

Joint Letter

from the High Commissioner of UNHCR and Executive Director of UN Women

Dear colleagues,

Today UN Women and UNHCR accelerate our work together for all refugees, internally displaced and stateless women at the global, regional and country levels.

Now is the time to strengthen our partnership. A rapidly changing global context requires seamless collaboration among humanitarian, development and peace actors to respond to increasingly complex and protracted crises. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates the challenges faced by women and girls.

Through our complementary mandates and expertise, we will strengthen our support for the unique needs and concerns of refugee, internally displaced and stateless women and girls. Our commitments are elaborated in UNHCR's 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, UNHCR's Policy on Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence, UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.

Our past and current collaboration spans coordination, programmatic and advocacy initiatives at the global, regional and country levels. In many country operations, UNHCR and UN Women already work hand in hand. At the corporate level, we engage through the accountability framework on gender equality and women's empowerment, UN-SWAP and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Statelessness, as well as UNHCR's membership in the Generation Equality Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

Our strengthened partnership builds on the comprehensive commitments on the rights and needs of women and girls made in the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants and in the Global Compact on Refugees.

We seek to strengthen our collaboration in three key areas:

1. Joint Programmes/Operations

UNHCR and UN Women will:

- Explore opportunities where joint programmes can be conducted to scale up protection assistance to women and girls, including through cash assistance, integrating gender equality outcomes and expanding UNHCR community-based work with women and girls.
- Advance and scale up programming on gender sensitive livelihoods including through existing mechanisms such as UN Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access, Protection (LEAP) programme and through advocacy on economic inclusion.

- Deploy long term gender technical capacity, including to support camp management and coordination and to strengthen gender equality in humanitarian programming.

2. Coordination Platforms

UNHCR and UN Women will:

- Strive to co-chair/convene Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Groups or Gender Hubs to promote gender mainstreaming and targeted interventions to advance gender equality across and within all sectors including by coordinating a network of gender focal points and leading joint advocacy initiatives, if deemed appropriate in the given context.
- Strengthen meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless women and the organizations/networks representing them in refugee coordination/decision making, through Protection and Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Groups and other mechanisms. Both organizations will promote women leaders/women's rights organizations' direct engagement in consultations to identify, plan and respond to humanitarian needs.
- Reinforce linkages in situations of internal displacement with UNHCR-led protection cluster, and UNHCR co-led CCCM and shelter clusters with UN Women at global and country levels to align strategies and ensure that policies and actions are promoting gender equality and the empowerment of internally displaced women and girls in every context.
- Agree to find ways of strengthening aspects of durable solutions, including through facilitating the direct participation of women in peace processes, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.
- Strengthen gender analysis and use of sex/gender disaggregated data collection, using existing tools by both agencies. Encourage that these inform prioritization for gender equality in response plans, as well as outline gaps in gender norms and opportunities to scale up further strategic action and institutional priorities around women's leadership.

3. Advocacy and communications

UNHCR and UN Women will:

- Collaborate annually on 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, under the umbrella of the UNiTE campaign, by amplifying 16 Days messaging and content on social media.
- Determine key moments for joint advocacy and communication at the global level, which could include content creation, promotion, or other high-profile activation.
- Facilitate co-creation opportunities that highlight the impact on the ground of joint activities/programming to better protect and uphold the rights of refugees, internally displaced and stateless women and girls.

These priorities were identified through an initial review of our existing joint work and detailed technical level discussions highlighting areas where there is potential to consolidate and scale-up best practices and to enhance coordination, and entry-points for novel joint action.

In line with these priority areas, UN Women and UNHCR encourage all personnel, including senior managers, to develop joint initiatives at the regional and country levels in line with local contexts and priorities. A detailed matrix that captures these priority areas is annexed. As next steps, both agencies will hold annual strategic coordination dialogues at the corporate level and regions are encouraged to hold parallel joint dialogues, as needed, to ensure follow-up and implementation.

Moving forward, we recognize the potential of joint approaches and programmes for creating transformative impact for women and girls in stateless, internally displaced and refugee contexts.

For more information on the collaboration you can contact: Ms. Annika Sandlund, Head, Partnership and Coordination Service, UNHCR and Ms. Funmi Balogun, Head, Humanitarian Normative and Coordination Action, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section, UN Women.



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