governments and partners on participatory methodologies. In **Italy**, UNHCR, in partnership with the humanitarian aid organization INTERSOS, has implemented a programme of support for local organisations which are refugee-led or promote the active participation of refugees. The objective of the programme, aptly entitled “Partecipazione”, is to promote the protection and active participation of refugees in the economic, social and cultural life of Italy. UNHCR and the Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) jointly conducted training on participatory assessments to facilitate the conduct of those assessments and promote the use of participatory approaches by the Belgian Agency in its operational work.

In **Uganda**, multiple consultations took place with women, men, including youth aged 18-24, and boys and girls of diverse backgrounds (persons with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities) to inform decisions

on the opening of bank accounts, the provision of cash-based assistance and the monetization of menstrual hygiene management kits. **South Sudan** organized monthly national refugee’s coordination meetings, roundtable discussions on statelessness and refugee eligibility committee meetings in order to involve persons of concern in needs assessments and programme design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

In **Lebanon**, 129 refugees were mobilized as evaluators to help increase refugee engagement in the monitoring and evaluation of protection programmes. By the end of 2019, this practice was expanded to other sectors, such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Three pilot operations in **Morocco, Algeria** and **Israel** involved real-time analysis of participatory methodologies, increasing the accessibility and comparability of data, and facilitating feedback and response to communities. The project was anchored in the coordinated work of a multi-functional team that involved programme, information management, and protection colleagues.

Finally, in **Europe**, consultations of youth during monitoring and evaluation phases, and the related adaptations were a mandatory feature of the small projects supported through the Youth Initiative Fund (YIF). Some 43 projects led by youth across 29 countries were supported by UNHCR in 2018-2019 through the YIF. Spearheaded in community mobilization and action, youth benefited from the leadership opportunities provided and, in exercised their roles, proved their potential in serving communities as connectors and protection actors.



Refugee and Kenyan children with and without intellectual disabilities participate in a unified sport activity in Kakuma refugee camp thanks to Special Olympics Kenya and Humanity and Inclusion.
 Photo credit: © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno



Working with Older Persons

Why does it matter?

Older persons are a relevant, distinct, and heterogenous group that requires intentional and specific attention and visualization.

Displacement situations pose serious challenges for older persons and yet their rights, needs and contributions remain largely overlooked. Older persons may have chronic health issues and require specific nutrition interventions; they may also be at heightened risk of violence, discrimination and exclusion. An estimated 46 percent of older people have a disability and face additional barriers to their access and enjoyment of assistance, protection, and solutions, all exacerbated in situations of displacement.

The current COVID-19 pandemic presents an especially high risk for older persons, and particularly those with pre-existing medical conditions. Mental and psychosocial health considerations are essential in times of social distancing, and where movement restrictions and isolation apply, such as for example in reception facilities. This may require increasing phone and online connectivity.²¹

At the same time, it is critical not to frame the experiences of older persons in terms of frailty and dependency, and to recognize the vital support, guidance and knowledge they continue to provide to families and communities even in displacement settings. For example, older women are often critical care givers for children who have either lost their parents or were separated from them during displacement.

UNHCR adheres to the international frameworks that define the rights and minimum inclusive standards for older persons in the areas of protection and assistance delivery. Among them, the [2018 Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for older people and people with disabilities](#), a Sphere companion set of standards.

Examples of what UNHCR does

UNHCR is revising age brackets for youth and older persons to align with inter-agency standards.

Efforts are being made to ensure the identification and registration of older persons, and their access to documentation and information.

Older persons are engaged through participatory assessment exercises to ensure their specific needs are captured in most operations, such as in **Ethiopia** and **Lebanon**.

In **India**, older persons came together as Elderly Clubs to provide support to each other, create awareness among them and share their concerns with UNHCR and its partners.

The Community-Based Protection (CBP) team in **Tunisia** have created the Senior Persons Group dedicated to persons of concern over the age of sixty. The monthly group sessions aim to break the social isolation experienced by older asylum seekers and refugees and allow them to come together for activities that target their needs and build on their capacities. These activities are inclusive of older persons' children and grandchildren as a means to promote their well-being.

Older persons are consulted on their preferred and most accessible mode of assistance, communication and protection.

Facilities, such as shelters, latrines and health centres in particular, are purposely designed and adapted to facilitate safe, accessible and appropriate access for older persons.

Older persons actively participate in community leadership structures and decision-making bodies to shape decisions about their life in countries such as **Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Rwanda, Thailand** and **Uganda**.



Ahmed, 80, fled his home in Hajjah, north-west Yemen nearly a year ago. UNHCR helped Ahmed and his family with documentation and emergency shelter.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Ameer Alameri

²¹ Specific guidance on how to best address the needs of older persons can be found at: <https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/covid19-guidance-and-advice-for-older-people/>.

Communication and Transparency

Core Action 3

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.

Establishing good communication with affected communities is critical to ensure that communities are informed of their rights and of the assistance available, and to ensure that they are provided with opportunities to express their needs, priorities, and preferences, as well to shape how information is received by having a say on the channels of choice.

In this regard, establishing two-way communication is a form of service and empowerment that is as important as other sectoral interventions and provides the basis for a trusted relationship between humanitarian organizations and affected populations.

Critical to this is the provision of a range of accessible and rapid channels of communication with affected people to inform them about procedures, structures and processes and to ensure that affected communities can make informed decisions and choices.

Evidence from operations indicates a reliance on a wide variety of channels for communication and information-sharing purposes. Among them, the most commonly reported, alongside regular face-to-face communication with UNHCR staff and partners, are community outreach volunteers, counselling channels, home visits, radio broadcasts, leaflets and other communication materials, bulk text messaging, dedicated e-mail addresses or phone lines, and websites. Access to, meaningful use of and participation in their choice and design is not evenly distributed across operations and across gender, age, and other diversities within them, all the more so when it comes to digital technologies. For example, social, cultural and economic barriers are important impediments to women and girls obtaining access to the Internet or mobile devices. Bridging the gender digital divide²² involves, at a minimum, designing solutions with women and girls and understanding the gender dimensions in each context that affects access to and use of technologies.

Given that the majority of operations have several options for communication, it is expected that access and use should be guaranteed to all. However, only a few operations specifically highlighted consulting persons of concern about the effectiveness and accessibility of the various modes and how to ensure access and use for all. A question remains on how to best to embrace the heterogeneity of individuals in UNHCR operational contexts, while at the same time guaranteeing the delivery of services and solutions at scale.

UNHCR **Tunisia** created alternative channels of communication, such as the Facebook group 'We Hear You', to raise concerns and discuss matters related to COVID-19. This group, which is closely monitored by the UNHCR partner, has ensured the dissemination of accurate information in multiple languages (Arabic, French, Somali, Amharic and Tigrinya) on the evolving situation and addressed concerns as they arise.



Older persons find friendship and recreation, such as making handicrafts based on inspiration from the internet, in this UNHCR-supported centre in Aleppo's neighbourhood of Ashrafiya.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Antwan Chnkddj

²² Also known as the digital divide or technology gap, this aspect refers to the difference between groups with access to technology and the internet and those without. Girls and women often have less access to technology as compared to boys and men due to stereotypes around technology being for men and boys, safety concerns about being online and using online resources, and the cost of technology. More on the digital divide in humanitarian settings can be found in HPG (2019) The Humanitarian 'digital divide'. https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/digital_divide_lit_review_web_0.pdf



Omar Ali, 70, was injured during the Yemeni conflict. He and his family were displaced by the fighting and live in a makeshift shelter in Hudaydah governorate.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Abdaljabar Zeyad

In some countries, such as **Yemen, Turkey, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, South Sudan and Myanmar**, inter-agency Communication with Communities (CwC) working groups have been established to improve the coordination and complementarity of initiatives among humanitarian players. In the **Americas**, an all-encompassing platform has been established to combine all the relevant activities and information relating to the response to the Venezuelan crisis across the region.²³ The platform proved particularly useful also in the dissemination of information on the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, in **Europe**, the help.unhcr.org website is a one-stop shop for refugees and asylum-seekers for information on their rights and obligations, asylum procedures and the range of services available, such as health, legal assistance, SGBV, integration, birth registration, etc., in various languages. To date, sites have been established in **Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Germany, Greece, North Macedonia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Turkey and Ukraine**.²⁴ Finally, in **India**, a wide range of communication and information channels have been established, including a webpage²⁵ on registration, refugee status determination, durable solutions, assistance and services.

Research on communication needs have been conducted at regional and national levels (**Algeria, Morocco, Turkey and Mauritania**) to adapt Communications with Communities strategies, focusing on people with specific needs, as well as people in transit and in remote areas. Another example of this is the regional interagency Information and Communication Needs Assessment conducted in 15 Latin American and Caribbean countries in 2019 (see the promising practice on this in the relevant box).

In **Sri Lanka**, UNHCR regularly communicates with persons of concern about key developments through community meetings and visits to displacement centres, quarterly large-scale community outreach activities, weekly individual counselling appointments, and communication by e-mail, fax, landline and mobile phones.

In **Venezuela**, UNHCR also works with community structures who are trained in the identification of persons with specific needs, community mobilization and the AGD approach. The community structures are in charge of conducting outreach to persons with specific needs, including women and children at risk, older persons at risk, LGBTI persons, indigenous people and persons with disabilities, conducting information sessions and disseminating referral pathways.



Venezuelan Warao refugee leader, Adriana, broadcasts information through her community radio show at the Carlos Gomes shelter in Manaus, northern Brazil.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Felipe Inaldo

²³ See reference to the platform in the promising practice, while for more information: <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform>

²⁴ UNHCR (2019) Age, Gender and Diversity Good Practices in Europe.

²⁵ <https://help.unhcr.org/india/>



Working with Youth

Why does it matter?

Adolescents and youth are a distinct group whose concerns and needs are often disregarded in humanitarian settings. Even where they are included, adolescents are rarely the primary focus of interventions, thus the effect on them may be diluted. Among them, adolescent girls face disproportionate risks of sexual and gender-based violence, have fewer educational opportunities than boys, and bear an enormous domestic burden in comparison with boys.

It is important to single out adolescents and youth and focus on them early enough to build self-esteem and leadership skills that will enable them to be more resilient and to participate courageously in all spaces. The engagement of refugee and host community youth, building on their talent, potential and energy, supports protection, resilience and solutions.

Examples of what UNHCR does

UNHCR is supporting and working with the Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN), a global network led by refugee students and graduates of different higher education programmes in more than 15 countries in all regions. TRSN members are committed to helping to increase the number of youth refugees to 15 percent by 2030 through peer support, community awareness, advocacy campaigns, and cooperation with UNHCR and its partners.²⁶

In **Malaysia**, with the support from UNHCR a group of youth refugees from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds sharing a passion for art came together and decided to use art to empower themselves. Under the label “Canvassing for Confidence”, the group organized art workshops, public and private exhibitions and storytelling sessions, using the arts to strengthen youth’s resilience and provide opportunities for the empowerment of youth. A key activity was the launch of public gallery events tied into key celebrations, such as the World Refugee Day, for which participants designed the invitations, promotional materials and prints for sale.²⁷

The Youth Peace Education Club (YPEC) in Pugnido, **Ethiopia**, was launched in 2017 to enhance dialogue and activities to sustain a durable peace and build trust between the refugee and host communities. The Youth Peace Education Club met weekly and organized activities, such as traditional and modern dance, drama and storytelling, which helped to bring together youth from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and build a strong relationship. A key outcome of this initiative has been the establishment of peace clubs in both primary

and secondary schools, thus ensuring the continuity of peace efforts and encouraging youth, and particularly females youth, to pursue leadership positions and promote a culture of good governance.²⁸

In **Rwanda**, UNHCR collaborates with Kepler through the ITEMÉ (‘bridge’ in Kinyarwanda) programme to offer English language, information communication and technology courses, as well as soft skills and interview techniques to support refugee youth to transition from secondary to tertiary education. In total, 102 refugees youth, 51 of whom were women, have participated in the programme since its launch in 2018. 40 percent of the programme’s participants have already successfully enrolled at higher education institutions, including universities and vocational courses.²⁹



Refugee and local youths tell stories of fear, flight and integration through contemporary dance, at the Enlaces project in Panama City.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Diana Diaz



Refugees and asylum-seekers attending events during the Global Refugee Forum play football on the lawn at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

²⁶ <https://sites.google.com/view/trsn/home>

²⁷ UNHCR (2019) Youth in Action Report 2017-2019. A Field Youth Engagement Toolkit.

²⁸ UNHCR (2019) Youth in Action Report 2017-2019. A Field Youth Engagement Toolkit.

²⁹ UNHCR DAFI Programme web site <https://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>

Feedback and Response

Core Action 4

At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaint

The vast majority of operations reported the establishment of feedback and response mechanisms for persons of concern. Besides the regular exchanges with UNHCR staff and partners, other systems commonly referred to are complaint boxes, hotlines or helplines, focus group discussions, open receptions, surveys, and post-distribution monitoring exercises. Participatory assessments on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse are also conducted in various contexts, although in most operations structured consultation on the risks, communication needs and channels has not yet taken place to inform the design of information material on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.³⁰

Evidence indicates that feedback mechanisms are often designed without the involvement of those who are supposed to use them nor with a proper understanding of the information needs and accessibility of various groups among the affected populations.³¹ For these mechanisms to be accessed and used, it is essential that they be adapted to the context and to the protection risks, information needs and capacities of the various age, gender and diversity groups addressed, with a particular focus on persons with disabilities, women and girls, LGBTI persons and children, and that they ensure confidentiality, especially when it comes to reporting sexual misconduct and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and that there is an overall relationship of trust between staff and affected communities.

In **Iraq**, UNHCR employs a range of Feedback and Complaint mechanisms to enhance accountability to affected people across the full age, gender and diversity spectrum, including Feedback Management Committees to review refugee and IDP complaints and suggestions received in camp and urban settings.

In **Uganda**, an inter-agency Feedback, Referral, and Resolution Mechanism (FRRM) helpline was first piloted in 2018 and later rolled out across the operation. Operated by a call centre with agents speaking the 15 different languages spoken by refugees, the Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism has a network of partners and UNHCR focal points who receive referrals and respond to requests received. An open portal with a breakdown of the callers by age, gender, nationality and location supplements the Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism.³² Finally, since mid-March 2020, calls relating to COVID-19 have been handled and a separate interactive dashboard is in the process of being created.



In Cox's Bazar, students, local people and Rohingya refugees from Myanmar team up to decorate one of the five college buses UNHCR is donating to local schools.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Areez Tanbeen Rahman

³⁰ UNHCR (2020) Global Stocktaking of PSEA & SH Materials and Approaches.

³¹ UNHCR (2020) Digital Accountability to Affected People. This Accountability to Affected People study covered 8 countries, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan.

³² The portal is accessible here: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/84>

One voice - your choice. How to best engage with refugees and migrants from Venezuela³³

Overview

The current complex situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereinafter, Venezuela) has led to the largest movement of persons in the recent history of Latin America and the Caribbean. In June 2020, slightly more than 5 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela³⁴ were seeking protection and support in neighbouring countries.

Among them, those who have not been able to regularize their status, due, for example, to a long waiting period, high fees, and administrative issues, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, violence and discrimination, smuggling and trafficking, and may turn to negative coping mechanisms for survival. These risk factors are further exacerbated when they intersect with age, gender and other factors of diversity. Venezuelan LGBTI refugees and migrants for example, are at higher risk of persecution, discrimination, xenophobia, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as a lack of physical security, protection by national laws and authorities, and access to basic rights and services.

In this context, establishing good communication channels with affected communities is vital to ensure that communities are informed about their rights and assistance available, and are engaged in shaping the assistance they receive based on their needs and preferences. Strong and inclusive communication mechanisms ensure that all voices are heard and shape the response, making it relevant to the persons of concern.

This communication practice involved a regional interagency Information and Communication Needs Assessment and the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V).³⁵ As the title of the assessment suggests, the purpose was to gain a better understanding of the information and communication needs of different population groups among the Venezuelan refugees and migrants in various countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, their access to channels and information, and their preferences in order to adapt interventions accordingly.³⁶

What makes it a promising practice?

The following features were identified as making this practice promising:

Process-wise:

- A standardized approach was adopted across all affected countries, which made it possible to compare data, generate trends and identify common solutions.
- The assessment was administered simultaneously to more than 3,400 refugees in 15 countries: Argentina, Aruba, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.
- Inputs were gathered through multiple methods: survey, online survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), thus ensuring an all-inclusive approach suitable for reaching different groups among the targeted populations.³⁷
- All the assessment tools were developed and tested in a consultative manner.
- The assessment was a collective and collaborative effort; it was UNHCR & IFRC-led and undertaken on behalf of the whole humanitarian community in an attempt to avoid duplicative initiatives and frustration on the part of the affected populations.³⁸
- This initiative is grounded in the work conducted by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors to ensure a coordinated operational response in support of refugees and migrants from Venezuela throughout the region, as collated in the Refugee and Migrants Response Plan (RMRP). This includes a strong focus on improved coordination and complementarity on communicating with communities.

Age, gender and diversity specific:

- The assessment focused on accountability to affected people, including communicating with communities (CwC).³⁹
- An age, gender and diversity focus was ensured throughout, with equal participation of men and women, inclusion of different age range and persons with disabilities, including in the analysis of findings, and with specific issues highlighted accordingly.⁴⁰
- All groups were given the opportunity to have a say, and were in control as they narrated their experiences and preferences, with no filtering, for example by community leaders.
- People were asked which information and communication channels they have access to, use and prefer the most, thereby making it possible to identify the most trusted communication and information channels and sources.
- To best align operations with the needs, capacities and concerns of communities and individuals, recommendations were formulated on the most appropriate information and communication channels.
- The impact of substantive investment in community engagement and the establishment of a relationship of trust as a way to make the response directly relevant and efficient for them was evidenced through the assessment.
- The Response for Venezuelans (R4V) platform hosting this, as well as other initiatives targeting refugees and migrants from Venezuela, provided a valuable and ready-to-use platform for communication and information sharing in the context of COVID-19.⁴¹

³³ In 2019, a methodology for the collection of promising practices was agreed on, for the first time, by four units within UNHCR. The proposed common definition of promising practice cites 'A practice that is proven to work well and produce sustainable results and has protective and/or transformative potential for individuals and/or communities, as demonstrated by reliable results. It can serve as a model to be replicated and scaled up'.

³⁴ Tertiary Refugee Student Network website data for April 2020, <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform> (accessed June 2020).

³⁵ The Platform brought together 41 of the UN agencies, CSOs, NGOs, donors, financial institutions and the Red Cross Movement to support the response to migrants and refugees from Venezuela in a coordinated manner.

³⁶ Detailed findings can be found here: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73683.pdf>

³⁷ More specifically, 1,516 people were interviewed through the main survey; 1,492 through the online self-administered survey; 77 interviews; 30 FGDs with over 330 refugees, migrants and host communities.

³⁸ This assessment was conducted as a multi-actor joint exercise of the CWC/C4D working group part of the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) and national interagency coordination platforms.

³⁹ Another complementary initiative is for example the project 'Uniendo Voces' that is specifically targeted to adolescents and youth to gather their opinion, have access to information and feedback and orientate the work of decision-makers.

⁴⁰ More information on the demographics can be found in R4V (2019) Regional Information and Communication Needs Assessment.

⁴¹ R4V website: <https://r4v.info/es/working-group/248?sv=39&geo=0>.



A refugee community leader makes a point to the UNHCR protection team during a meeting in Mbera refugee camp in Mauritania.
 Photo credit: © UNHCR/Jose Manuel Caceres

A multiplicity of channels for feedback and response have been established in other operations. UNHCR **Greece**, for example, has dedicated e-mail, protection and cash desks, post-distribution monitoring (PDM), and protection helplines. Moreover, UNHCR and the Greek Reception Authority has centralised and strengthened complaints and feedback mechanisms for persons of concern on the mainland through the establishment of standard operating procedures. Complaints may be received in person or through complaints boxes; the standard operating procedures ensure each organisation working in reception facilities is aware of how to handle complaints received by persons of concern.

UNHCR **India** introduced a call roster and a helpline, and has continued its engagement with diverse community-based structures, focus group discussions and outreach meetings. Finally, in **Kyrgyzstan**, the feedback and monitoring mechanism includes focus group discussions, household visits, a complaints box, individual consultations and a 24/7 hotline.

In **Myanmar**, UNHCR adapted its feedback mechanisms to reach out to isolated people and those facing literacy barriers, as often experienced by persons with disabilities who are excluded from education, especially in remote areas.

Most of UNHCR's operations have conducted awareness-raising campaigns on sexual exploitation and abuse and have established community-based complaints mechanisms to encourage safe, confidential and accessible reporting.

In the **USA**, a regional Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse was drawn up, PSEA focal points were identified for each operation in the **Caribbean**, and PSEA material was developed in English and Spanish. Based on the feedback from the assisted populations, including on sexual misconduct, decisions were made on whether or not to continue working with some partners.

Colombia has also updated and disseminated its PSEA SOPs and has trained its PSEA focal points. In **Ecuador**, PSEA SOPs have also been developed and support was given to the establishment of an Interagency PSEA Taskforce, which UNHCR **Ecuador** also leads. UNHCR **Ecuador** has also developed an animated video on PSEA and Fraud that is being shared through social media, including WhatsApp, and screened in strategic locations. WiFi access points are available throughout the displacement routes.

Colombia has participated in the Regional Safe Spaces Network to help improve the coordination of case management where SGBV and child protection, including sexual exploitation and abuse, is involved and to ensure access to quality services, in collaboration with nearly 30 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government partners.

In **South Sudan**, UNHCR chairs a Steering Committee on the Implementation of a Zero Tolerance Policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; this Committee, which includes the heads of 19 implementing partners and UNHCR, focuses on internal sexual exploitation and abuse trend monitoring and reporting mechanisms.



UNHCR staff carry out protection monitoring in Tulus, Sudan, with women who could not flee when the village was attacked because they have older family members to take care of.
 Photo credit: © UNHCR/Modesta Ndubi



Working with Children

Why does it matter?

Protecting and promoting the rights of all children is a key priority for UNHCR. Children, whether refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced, returnees or stateless, face increased risks of abuse, neglect and violence, especially when separated from their families or care-takers. This may further expose them to stress and trauma that could develop into risky behaviour and negative coping mechanisms. Child protection interventions in crises support the physical and emotional health, dignity and well-being of children, families and communities.

UNHCR contributed to finalization of the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)⁴², which are applicable to all settings and contain specific considerations that apply to refugees, internally displaced, migrants and stateless populations, and complement the 2018 UNHCR Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best-Interest Procedure (BIP) of the Child and the UNHCR Framework for the Protection of Children.

Examples of what UNHCR does

Child-friendly spaces (CFS) in **South Sudan** offer refugee children organized and structured support, including psychosocial support, in a safe and protected environment;

UNHCR is stepping up efforts to provide more comprehensive data-processing systems for child protection, especially in operations where children are on the move, with larger numbers of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), and where there are emergency influxes or repatriation exercises. Digital solutions, such as conducting assessments using tablet computers and UNHCR's case management software (proGres), have helped to maximize efficiency and to reduce the time it takes for conducting best-interests assessments (BIAs) and best-interest determinations;

Unaccompanied and separated children, as well as children at risk, are identified and referred for the best-interest procedures and to the relevant services, including multi-sectoral services: legal assistance, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). In **Lebanon**, for example, UNHCR is offering mental health and psychosocial support to refugee children with the aim of early intervention in the management of psychological distress;

UNHCR participated in the development and dissemination of an inter-agency Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) with key partners on "Caring for Children Moving Alone: Protecting Unaccompanied and Separated Children" This course was followed by 21,500 individuals in 2019 only;

In Mahama Camp, **Rwanda**, refugee and host community girls gather together in the 'Girl's Safe Room.' This space provides a place for girls where they can get free sanitary pads, take showers and change their clothes if necessary. Previously, girls used to have to go back to their homes when they were menstruating, leading to them missing schooling. The Girl's Safe Room also provides a space for girls to gather together to read, socialize and engage in discussions on issues pertinent to them;

In Kharaz refugee camp, **Yemen**, the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) helps out-of-school children aged 9-17 to complete their primary education. The Accelerated Education Programme is run by a refugee committee called Al Ghaith and is supported by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which provides technical support, textbooks, examinations and certification. Accelerated Education Programmes are key to increasing opportunities for over-aged children and youth who have missed out on substantial amounts of schooling, enabling them to access appropriate, responsive and relevant education. Specialized rehabilitative and educational services for children with disabilities are also offered to improve their conditions, enable their integration into the communities and support their access to education.⁴³



A Sudanese returnee child who was previously internally displaced attends Daliba Primary School in North Darfur.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Modesta Ndubi

⁴² The first edition of these standards dated back to 2012, and was updated in 2019. They complement the standards developed by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, a global network of operational agencies, academic institutions, policymakers, donors, and practitioners.

⁴³ UNHCR (2019) UNHCR's approach to persons with disabilities in displacement <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%27s%20Approach%20to%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20-%20November%202019.pdf>

Organizational Learning and Adaptation

Core Action 5

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.

This core action recognizes the value and increased relevance and effectiveness of interventions when they are shaped around the expressed priorities, needs, capacities and views of all persons of concern. This necessitates flexibility and the creative ability to combine and analyse inputs gathered through multiple processes and mechanisms, such as participatory exercises, feedback and response and community engagement mechanisms, as well as programmes responsive to these inputs.

Adaptation and learning means benefiting from a diversity of experiences, perspectives and inputs to give rise to more sustainable, adaptable and inspired solutions.

The majority of operations conducting participatory exercises reported integrating the views of persons of concern to improve ongoing activities and better plan their future strategies. For instance, UNHCR **Cote d'Ivoire** used the results of the participatory assessment to better identify priorities and re-allocate the budget for 2020 accordingly. Similarly, UNHCR **Indonesia** reported using the findings of the participatory exercise to refine protection strategies, responses, and programming for the 2020 Operational Plan. **Zimbabwe** made a clear effort to specifically gather the protection concerns of girls and boys through focus group discussions, interfaces for youth, peer support groups, school clubs, film sessions, sports and talent shows, for integration in the Country Operations Plan for 2020. In December 2019, UNHCR in **Cyprus** brought together refugees, refugee-led organisations, municipal authorities and civil society to discuss opportunities and challenges in relation to integration, and to provide feedback on existing interventions supporting integration in **Cyprus**.



Amira, 20, works as a road construction volunteer in Kutupalong mega-camp, landscaping, tunnelling and greening road sides as part of the Site Management and Engineering Project 's (SMEP) in Cox's Bazar.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Firas Al-Khateeb

In **Mozambique**, feedback from the persons of concern (both urban and camp-based refugees) led to changes in the ways counselling services could be requested and resulted in a better gender balance among persons of concern receiving this service and also in increased inclusion of older persons, people with disabilities, those of all nationalities, including minorities, youth, and children, among others. Disaggregation was based on the profile of persons of concern living in Maratane camp.

In **Sri Lanka**, consultations with both refugees and asylum-seekers led UNHCR to the identification of persons of concern at heightened risk of retaliation from local community and anti-Muslim sentiments. Consultations with women also revealed that the lack of economic opportunities and income generation had increased intra-household tension and the risk of domestic violence. Hence, UNHCR included in its 2020 Plan the implementation of a National Action Plan on SGBV, which included a component to support home-based income-generation activities.



Working with Indigenous and Minority Groups

Why does it matter?

Minorities and indigenous people can often be overlooked in an emergency. In many societies minorities and indigenous people are marginalized socially, economically, politically and culturally. They are victims of severe human rights violations, violence, conflict, ethnic or religious persecution and even genocide.

In addition to the human rights principles that prohibit discrimination and affirm the equality of all, minorities and indigenous people have specific rights, such as the right to be included, to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion and use their own language. These are established in a series of human rights instruments, such as UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the 1989 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. These rights should be upheld in emergency settings or situations of forced displacement.

Examples of what UNHCR does

Operations, including those in **Argentina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, and Zimbabwe**, conduct specific participatory assessment exercises with minorities and indigenous persons to better understand their needs, capacities and envisioned solutions;

To protect indigenous populations and help prevent and reduce statelessness in **Venezuela**, UNHCR took measures to build the capacity of state institutions, NGOs and community structures, developing and dispensing related guidance, training community committees and outreach volunteers and providing information sessions on the right to identity and on birth registration procedures for indigenous populations. In addition, public information materials in five indigenous languages have been produced as part of a specific and comprehensive strategy for working with indigenous people at risk;

In **Tajikistan**, UNHCR, through its partner, identified marginalized minority persons, who often lack birth certificates regardless of their age or gender, and supported them in starting the process of confirmation of nationality and of pursuing document issuance;

UNHCR in **Kosovo** organised a series of events to consult women from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, to discuss and learn about the protection risks affecting the daily lives of ethnic minority returnee women, as well as to identify capacities and solutions. Issues that emerged included SGBV, a lack of representation and limited opportunities for economic empowerment.

In **Bangladesh**, UNHCR, in the wake of community consultations, established a Multipurpose Community Engagement Centre in Hindupara which specifically caters to the Hindu community, a religious minority group who fled the violence in Myanmar in 2017.

Consider minorities and indigenous people's cultural practices to ensure they are properly included in decision-making and can effectively access and benefit from assistance and services;

Ensure information sharing and communication mechanisms in accessible formats and languages.



Venezuelan refugees from the Warao and Eñepà ethnic groups take part in an exhibition of art, dancing and culture at UNHCR's Pintolândia shelter in Boa Vista.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Flavia Faria



Mtii Hamisi Jefa is one of several thousand Makonde people being issued identity papers and Kenyan citizenship after years of statelessness.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Roger Arnold

▶ Advancing gender equality

Gender equality is fundamental to the well-being and rights of all persons of concern and is a central component of UNHCR's protection mandate. This section discusses the implementation of UNHCR's Commitments to Women and Girls. Initially established in 2001, they were updated with the adoption of the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy and represent critical areas for action to uphold the rights of women and girls of concern to UNHCR.

In line with what stated in the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, though the Commitments focus on women and girls; attention is also paid to gender inequalities that affect men and boys, as well as other genders. The focus is on advancing equal rights, well-being and equitable access to protection and services for all persons of concern. In addition, diversities amongst women and girls and how these affect their capacities and risks are also taken into account.

In February 2020, UNHCR launched its Gender Equality Toolkit,⁴⁴ which is meant to guide and support staff across

functions and offices to ensure systematic integration of gender equality priorities throughout UNHCR's work, including implementation of the updated commitments to women and girls.



Fatimetou, 27, and her friends, are attending a construction education project in Mbera refugee camp in Mauritania.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Jerry de Mars

Updated Commitments to Women and Girls

Core Action 6

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 that 50 percent of participants in management and leadership structures under UNHCR's authority are women, and will advocate the same with its partners, including governments.

Participation is a very broad concept that is often used indiscriminately to refer to a wide range of situations. When it comes to displacement settings, structural inequalities that pose barriers to women's and girls' participation are often exacerbated. At the same time, displacement at times yields opportunities for participation that would not be possible otherwise, for example in relation to programme implementation.⁴⁵

Along the ample spectrum of forms that participation could take, this core action specifically refers to participation that is equal, active and meaningful, and envisions shared decision-making power between men and women. So understood, participation offers a venue for women to bring forth and act on their interests and concerns.⁴⁶ Meaningful participation is also central for the realization of rights, ensuring effective protection and defining solutions.

⁴⁴ UNHCR (2020) Gender Equality Toolkit. <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/manuals/5e5cd64a7/unhcr-gender-equality-toolkit.html>

⁴⁵ UNHCR (2018) Tearing down the walls. Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girl's participation in humanitarian settings.

⁴⁶ Participation is also strictly related to Core Action 1 as age, gender and diversity impact on the opportunities a person has to make life decisions, and data on sex and age, as well as other relevant dimensions, need to be consistently collected and analyzed for an understanding of how different population groups experience and participate in the assistance.



Urban refugee women in Kampala, Uganda meet discussing continuity of business amid COVID-19 lock-down.

Photo credit: © UNHCR/Duniya Aslam Khan

The participation of women in leadership positions is also an organisational indicator and the results thereof are monitored and reported on at global level. Evidence from 2018 indicates that 73 percent of the situations⁴⁷ that reported on the indicator had over 35 percent of active female participants in leadership/management structures.⁴⁸ In 2019, 56 percent of the 46 operations reporting on UNHCR's global strategic priority indicator for female participation, had either improved or maintained the percentage of female participants in leadership and management structures.⁴⁹

Almost all operations reported engaging women in leadership structures, committees of persons of concern and community management structures, although, for the most part, not in equal number to their male counterparts. Discriminatory social and cultural norms, limited literacy and education, and burdensome household and caring responsibilities are among the reasons that continue to bar women from participating, particularly at the decision-making level, in most of the countries where UNHCR operates. To mitigate these, in **Djibouti**, UNHCR adapted its presence schedule to accommodate women's daily tasks. Some notable exceptions were reported by **South Sudan** which achieve the target of 50 percent female participants in management and leadership structures in the Maban, Jamjang, Makpandu and Gorom refugee camps. In **Syria** too, 65 percent of the outreach volunteers are females and over 2,000 displaced, returnee and refugee women received capacity building support to enhance their role within their communities.

In **Ukraine**, in more than 20 refugee and 200 IDP community groups, as well as in the community support initiatives that took place to enhance the capacity of these groups through UNHCR and partners in 2019, women and girls constitute approximately 50 percent of the members, and they equally participate in the leadership and management structures.

Some specific efforts by UNHCR also started yielding results. In **Bangladesh**, for example, UNHCR supported the election of community representation in four camps. 55 percent of refugees participating (nominating and voting) in the elections were women, 50 percent of the candidates were refugee women, and women were ultimately elected to 46 percent of the seats on the Block and Camp Committees. In April 2020, out of 115 community groups UNHCR had established across 23 camps, 56 (49 percent) were formed by women and female youth.

In **Burkina Faso**, women constitute 49 percent of the community management members and women-specific committees are in place in two camps hosting Malian refugees. In **Nigeria**, UNHCR has established protection action groups (PAGs) as part of the community-based protection structures, and in 2019, 60 percent of PAG members were women volunteers. This granted women the opportunity to participate in decision making and improved their ability to influence the response.

Examples of diverse participation were reported in **Zimbabwe**, where older persons and men and women with disabilities were purposefully included in community leadership structures. This was also the case in **Venezuela**, where support is provided to networks of youth, older, indigenous and women with disabilities responsible for identifying and referring persons with specific needs, heightening awareness of SGBV, and encouraging the participation of women in community activities. In **Pakistan**, UNHCR is working to engage respected older women at a community level and seeking to increase the participation of other women in community activities.

⁴⁷ This report uses the term "situation" to refer to the situation of a specific population group representing persons of concern within an UNHCR operation who share common needs, including refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, stateless persons and returnees, and/or persons of concern in various geographical locations within a country/region. There can be multiple "situations" in one operation. UNHCR monitors each situation in order to adapt its response and therefore one operation may report on the same indicator twice or more. This report compiles and analyses AGD reporting from a total of 105 country operations, regional offices and headquarters divisions.

⁴⁸ The organisational indicator is Female Participation in Leadership and Management. UNHCR (2018) Global Strategic Priorities Progress Report.

⁴⁹ UNHCR (2019) Global Strategic Priorities Report.

Core
Action 6

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 its partners, including governments.

Registration and identification of refugees is key to ensuring protection, facilitating access to basic assistance, and safeguarding freedom of movement and safety when on the move, including safety from trafficking. Individual registration and documentation are common practices across most UNHCR operations. In 2018, 76 percent of the situations registered over 90 percent of persons of concern on an individual basis. In countries where registration of asylum seekers, refugees, IDPs, returnees or stateless persons is done by the national authorities, UNHCR advocates for this to be done according to internationally accepted standards and with due consideration of the protection risks of all different groups.

Some country offices have established fast-track registration systems for particularly vulnerable applicants, such as SGBV survivors, unaccompanied and separated children, women at risk and LGBTI persons. This is the case, for instance, in **Kenya**, **Saudi Arabia**, and **Uganda**. Moreover, in **Nigeria**, special attention is given to the issuing of birth certificate for girls to reduce the risk of child marriage and for women to increase their access to services.

UNHCR is also mandated to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness around the world. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, 148 foundlings and 343 other individuals at risk of statelessness, including children, obtained confirmation of their Ivorian citizenship in 2019. In addition, 9 individuals obtained consular cards confirming their citizenship from other states, and 123 individuals were able to proceed with late birth registration.

Mapping studies on statelessness were reportedly launched in **Poland** and **Slovakia**. While in **Moldova** and **Romania** initiatives were undertaken at enhancing the capacity of national stakeholders, such as immigration officers, legal professionals and judges, to identify and address statelessness cases. Moreover in **Romania**, the

relevant resources, such as the IPU/UNHCR Handbook for Parliamentarians and the Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness, were distributed amongst policymakers to increase interest in this topic. Gender considerations are key to the Regional Strategic Approach on the Prevention and Reduction of statelessness in the **Middle East** and **North Africa**, where a number of countries have nationality laws that do not grant women the right to confer nationality on their children in the same way as men.



A South Sudanese refugee woman holds her baby as she waits at a registration centre in Jewi camp, Ethiopia.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Eduardo Soteras Jalil

Core
Action 6

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 who are the primary recipients of assistance.

Few operations reported on the sex of recipients of aid. Those that do affirm prioritizing women, does it when it does not place them in danger. In 2019 for example, available data indicate that women were 43 percent of the direct beneficiaries of cash-based interventions. In **Djibouti** and in **Morocco**, for instance, women are, by default, registered as heads of household so that they can be considered to be the primary recipients and to facilitate their access to assistance. Provided that there are no protection risks, the general practice is for women to be the preferred recipients of assistance as a way to counter traditional gender-related income and financial decision-making dynamics, which tend to be to the advantage of men.

In **Rwanda**, women participate equally in the management of cash and non-food items. In **Malawi**, dignity kits were distributed to women and girls of reproductive age that contained basic supplies and treatment for rape cases (18 kits), sexually transmitted infections (30 kits), managing safe abortions (65 kits) and managing safe birth (28 kits). Other operations that included the distribution of sanitary cloth, soap, and dignity kits were in **Mozambique, Nigeria** and **South Sudan**.

In **Uganda**, efforts are underway to improve the quality of sanitary kits for distribution. In addition, dignity kits, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and presumptive treatment for sexually transmitted infections, together with male condoms, were distributed to pregnant and lactating mothers, SGBV survivors and refugees respectively.

Core
Action 6

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 the livelihood, education, and health programmes it delivers, and will advocate with its partners, including governments, for their equal access to public services.

Income-generating projects represent a concrete step towards the empowerment of forcibly displaced women and girls as they enable participants to wield greater control over resources and contribute to strengthening resilience, confidence and capacity. In addition, offering opportunities for economic independence and survival and agency building can activate decision-making power for women and girls, thus also reinforcing core action 6A.

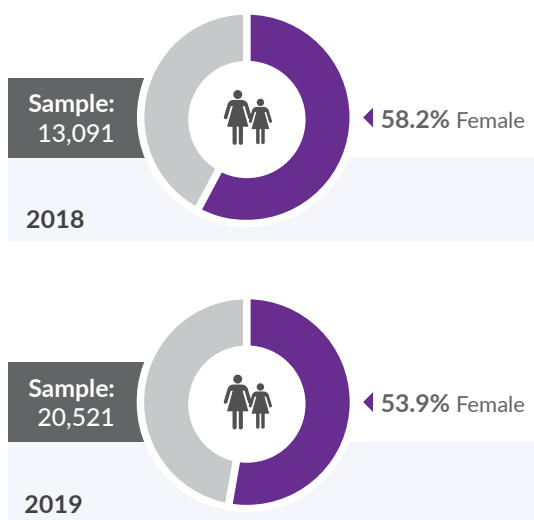
In 2019, UNHCR operations and implementing partners introduced livelihood and economic inclusion interventions targeting 1.9 million persons of concern and host-community members, an average of 54 percent of persons targeted being female.⁵⁰ In addition, UNHCR supported more than 2,600 refugee and host-community artisans, the majority of whom were women, in accessing market opportunities in partnership with 22 local social enterprises through MADE51.⁵¹

⁵⁰ UNHCR (2019) Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Global Survey.

⁵¹ MADE51 is a UNHCR-promoted global initiative to connect refugee artisans with social enterprises to facilitate the design, creation and marketing of unique home décor and fashion accessories across the world. For more information refer to: <https://www.made51.org/>

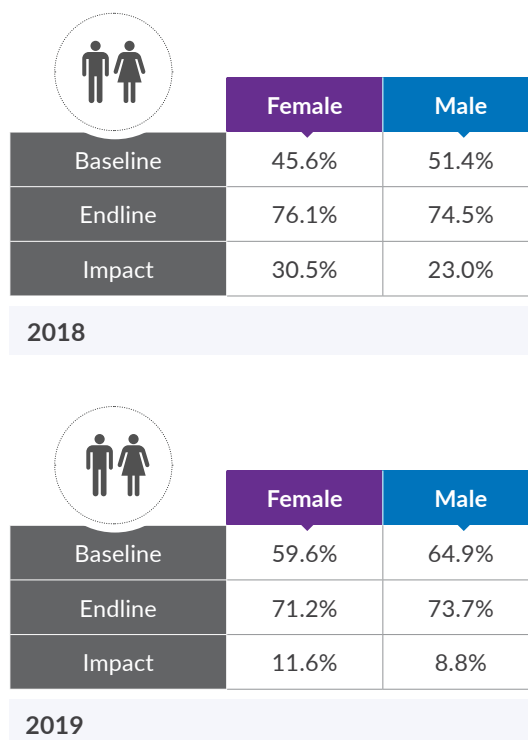
Some of the global aggregated figures derived from UNHCR annual livelihood programme monitoring⁵² are given below. These indicate that the proportion of female beneficiaries in the past two years has been slightly above 50 percent. The second table opposite shows that the baseline employment rate is lower among female beneficiaries, while the impact (an increase in employment rate) is higher among female beneficiaries.⁵³

Figure 3: % female beneficiaries in livelihood programmes, UNHCR.



Saleema Rehman on the ward at Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The 28-year-old Afghan refugee is in her final year of training. Photo credit: © UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Figure 4: Employment rate by gender, UNHCR.



A large number of operations reported working on enhancing women’s economic empowerment through vocational training courses and income-generation activities, mostly tailored to the needs of women. Some operations, such as those in **Afghanistan**, supported the establishment of women’s self-help groups to promote female entrepreneurship and self-reliance. UNHCR **Georgia** partnered with UN Women to enhance economic opportunities and self-reliance for women of concern. The project featured a 30-hour course designed to support women in starting their own businesses and provided small grants to support their new business ideas, ranging from USD 450 to 1,880.

In **Rwanda**, women associations are established in camps and programmes on livelihoods and self-reliance are specifically targeted to women. Also, some of these community-based structures have been granted access to loans by partner agencies, in addition to training opportunities. In **Nepal**, livelihood assistance was provided that gave due consideration to the age, gender and diversity approach. Four new self-help

⁵² The results of the annual livelihoods programme monitoring are published on a real-time basis on the following platform: <https://lis.unhcr.org>.

⁵³ Figures are the estimates calculated for the beneficiaries of livelihoods programmes calculated through sample surveys. Also, 2019 figures are not final as at the time of writing data were still coming from many operations.

groups comprising 141 refugees, 92 of which were women, were formed, and 121 refugees, 85 of which women, received ILO-certified Start & Improve Your Business training in 2019. In the Zakarpattia region of **Ukraine**, a women's club offering life skills training for women from IDP, refugee and local communities has been established in association with a local employment centre.

In all countries, UNHCR strives to guarantee school education for both boys and girls. Despite these efforts, the number of refugee children and youth enrolled in education activities still falls below national standards, and about 3.7 million refugee children are estimated to be out of school. In many contexts, girls are accorded special attention, as cultural barriers and traditions, lack of separate hygiene facilities, compounded with the tendency of parents to prioritize boys' education prevent them from accessing and benefiting from educational opportunities to the same extent as boys. Among the reported efforts are the inclusion of marginalized girls and the provision of alternative education options, such as home-based education, to girls who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to learn. These initiatives also have the effect of increasing acceptance by the community of education for girls.

UNHCR **Costa Rica** has worked to integrate gender equality into its programs. In 2019, the CBI strategy was designed based on the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. Some of the criteria for the evaluation process encompass the protection risks that may be faced by women, trans women and LGBTI persons, as well as people with some type of disability and older adults. For education, work has continued on the inclusion of children, especially girls and adolescents, including those who are pregnant. Additionally, UNHCR **Costa Rica** has a process for validating educational diploma which makes it possible for persons of concern to continue their studies and/or to access to job opportunities. Regarding livelihoods, the projects under way highlight the fact that a proportion of the beneficiary population must be women. In 2019, an initiative was developed to provide training to LGBTI persons.

Ensuring an equal balance of male and female teachers in schools is one way in which UNHCR provides positive role models for girls and young women. In Maban, **South Sudan**, UNHCR has introduced an intensive English course for female-only applicants, 359 have enrolled to date, with the expectation of significantly increasing the



Jordanian plumber, Safaa Sukarria (left), teaches plumbing to a group of Syrian refugees and women from the host community at her training centre in Irbid, Jordan.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Jose Cendon

pool of prospective female trainee teachers, who would then be mentored in schools to further enhance their teaching skills and overall confidence. In other parts of the country, awareness-raising activities at house-to-house level, back to school campaigns and girls' club activities were intensified to support girls' education.

In 2019, UNHCR supported over 8,200 refugee and returnee students across 54 countries with an Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship to obtain a university degree.⁵⁴ In an attempt to give equal opportunities to women and men, a set of guidelines facilitating gender equity in the DAFI scholarship programme has been introduced. These guidelines encompass considerations relating to the inclusion of young mothers and pregnant women, including an allowance for children in single-parent households, and relation to the reasons for the lower performance of girls in upper secondary schools; they recommend exceptions to the age limit for strong female candidates and that support be provided through language and preparatory courses to ensure that men and women can benefit equally from the scholarships. As a result, currently 39 percent of the enrolled students are women.

As far as health is concerned, a few operations mentioned implementing services specifically for women and girls, mostly in the forms of reproductive health and maternity services. An exception worth noting is **Bangladesh**. In camps where all-inclusive female hygiene centres are in place, women are given priority access to healthcare facilities and benefit from programmes that cater to their specific needs.

⁵⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>

Moreover, partnerships with two NGOs, Bandhu and Lighthouse, have been established to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of a gender diverse community as well as individuals engaged in sex work.

In the provinces of South and North Ubangi, South Kivu, Ituri and Haut Uélé in **DRC**, women of childbearing age have access to reproductive health and maternity services in urban areas and in the camps and refugee sites that UNHCR manages.

In **Jordan**, UNHCR and its partner Caritas provided reproductive health services at primary healthcare level to Iraqis and persons of other nationalities who would have been unable to afford the national healthcare facilities. UNHCR ensured HIV positive refugees, Syrians and non-Syrians, were well integrated into early detection and treatment programmes through a functional referral system to the Ministry of Health center.



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 its partners, including governments.

Forced displacement exposes persons of concern, particularly women and girls, to heightened risks of SGBV. UNHCR, together with its partners, including national authorities, continued to strengthen and expand SGBV prevention and response programming by ensuring that inter-agency SGBV Prevention, Risk Mitigation and Response Standard Operating Procedures are in place or are being developed through an inclusive and transparent process, including quality case management systems and referral pathways. Capacity building for key stakeholders, awareness raising among communities, in particular women and girls and groups at risk, and sharing information on where and how to access safe services, such as health, psychosocial, safety, security and legal services, are priority activities.

To ensure critical SGBV programming and life-saving SGBV services from the onset of an emergency, dedicated roving technical SGBV staff at senior level⁵⁵

supported 29 emergency operations that helped to more than double the efficiency of SGBV prevention and response programming from 35 percent to 82 percent, and coverage from 25 to 59 percent by the end of 2019.

Examples are given below that showcase the operationalization of UNHCR's minimum commitment to equal access to comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services under core action 6E.

In **Algeria**, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Department of Forensic Medicine in September 2019 to facilitate the referral of SGBV survivors, and the SGBV referral pathways were implemented by UNHCR and partners' SGBV focal points. In **Egypt** and **Turkey**, SGBV survivors are provided with relocation assistance by UNHCR's partner when this is required to ensure their safety, as well as with emergency cash assistance if this is needed to implement the individual case plan.

⁵⁵ The roving SGBV in emergency deployment scheme is part of the multi-year UNHCR Safe from the Start project supported by PRM and established in 2013.

In **Bangladesh**, SGBV prevention and response SOPs are in place and continue to be extended to cover all camp locations and out of camp areas. This includes inter-agency case management and the gender-based violence Information management system (GBV IMS+) that is being piloted as an inter-agency case management tool. Regular training sessions have been conducted to harmonize and standardize procedures and their implementation. UNHCR promotes the expansion of integrated services to survivors and women at risk at Women Friendly Spaces and other safe community facilities. The reciprocal research methodology developed by the University of New South Wales (UNSW) was collectively viewed as good practice in empowering refugee women and girls through meaningful participation in analysing key concerns and identifying solutions related to SGBV. Moreover, UNHCR supported the establishment of community-based safe shelters in several camps and a safe hostel in Cox Bazar's city catered for men and boys.

In **Ecuador**, UNHCR worked together with partners and government counterparts to strengthen local capacities to respond to the needs of refugees and migrants engaged in selling or exchanging sex. Focus was also placed on mitigating risks of sexual exploitation and ensuring safe access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), undertaken in conjunction with public authorities and the civil society. In 2019, UNHCR supported four safe shelters for women and the LGBTI population, providing safe space for 294 individuals. It took the lead in the development of inter-agency SGBV SOPs and the establishment of an Inter-agency PSEA Task Force. UNHCR and its partners provided training to partner and government staff and engaged with 5,460 persons of concern and members of host communities to sensitize and raise awareness of SGBV.

In **Djibouti**, inter-agency and multi-sectoral SGBV SOPs cover the whole operation and build on the national referral protocol. A case management system is in place for both SGBV and child protection, with training on case management having been provided to all service providers in 2019. Access to basic psychosocial support services and to legal assistance were made available to survivors through the SGBV partner. Barriers remain regarding access to the formal justice system due to the cultural preference of dealing with SGBV issues through informal mediation. In addition, essential health services, such as clinical management of rape, are only available in the capital city, Djibouti.

In 2019, the **Europe Regional Office** strengthened its SGBV prevention and response across the region. For example, in **Georgia** a multi-service community centre provides SGBV prevention and response activities, including legal and social counselling, cash-based interventions, psychosocial support, life skills and language courses, as well as dedicated thematic discussions on SGBV. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR provides legal assistance and representation to survivors of SGBV, including in relation to the violations that took place during the conflict of the 1990s. In **Malta**, the piloting of a mapping questionnaire by the office has contributed to a centralized directory of SGBV services and helped initiate the establishment of safe referral pathways. In the **Russian Federation**, the office has established a cooperation framework with the national legal assistance network to extend services to persons of concern, including survivors of domestic violence. Finally, in **Poland** UNHCR implemented awareness sessions for asylum-seekers, coaching sessions for reception staff and a workshop for municipal interdisciplinary teams operating in areas hosting large numbers of asylum-seekers. The sessions were conducted using a form of self-defence for women, integrating role-play of scenarios involving violence.

Regarding specific SGBV prevention programming, operations reported sustained and meaningful engagement with all segments of the communities to sensitize them to power dynamics and gender inequality as root causes of SGBV. In some operations, long-term and sustained prevention programmes were rolled-out. The Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP) Programme and/or SASA! methodology continued to be implemented in **Bangladesh, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania**, specifically engaging with men and youth as role models and advocates in the prevention of SGBV.

In **Thailand**, UNHCR targeted men, boys and other diverse groups to encourage them to engage in SGBV prevention activities. This included the production of an awareness-raising film, in collaboration with FilmAid, that focused on promoting community support to prevent domestic violence, as well as information-education-communication (IEC) materials featuring key messages on how men can be a positive role models in their community. Consultations with men and boys were the key to measuring the perceptions and understanding of SGBV amongst them and to engage with them in a meaningful way.



Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Persons

Why does it matter?

Prevention, mitigation and response to protection risks faced by LGBTI persons are a key priority for UNHCR, and the organization strives to ensure that LGBTI persons' rights are fulfilled and their needs met including through safe identification, referral systems, active participation, case management services and livelihood opportunities, among others.

LGBTI⁵⁶ persons flee their home to escape discrimination, violence and abuse, including rejection by their families. In the event of displacement, they often suffer from twofold discrimination, firstly as refugees or IDPs and secondly because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC); they are exposed to multiple protection risks, ranging from barriers to access rights and services, threats, discrimination, prejudice, abuse, bullying, neglect and violence to exploitation.

While discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited under international legal standards, non-discriminatory provisions are not always reflected in the laws of states concerned,⁵⁷ and LGBTI persons continue to face prosecution both in their country of origin and that of asylum. Even where a more robust legal framework exists, the reality in displacement settings is that it is not always easily accessible, comprehensible and accountable to those people whose lives it is intended to benefit. Hence, marginalization and exclusion prevail, forcing them to remain in hiding and preventing LGBTI persons from accessing basic information and services. With limited economic opportunities and support networks or safety nets, many resort to negative coping mechanisms for survival.

Examples of what UNHCR does

The Americas has, to date, been the focus of most of the initiatives for the protection of LGBTI individuals. These initiatives have included strengthening community youth networks to include activities targeted specifically to LGBTI persons of concern, and employers have been supported to create livelihood opportunities for LGBTI refugees. Examples of this can be found in **El Salvador**, **Ecuador**, **Argentina**, and **Brazil**.⁵⁸ In **El Salvador**, UNHCR has worked with local partners to raise awareness of the rights of LGBTI persons and to promote their access to work. UNHCR partner COMCAVIS, a NGO focusing on helping LGBTI persons, won last year's Nansen Refugee Award in the Americas Region. In **Ecuador**, a short workshop with LGBTI refugees about video producing led to the creation of a short documentary that was also screened in an LGBTI film festival

called "**El Lugar Sin Límites**". Finally, the UNHCR-promoted age, gender and diversity approach has been instrumental in shaping legislation and processes such as the 2014 **Brazil Declaration** and the **2019 Inter-American Court of Human Rights Advisory Opinion OC-24/17** on gender identity, equality, and non-discrimination.⁵⁹

In **Europe**, asylum officials benefit from training on sexual orientation and gender identity, together with on-the-job training on LGBTI related issues, including through a European Asylum Support Office (EASO) consultative forum on gender-related persecution that was co-facilitated by UNHCR in July 2019. UNHCR in **Romania** organized "Living Libraries" as part of the training, enabling asylum case officers to meet and speak with LGBTI refugees and hear their experiences. UNHCR supported a project entitled "Deconstruct the Difference", developed by LGBTI NGO ACATHI in Barcelona, **Spain**, which creates a safe space for LGBTI youth of concern to develop their capacities, self-awareness and interpersonal skills, and enhances the confidence and engagement of LGBTI refugees;

In **East Africa**, UNHCR works with national LGBTI organizations to train NGOs, government officials and LGBTI refugees together on SOGI-appropriate protection measures and employment opportunities. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, UNHCR trains national asylum authorities on how to work with SOGI asylum claims in a manner consistent with both national and international legal frameworks.

In **West and Central Africa**, UNHCR and OHCHR work with the African Union and Economic Community of West African States to include the needs of LGBTI persons of concern in the Covid-19 Gender Considerations.

Work with LGBTI leaders and activists has been promoted in **Africa** and in the **Americas** to enhance outreach and referral to services, as well as enhance the interest of LGBTI persons;

In the **Middle East**, efforts have concentrated on establishing sensitive strategies to communicate the protection risks faced by individuals with diverse sexual orientation or gender identities. Some of the initiatives have focused on establishing support groups for youth and sensitizing staff and community organizations so that support is provided to this population group. In one operations, for example, UNHCR and implementing partners organize regular focus group discussions with LGBTI individuals to enhance their awareness of the legal context, the services offered by partners, and to identify protection risks and needs of this group.

⁵⁶ For the purpose of this report, the term LGBTI is used in an inclusive way and encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans(gender) and intersex, as well as other groups relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, including asexual, non-binary, queer, and many more.

⁵⁷ At least 68 countries still have national laws criminalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults. In addition, at least nine countries have national laws criminalizing forms of gender expression that target gender non-conforming people.

⁵⁸ UNHCR (2020) Mapping the situation and key activities for the protection of LGBTI+ persons in forced displacement: The Americas. Fact Sheet.

⁵⁹ UNHCR (2020) Mapping the situation and key activities for the protection of LGBTI+ persons in forced displacement: The Americas. Fact Sheet.



III. Organizational accountability

Youth delegate Foni Joyce Vuni speaks during a high-level discussion on education during the Global Refugee Forum at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

This section sets out the actions taken by the leadership to strengthen protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and create an environment that promotes the continued integration of the age, gender and diversity approach and the smooth and effective implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy across the organization. Amongst these are actions taken to ensure the enforcement, institutionalization and integration of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and age, gender and diversity across bureaux, operations, and divisions, including systems for systematic monitoring and reporting, as well as efforts to enhance diversity in human resources.

► Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

UNHCR's work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) is set within broader organizational efforts to address sexual misconduct, an approach which recognizes the common roots of both sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH). During the past two years, UNHCR has made significant progress in its efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) within the organization and within the humanitarian and development sectors.

Critical to the success of this approach, was the decision made by the High Commissioner, in March 2018, to have a dedicated capacity and coordination structure

that focuses comprehensively on addressing sexual misconduct, including SEA. A clear vision for UNHCR's work and priorities is reflected in the [Strategy and Action Plan](#) that was developed in 2018, the implementation of which was taken forward by the Senior Coordinator on Prevention and Response to Sexual Misconduct working with a technical level Working Group⁶⁰ and a Director level Task Force, led by the UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner.

In 2019, considerable progress was made on implementing a number of initiatives in the Strategy and Action Plan, falling under five broad objectives: 1. ensuring accessible and trusted reporting mechanisms; 2. protecting those reporting; 3. strengthening investigation and disciplinary capacity; 4. ensuring the accountability of staff and managers; and, 5. ensuring organizational accountability. These are outlined in the report 2019 in [Review: Joining up Forces Against Sexual Misconduct](#).

One key area of work was the strengthening of UNHCR's field-based network of more than 400 focal points on PSEA. This included through online and face-to-face technical support and training and strengthening an internal interactive platform for the exchange of good practices – access to the platform increased by 60 percent from 2018 to 2019.

A global stocktaking of information, education and communication (IEC) materials related to sexual misconduct was launched and completed in 2019 to gain a better understanding of how communication on protection from SEA and SH is being undertaken in UNHCR operations and to ensure that IEC approaches are inclusive, AGD-sensitive and built on a strong foundation of community consultation.

In 2019, an [independent evaluative review of PSEA policies and procedures](#) was completed, to which UNHCR issued a [Management Response](#). This evaluative review validated the overall approach of the agency whilst sharing recommendations on areas for further strengthening, which have been included in the updated Strategy and Action Plan.

Also in 2019, a review of 30 field operations indicated that, PSEA inter-agency coordination structures are in place in most operations, with UNHCR co-chairing the PSEA Network in key locations. Most of the UNHCR's operations reviewed have conducted SEA awareness-raising and established community-based complaints mechanisms (CBCMs) to encourage safe and accessible reporting.

Moreover, country operations are moving forward with a range of promising practices to empower the people we serve to independently (and remotely) access information on protection and services, to report SEA, and to ensure reporting channels are AGD-sensitive, trusted by community members and appropriate to local and diverse needs.⁶¹

UNHCR has also taken a leadership role on PSEA at the interagency level. In September 2019, the High Commissioner assumed the role of [IASC Champion on PSEA and Sexual Harassment](#), which will conclude in December 2020. He has established three over-arching priorities for his [championship](#): 1) bolstering prevention, 2) increasing safe spaces for victims/survivors to speak out and 3) promoting the responsible use of authority through positive changes in organisational culture. These priorities are supported by a range of activities to benefit all members of the humanitarian community in strengthening protection from SEA and SH.



Malian refugees in Goudoubo camp, Burkina Faso, carry home new dignity kits, received at a distribution point in the camp.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Sylvain Cherkaoui

⁶⁰ Division of External Relations, Division of Human Resources, Division of International Protection, Enterprise Risk Management, Division of Strategic Planning and Results, Ethics Office, Field Security Service, Innovation Service, Inspector General's Office, Legal Affairs Service and Ombudsman's Office.

⁶¹ Examples of this can be found in the Feedback and Response section above.

To enhance effective coordination across the humanitarian system as a whole, UNHCR co-chairs the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion,⁶² and the IASC Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.⁶³ The purpose of Results Group 2 is to create a system-wide culture of accountability to affected people, inclusion and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, with a view to improving the overall effectiveness and outcomes of humanitarian responses at the country level. UNHCR also engages actively with the Office of the Special Coordinator on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which convenes UN-wide engagement on PSA to ensure a harmonized and effective approach to combating sexual exploitation and abuse. In line with the Secretary General's emphasis on addressing the needs of SEA victims/survivors, UNHCR also cooperates closely with the UN Office of the Victim Rights Advocate on system-wide initiatives to strengthen a victim-centred approach.

▶ Enabling environment

Implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy is an organizational commitment. Its success hinges on the leadership and oversight of senior management, and strong collaboration between relevant actors and stakeholders across bureaux, divisions and operations.

2018 and 2019 saw a succession of organization-wide initiatives to support the roll-out and implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. Throughout, the focus has been on building operations' understanding within the regions and on uptake of the policy, thus enhancing the capacity to respond to the needs of persons of concern in a protection-sensitive manner and with due respect for age, gender and diversity considerations, improving the alignment of practices with the age, gender and diversity core actions, and providing guidance and tools to support implementation.⁶⁴ A timeline listing the initiatives undertaken in the past two years is given below.

Figure 5: Age, Gender and Diversity Policy implementation timeline 2018-2019.



⁶² More information on Results Group 2 can be found here: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/results-group-2-accountability-and-inclusion>.

⁶³ All of these were active until early 2019 when a new structure and working methods were established to ensure that the IASC was more fit for purpose. Results Group 2 specifically focuses on accountability, inclusion and the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse within the humanitarian system.

⁶⁴ While a detailed account of the measures taken for implementation of the Policy is beyond the scope of this report, key initiatives include an survey on accountability to affected people for all operations and field missions involving Algeria, Chad, Morocco, Poland and Uganda, Age, gender and diversity workshops in both the HQ and the Americas; and tools to strengthen gender equality, disability and child and youth-inclusive programmes.

UNHCR has been leading by example, prioritizing age, gender and diversity in programme design and implementation, and building the capacity of staff and partners to position age, gender and diversity as an organizing principle in all their work. Moreover, as the lead for the Global Protection Cluster, it has been advocating for the systematic integration of an age, gender and diversity focus through its work on protection mainstreaming.

The first ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF)⁶⁵ in 2019 provided a unique opportunity to advance gender equality, youth, refugee participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities more generally. The participation and leadership of refugee women was ensured through a gender audit of the GRF and the processes leading up to it. Led by refugee women, the audit drew attention to gender-equality related challenges in refugee contexts and the need to ensure that the commitments made to refugee women and girls in the Global Compact on Refugees were acknowledged and fully integrated through the GRF pledging process and the preparatory meetings. It also documented how age, gender and diversity, and SGBV were addressed by different stakeholders across key thematic areas.⁶⁶



Refugee youth and students delegates attend the Global Refugee Forum at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



A joint statement by refugees representing the Global Refugee Network, the Global Youth Advisory Council, the Gender Audit team and the student delegation at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Steve Forrest

Discussion focused on youth across inter-agency actors resulted in 16 pledges on the engagement and empowerment of youth. In addition, in collaboration with the International Disability Alliance, UNHCR disseminated guidance on developing pledges given on the rights of refugees with disabilities. As a result, 14 of the pledges included substantial commitments to this population.

One important area of work is the ongoing renewal of UNHCR's approach to Results-Based Management (RBM), which aims to enable the organization to report globally on a core set of some 50 indicators that accompany the new results framework. Where relevant, these impact and outcome-level indicators will be disaggregated by age, sex, and disability. Disaggregated data on persons of concern will improve the monitoring and reporting of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy. The new results framework, together with the associated core indicators, are expected to be in use from 2022.

⁶⁵ The Global Refugee Forum is one of the arrangements for a comprehensive refugee response model, also known as the Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 2019. The GRF is a forum for States and other actors to come together every four years to share good practices and contribute financial support, technical expertise and policy changes to achieve the goals set in the Global Compact. The first such forum took place in December 2019. More information on the 2019 GRF can be found at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum.html>.

⁶⁶ The gender audit reports are available on the UNHCR website at: <https://www.unhcr.org/search?query=Gender%20audit%202019>.

Diversity starts from within

As the case for a more diverse workforce becomes increasingly compelling across all sectors, UNHCR has embraced the vision that a diverse and inclusive working environment fosters innovation and better decision-making in ways that homogenous environments seldom do.

In line with the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, diversity in human resources goes beyond gender parity to encompass disability, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and other specific characteristics such as religion and belief.

UNHCR personnel are the face and the voice of the organization, those who live and breathe the work culture. For UNHCR to maximise its contribution to a more open, diverse and inclusive society where all people of concern feel welcome and protected, this could only start from within.

The charts below illustrate the diversity within UNHCR in terms of gender and nationality both in the HQ and in field operations. Efforts are underway to enhance diversity with respect to gender and other dimensions, such as nationality, disability, and sexual identity.

The UNHCR's diversity and inclusion strategy is focused on achieving gender parity across all international grade

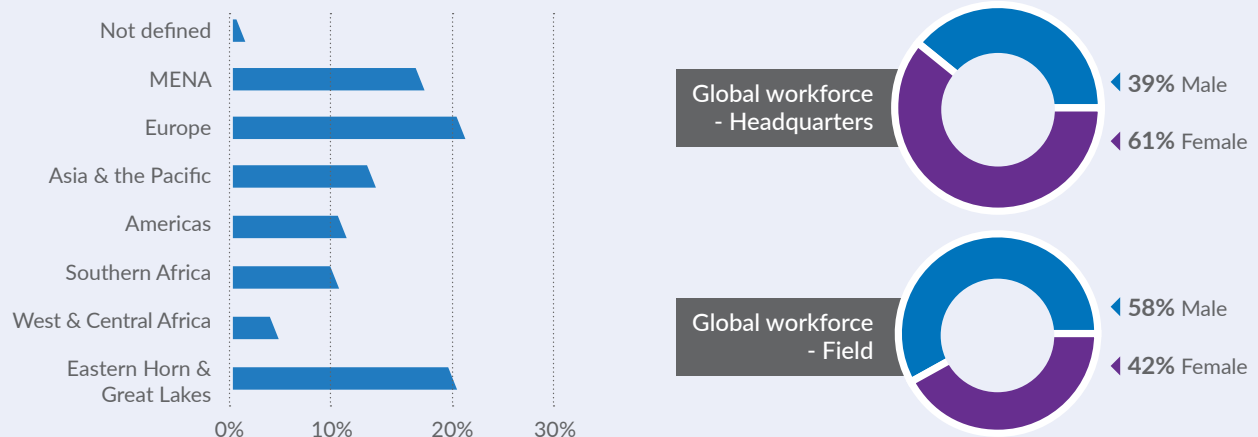
levels by 2023, as well as on increased gender diversity amongst locally recruited personnel, and greater diversity in nationalities working in different parts of the organisation. It is also aimed at increasing the numbers of persons with disabilities who work for UNHCR and ensuring greater inclusion of LGBTI colleagues.

Underpinning UNHCR success in improving its gender diversity over the past two years are the temporary measures built into the recruitment and assignments policy. The recent introduction of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, which is informing the development of a workplace action plan to advance disability inclusion and increase cultural and ethnic diversity, will further diversify the workforce.

Success in achieving diversity and inclusion is, however contingent on commitment on the part of the leadership teams. The evidence suggests that a diverse and inclusive⁶⁷ humanitarian leadership is more likely to adopt a diverse and inclusive approach to the communities they serve.⁶⁸

As the data clearly suggests, significant improvements have been made to ensure greater diversity at the highest management level. For example, there is now a gender balanced and nationality diverse Senior Executive Team and the same is true at D2 level.

Figures 6,7 & 8: Diversity within the UNHCR workforce.



⁶⁷ Diversity includes differences relating to gender, age, disability, cultural background, sexual orientation, social and economic background, profession, education, work experiences and organizational roles. Inclusion refers to the feeling of value and respect, and the opportunities to contribute perspectives and access opportunities and resources. In the case of Nigeria, the focus was primarily on gender diversity.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Humanitarian Advisory Group (2019) Data on Diversity: Humanitarian Leadership under the Spotlight and ALNAP (2012) Leadership in Action: Leading Effectively in humanitarian operations.



IV. Equality through participation and inclusion

Rama, 14, practices Taekwondo in Zaatari Refugee Camp, Jordan. Photo credit: © UNHCR/Mohammad Hawari

► Key areas going forward

This report sets out a compilation of practices and experiences from current UNHCR operations with regard to age, gender and diversity and provides a basis for discussion with regard to the development of future activities.

A number of summative observations based on the evidence presented and some thoughts on possible next steps are given below.

Age, gender and diversity-inclusive programming

This is the area where most of the advancements were observed, reflecting clearly the energy invested and emphasis placed by UNHCR across its numerous functions and locations over the years.

While disaggregation by sex and age are common to all operations, more recent work on disability and youth has raised the bar, with ever greater efforts currently

underway to ensure that UNHCR meets international standards and practices.

The identification and collection of disaggregated data on disabilities will be prioritized since persons with disabilities are often under-identified at reception and registration, with negative consequences for their ability to access protection and assistance. In this regard, **UNHCR is promoting the systematic integration of the Washington Group Questions into the standard data collection tools and processes.**

Additional guidance will be developed on the feasibility and appropriateness of collecting 'other diversity' information.

Finally, the true value of any collected data lies in its use in the development, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. For this to occur, UNHCR continues **to promote the practice of consistent, standardized data collection, analysis and use, and invests in capacity building and advocacy for disaggregated data collection amongst all stakeholders.**

Accountability to affected people

Meaningful participation, information sharing, and feedback are concrete mechanisms through which persons of concern can contribute to the development of activities and services that aim to enhance their well-being. They are an integral component of sustainable protection, given that only well-informed and engaged individuals and communities can stand up for their rights and have agency over their lives. Individuals know best what solutions are suitable for them and should be provided with the opportunity and space to shape that narrative through their experiences, needs and concerns.

This report presents a number of examples of approaches to systematically engage with diverse age, gender and diversity groups, from age-appropriate participatory tools, through assessment of the preferred and most trustworthy sources of information and communication, to unified and responsive feedback and response systems. But there is still work to be done.

Further engagement and dialogue with communities is needed to understand how they want to influence decisions, what channels of communication and feedback they are currently using, what sources they trust, and how they would like to engage and communicate with humanitarian agencies, especially on sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Where people's capacities and preferences are diverse and dynamic, so too should be the repertoire of available tools and solutions. **UNHCR is committed to broadening the scope of available tools and solutions and adjusting existing mechanisms and developing new tools in consultation with communities, while weighing these against parameters such as scalability, practicality, accessibility and use by diverse populations.**

Extra efforts will need to be made to capacitate displaced communities to influence decision-making processes. Although UNHCR systematically applies participatory methodologies and consults displaced populations on their needs and capacities at the assessment phase, the **participation of communities is rather limited at the programme planning, monitoring and evaluation phases.** True engagement also calls for **communities to be kept informed about how their feedback influenced programmes, as well as where and why this was not possible.**

In 2020-21, UNHCR will further explore the use of remote monitoring, including digital feedback received from displaced populations, as a complementary monitoring tool and an additional source of information.

To boost UNHCR's efforts to show how the inputs of persons of concern are used to shape and adjust programmes, **support needs to be provided to enable operations to systematically record, analyse and use information and data received through the various communication and feedback channels with persons of concern.** This will serve two purposes: 1. to ensure efforts are made to respond to feedback received from persons of concern, and 2. to ensure that data is better documented and used effectively to influence programming.

Finally, complementarity to other measures is essential for the success of solutions to address complex needs and capacities. Unified and coordinated systems, such as the R4V platform in the **Americas** or the hotlines in **Iraq** and **Uganda** that provide a consolidated set of contributions that people can draw on to meet their needs, are good examples of how this could be accomplished.



UNHCR Helpline agents take calls at the centre in Khalda, Amman, Jordan.
Photo credit: © UNHCR/Annie Sakkab

Gender equality

Restrictive gender stereotypes, discriminatory societal norms, persistent institutional and structural barriers and burdensome, though critical, life sustaining household and caring responsibilities that limit women's and girls' educational and economic opportunities continue to present barriers to the full and meaningful participation and leadership of women.

Equal and meaningful participation is essential for upholding the rights of women and girls, ensuring their effective protection and their ability to define future prospects. Therefore, **focussed efforts must continue to enable women and girls to take on leadership roles, while at the same time confronting and dismantling the inequalities that side-line women and girls. Gender-responsive programming and targeted actions** based on solid gender analysis and gender-responsive and inclusive messaging, including on issues such as sexual exploitation and abuse, are crucial for tackling underlying harmful norms that underpin discrimination, exploitation, and violence. These efforts **must be strengthened.**

To continue to advance gender equality, **more efforts and time must be invested in promoting dialogue within communities, raising awareness of and advocating for women's rights and supporting women in building their leadership skills and overcoming participation barriers.** In this regard, engagement and close partnerships with local women's rights organizations and groups are key.

As the *Tearing Down the Walls report* reveals, simply staying alive and meeting basic needs is a fundamental challenge for many forcibly displaced women and a barrier to their active participation. What women and girls really want is economic betterment as a step in the process that leads to more substantive and influential participation and leadership.⁶⁹ **Enabling and supporting economic empowerment and resilience** is fundamental to advance gender equality and it is therefore critical for UNHCR to **scale up support to partners capable of carrying out technically sound and effective women's economic empowerment projects,** informed by strong gender analysis and with the engagement and sensitization of male partners, family members, and other community power-holders.

While some welcome progress has been achieved, the current focus of SGBV prevention programs remains limited. This is partially linked to an inadequate emphasis on programming for gender equality as well as the need for **committed multi-year funding to advance gender equality.** UNHCR needs to continue expanding its work and engagement in this area, including through the replication of good practices and expansion of evidence-based prevention programming.

Further work is also required globally to scale **up life-saving SGBV response services,** particularly psychosocial support, legal aid and safe shelter. Programmes are often too short-lived to enable women to emerge from the suffering brought about by SGBV and to take back control of their lives.

Evidence suggests that meaningful engagement with men and boys has the potential to reduce SGBV, particularly intimate partner violence. UNHCR is well positioned to **advocate for more funds and space to work with men and boys, alongside targeted actions to ensure the protection and realization of rights for women and girls,** and could lead by example by prioritizing this as an area of work.

2020 will be marked by the launch of the first UNHCR Policy on the Prevention, Risk Mitigation, and Response to Gender-Based Violence (UNHCR Gender-based Violence Policy) as well as operational guidance accompanying the Policy, reflecting the latest set of priorities and the direction to be taken by the organization in line with global standards. Building on key aspects of the age, gender and diversity approach, the upcoming Gender-based Violence Policy has ten core actions covering the three areas of SGBV programming, i.e. prevention, risk mitigation and response.

Finally, work on strengthening integration and synergies between areas of work, such as education, livelihoods, health, shelter, registration, child protection, youth programming, SGBV, and durable solutions needs to continue to achieve effective mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is essential that gender equality considerations, building on **solid gender analyses and the use of disaggregated data on sex, age, disability and other diversity characteristics, are integrated consistently and effectively across UNHCR's operational responses.**

⁶⁹ UNHCR (2018) *Tearing down the walls. Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girl's participation in humanitarian settings.*

Age, gender and diversity-inclusive programming

- Integrate the Washington Group Questions into the standard data collection tools and processes.
- Develop guidance on the feasibility and appropriateness of collecting ‘other diversity’ information.
- Promote the practice of consistent and standardized data collection, invest in capacity building and advocate for disaggregated data collection amongst all stakeholders.

Accountability to affected people

- Extend community participation beyond the assessment phase.
- Systematically inform communities about how their feedback influenced programmes as well as where and why this was not possible.
- Engage with diverse groups within communities to understand how they want to influence decisions, what channels of communication and feedback they are currently using, what sources they trust, and how they would like to engage and communicate with humanitarian agencies, especially on sensitive issues such as SEA.
- Broaden the scope of available communications tools to respond to POCs preference and diverse needs, while weighing these against parameters such as scalability, practicality, accessibility and use by diverse populations.
- Include digital feedback received from displaced populations, as a complementary monitoring tool and an additional source of information.
- Support operations to systematically record, analyse and use information and data received through the various communication and feedback channels to influence programming and to close the feedback loop by responding to feedback received by POC.
- Further explore the use of coordinated, multi-agency systems, to address complex communication needs.

Gender equality

- Strengthen focussed efforts to enable women and girls to take on leadership roles, while at the same time confronting and dismantling the inequalities that side-line women and girls.
- Strengthen gender-responsive programming and targeted actions based on solid gender analyses and gender-responsive and inclusive messaging, including on issues such as sexual exploitation and abuse, which are crucial for tackling underlying harmful norms that underpin discrimination, exploitation, and violence.
- Strengthen engagement and close partnerships with local women’s rights organizations to promote dialogue within communities, to raise awareness, to advocate for women’s rights and to support women in building leadership skills and overcoming participation barriers.
- Scale up support to partners capable of carrying out technically sound and effective women’s economic empowerment projects.
- Pursue commitment to multi-year funding to advance gender equality and scale up lifesaving gender-based violence response services.
- Advocate for more funds to work with men and boys, alongside targeted actions to ensure the protection and realization of rights for women and girls.
- Strengthen integration and synergies within technical sectors and across all areas of work, such as education, livelihoods, health, shelter, registration, child protection, youth programming, SGBV and durable solutions to continue to achieve effective mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- Integrate solid gender analyses and the use of disaggregated data on sex, age, disability and other diversity characteristics across UNHCR’s operational responses.



Putting People First

UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2018-2019