

# Gender Mainstreaming



OFFICE OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS HIGH  
COMMISSIONER FOR  
REFUGEES (UNHCR)

## Programme objectives

UNHCR has been working over many years to advance the rights of displaced women to equal protection and assistance. In doing so, women's resources, experiences, needs and rights should be mainstreamed throughout all interventions and policies with a view to achieving gender equality. Over this time, there has been an accumulation of experiences and learning within the organization on ways to programme that would ensure that women's needs and capacities are taken into full consideration. In recent years, there has been a better understanding of the need to have a two-pronged approach: targeted initiatives to address disadvantage and discrimination, in order to reach the objective of gender equality and on-going efforts to mainstream gender equality.

The Office of the Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Women/Gender Equality remains the focal office for efforts to affect policy and practice, in order to improve the protection of refugee women and women in other populations of concern.

UNHCR continues to analyze and revise manuals, guidelines, training materials and various other initiatives, to include a gender focus in order to promote gender mainstreaming. This will gradually enable the Organization to meet its core mandate more effectively and fairly.

## Operational activities

People Oriented Planning (POP) and Gender Awareness Training is an important tool for raising awareness on gender issues among UNHCR and implementing partner staff. Ten years old, this training package has been strengthened on gender analysis and the empowerment of women. POP training provides UNHCR staff and implementing Partners with a framework for analyzing the different experiences and resources of women and men refugees.

The Gender Network is a mechanism for sharing responsibility and key information on gender mainstreaming. The Gender teams and networks have been created in several regions to improve co-ordination and ensure that all UNHCR programmes/activities incorporate a gender equality perspective. In the Americas, Baltic States, CIS and Central Asia, established gender networks have evaluated their work so far and have developed region-specific tools to promote gender mainstreaming. In the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa, each country team has elaborated a plan of action for gender mainstreaming that was incorporated into the country action plans. In the Middle East, the gender networks have developed a series of projects/activities to promote gender mainstreaming in the region.

Through the incorporation of gender equality perspectives in the objectives and appraisal of UNHCR Staff, ongoing efforts show that this could be a very effective way to promote sustained sensitivity on gender issues among staff, and systematically mainstream gender perspectives in all UNHCR's programmes and activities, including budget and reporting process. It is also an important tool to monitor the progress made in the implementation of gender and the impact of UNHCR's efforts in addressing gender issues.

UNHCR's three main policy documents: (1) Policy on Refugee Women; (2) Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women; and (3) Guidelines on Prevention

UNHCR  
Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women  
and Gender Equality  
94 rue Montbrillant  
CH-1202 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Fax: 41-22-739-7374  
E-mail: [mends@unhcr.ch](mailto:mends@unhcr.ch)  
<http://www.unhcr.ch/women>

and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence, all address issues affecting refugee women, and are currently under revision, to reflect lessons learned and emerging issues.

Collecting and widely disseminating good practices and lessons learned on gender mainstreaming is one of the ways to support the replication of initiatives that have worked elsewhere. The Office of the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women/Gender Equality has published three good practices on Gender Equality Mainstreaming. The good practices are taken from current field activities around the world. The publication offers clear descriptions of activities and results, in a format that enables the ideas to be modified and replicated elsewhere.

Efforts have been made to incorporate gender perspectives in UNHCR's different learning programmes (Middle Management, Protection, and Operations Management Learning programmes)

A three-month Gender Learning Programme that builds on the current POP and gender awareness training is under preparation. This programme will provide staff with more in-depth knowledge of the issues involved in promoting gender equality and will provide opportunities for participants to work on projects to advance the rights of refugee women.

### **Other recent activities**

UNHCR recognizes that consulting with refugees themselves is pivotal to effective planning, implementation and evaluation addressing the real needs of all the beneficiaries. In 2001, a series of local and regional meetings were held with refugee women, followed by a Global Dialogue in Geneva with about 50 refugee women from around the world. This was an important opportunity for UNHCR senior managers to listen to refugee women and to learn about their concerns. The High Commissioner responded with five measurable, actionable and practical commitments to address practical and strategic needs of refugee women. They relate to food management and distribution, participation in decision-making, individual registration and documentation, provision of sanitary materials and the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence. ■