



# Gender and Child Protection Policies: *Where do UNHCR's partners stand?*

a report by the  
Women's Commission  
for Refugee Women and Children

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## **Mission Statement**

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children works to improve the lives and defend the rights of refugee and internally displaced women, children and adolescents. We advocate for their inclusion and participation in programs of humanitarian assistance and protection. We provide technical expertise and policy advice to donors and organizations that work with refugees and the displaced. We make recommendations to policy makers based on rigorous research and information gathered on fact-finding missions. We join with refugee women, children and adolescents to ensure that their voices are heard from the community level to the highest levels of governments and international organizations. We do this in the conviction that their empowerment is the surest route to the greater well-being of all forcibly displaced people.

## **Acknowledgments**

This report was researched and written by Patricia Kim. It was edited by Dale Buscher, Director, Protection and Participation Program, Ramina Johal, Senior Coordinator, Protection and Participation Program, and Diana Quick, Director of Communications, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

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## Introduction

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children has been partnering with UNHCR on its global rollout of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) since 2004. In recognition of the significant amount of work implemented by NGO partners for and with refugee/displaced populations, this study was undertaken to identify the existence of gender and child protection policies, as well as mainstreaming policies if any, amongst UNHCR's major international and national NGO partners. The presence of such policies, as well as their implementation, would assist UNHCR's partners with incorporating UNHCR's AGDM work within their own organizations and programs. Additionally, among UNHCR implementing partners, policies on gender and child protection and appropriate mechanisms for their implementation, monitoring and accountability are a necessary foundation for advancing UNHCR's own AGDM objectives at the operational level.

AGDM is, at its core, about enhancing gender equality, increasing access to decision-making and promoting equal access to assistance for all groups regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, ability or any other marker of differentiation. These principles underlie the holistic character of AGDM implementation. Not to be considered an additional project but rather a strategy to improve operations, this system-wide initiative also highlights the broad participatory approach that should be taken systematically in *all* stages of program and policy design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision. Better meeting the needs of all, with specific attention to the most vulnerable groups, for better protection and empowerment is a responsibility shared by staff throughout UNHCR. Thus far among field office locations in 116 countries, approximately 52 began AGDM rollout in 2004/2005 and around 40 more are scheduled for 2006.

The purpose of this study is to gauge what kind of policies, tools and accountability mechanisms are in place at partner organizations with respect to gender equality and child/youth protection. The aim is to find out if and what specific policies exist and the level of partner interaction with UNHCR to implement AGDM through information sharing and training. This report is not meant to evaluate UNHCR partners' policies and tools. Rather, it is meant to make a contribution to UNHCR and partners' work by documenting progress and good practice as well as obstacles and challenges they face in mainstreaming. As pertinent, these survey findings are to be taken into consideration within the overall context of strengthening UNHCR's multi-year AGDM global rollout by enhancing its impact through the promotion of relevant policy and accountability mechanisms development with its key partners.

## Methodology

Information presented in this report is based primarily on responses to surveys sent to 22 organizations representing the top 10-12 international and national implementing partners in terms of recipient amounts of UNHCR funding. The rationale for selecting the organizations by funding level was that it was deemed logically sound to assume implementing partners receiving significant amounts of funding would be a UNHCR priority for both capacity building and close working relationships. Also, it seemed fair to expect the top-funded partners to be undertaking considerable programs in areas of mutual interest with UNHCR. The response rate was 50 percent, with 5 out of 10 international organizations responding and 6 out of 12 national organizations responding.

Although not on UNHCR's list of partners,<sup>1</sup> certain federation headquarters were contacted where their affiliate member organization was in the study. The purpose was to find out what relevant policy directives existed from the federation level and the extent that policies at the federation level influenced local affiliates' structure of work and practices – 3 out of 5 contacted federations responded.

In addition, to better understand the level of interaction between UNHCR and implementing partners, UNHCR field offices in the countries where the national NGOs in the survey are located were contacted. They were asked about their working relationship with respect to relevant policy development and as applicable, participation in and impact of AGDM-related assessments, workshops and trainings. A total of 7 out of 12 UNHCR offices responded.<sup>2</sup>

Because the study was conducted over a short period, time constraints allowed only for dissemination of an electronic survey (with follow-up reminders) and Web-based research, which was used as background and to cross-reference data. The significant amount of data collected is not exhaustive but indicates directions and policy development needs for further exploration and attention.

**List of Agencies Consulted and Responses Received** provided in *Annex 1*.

**Copy of Questionnaire** provided in *Annex 2*.

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<sup>1</sup> Except the Lutheran World Federation which is on the international partners list as well as being the umbrella organization for the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service on the national partners list.

<sup>2</sup> One UNHCR field office was very helpful and disseminated the survey to several implementing partners whose responses are incorporated in this report, although the UNHCR office did not respond to our questions directly.

## **Key Findings**

### **Gender/Women/Child Protection Policies**

The majority of NGOs surveyed do not have their own developed gender or child protection policies. Most refer back to UNHCR guidelines and policies and to international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to guide their programming. It is important to note, however, that these need to be adapted to the circumstances of each organization in order to actually serve as instruments to guide programs and operations. Further, in the area of training, there appears to be insufficient gender and child protection focus in the induction of new staff and in-service for current staff. Finally, accountability is the backbone of any efforts to successfully promote AGDM. Here, too, the standard must be raised beyond reporting systems to include the development of monitoring indicators and their use in performance reviews and headquarters oversight.

### **Gender Mainstreaming Policies**

It should be underlined that the content of responses from local NGOs varied depending on whether or not the country had participated in the AGDM rollout. In general, those that had participated in the process seemed to be further along in relevant areas – due to synergy between the UNHCR-led AGDM initiative and the efforts of NGOs. For example, Opción Legal in Colombia, which was one of the pilot countries in 2004, has clear gender mainstreaming policies and a firm grounding in the issues involved. As another example, the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service, which highlights gender equity as a key policy goal in its 2004-2008 country strategy, has been a leading member in the Tanzania multi-functional team (MFT)<sup>3</sup> since rollout began in 2005. Over all, however, there was a very preliminary awareness on mainstreaming age, gender and diversity concerns. Importantly, several respondents underscored the need for such efforts and inquired about appropriate frameworks, tools and general advice.

For the international NGOs, it is more difficult to discern a causal pattern with regard to the divergent responses. Most agree on the importance and purpose of AGDM and a few have mainstreaming efforts underway while others are still planning or are vague about future plans. While organizations may be at different stages in the process of preparing for or actually doing mainstreaming, they showed strong interest in supportive networking. A number of organizations seemed confident that they are upholding the principle of AGDM based on their approaches which, for example, emphasize human rights or place a methodological priority on participation for all members of a community, including women.

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<sup>3</sup> MFTs are to be established during AGDM rollout addressing areas of program, community services and protection “to act as catalysts to facilitate the implementation of the policies on refugee women and children through a rights-based approach.” (UNHCR’s Age and Gender Mainstreaming Pilot Project 2004: Synthesis Report, April 2005, available at [www.unhcr.ch/epau](http://www.unhcr.ch/epau).)

## **Local Context and NGO Mandate/Expertise**

Of note here is that UNHCR's global rollout is administered on the basis of countries and regions, which can lead to differing experiences and relationships with UNHCR between national and international NGOs. For international NGOs there is the question of awareness at the headquarters level and at the various field locations/operations. The responses to the survey need to be analyzed with particular contexts in mind. Nevertheless, all organizations had as their stated mission and mandate the provision of basic services such as food, healthcare, primary education and also legal services, under the principle of human dignity and respect. Despite differences in working structure and/or scope, the partner organizations are working in specific locations under varied but comparable constraints.

That said, it was generally found that when discussing gender policy and gender equality, there was reference to two levels which at times was conflated – one, hiring guidelines at the workplace with respect to employees, and two, in terms of work with refugee/displaced groups. Work with displaced women was most often cited in terms of (a) income generation (linked to “empowerment”) and (b) healthcare, awareness/education on HIV/AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Few respondents mentioned programs or policies that addressed gender issues rather than women's issues, and fewer yet made the link to involving men and masculinity issues. Cumulatively, 4 out of 11 responding national and international NGOs had policies on gender equality. Several organizations cited global standards such as UNHCR, WHO, and Sphere guidelines as the primary tools being used by their organization.

On addressing children and adolescent needs and mainstreaming age concerns more broadly, the findings were more varied. Work in this category was most often cited in terms of education, shelter, food, healthcare and protection of primary school-age children and adolescents, with special attention to unaccompanied children and child soldiers. In contrast to gender, although most of the organizations had specific programs targeting children/adolescents and had corresponding policies and/or guidelines on child protection (most citing UN standards and some with their own), there was no information given on the existence of age-sensitive policies.<sup>4</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNHCR Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Children and the Interagency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children were the most cited. A handful of organizations referred to a code of conduct (or ethics) in their response, two of which explicitly deal with child protection, and one organization had an additional specific code of conduct that was enforced with teachers and staff at schools.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability**

In terms of monitoring impact, evaluation and accountability of existing policies/programs on women/children/gender/age as currently defined by the agency, answers were similar in their frame of reference to some combination of the following elements: (a) regular reports, e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly, especially on implementation of

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<sup>4</sup> The difference should be partially attributed to the wider lack of awareness on ageism and insufficient development of age-sensitive policies; whereas in contrast the problems of sexism have been much more analyzed and gender equality/equity policies have a longer history to draw lessons from (albeit the tendency to interchange “gender” with “women”)

programs and project proposals; (b) field visits by staff from headquarters or experienced personnel; (c) open channels of communication such as regular staff meetings (especially cross-departments/areas, and headquarters/field offices); (d) code of conduct, which every worker involved signs; and (e) mandatory reporting policy on abuse and exploitation. Considering the responses, it was unclear as to the appropriate extent of institutionalization necessary for the circular process of policy and program design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement. That is, all organizations have some system of reporting and evaluation, but how much of the process needs to be outlined in the form of a policy or guidelines? Indeed the kind of accountability asked for by AGDM efforts by all staff is one which, as INTERSOS stated, “becomes part of daily life and comes naturally during [their] work with people of concern.” The important thing to point out is that accountability entails more than a strong reporting system and needs to be systematically developed. Then, it can become more “natural” and part of organizational culture.

## **Major Findings**

### **1. Two Initial Observations**

Several responses from NGOs to the questions included statements on the organization’s non-discriminatory policy and human rights approach. In other words, that as a humanitarian organization, no distinction was made in beneficiaries in terms of age, gender or ethnic background. For example, Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) highlights its humanitarian mission while making note of how it pays “special attention” to women and children, in particular with their vulnerability of exposure to HIV/AIDS, but that it has “no specific policy” on women or gender equality as the organization “promotes a policy of non-discrimination.” The International Rescue Committee (IRC) emphasizes its principle of participation of all beneficiaries including women, which is one of five principles underscoring the NGO’s program methodology.

Such answers point out two key issues:

First, each organization rightfully has its own mode of operation and driving principles which means flexibility is necessary. That is, as the UNHCR promotes mainstreaming of age, gender and diversity in its operations, concerted efforts are called for to ensure this strategy can be incorporated into NGOs that have a variety of approaches and philosophies, as well as areas of focus. Practically speaking, this also means special administrative considerations to jointly seek ways for the lessons learned in the ongoing AGDM rollout process to be disseminated as they become available. The organizational styles of several respondents such as the aforementioned are by no means incompatible or more difficult for AGDM. As a timely point of review, a recent UNHCR reference guide describes AGDM as a “strategy” to “promote gender equality and respect for human rights, particularly women’s and children’s rights, and to enhance the protection of all persons of concern, regardless of their ethnic, social, or religious background.” Its attainment is “integral” for strengthening “a rights-based and a community-based approach” overall, approaches which the majority of partners take.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cited from 2006 UNHCR publication, *Operational Protection in Camps and Settlements: A reference*

Second, some partners did appear better placed to practice mainstreaming in their work according to this short study – depending on their awareness of AGDM and *not* necessarily based on levels of interest or capability. Better promotion of the idea of mainstreaming itself seems much needed, in conjunction with addressing the challenges of actual mainstreaming of age, gender and diversity. Successful AGDM would mean greater and equitable participation by all the various groups in decision-making, as well as an enhanced knowledge of the particular and interconnected needs of each population. It is about paying special attention, yes, but in a more systematic and accountable manner. However, a solid understanding and clear awareness of AGDM – at the very least its intention to drastically influence the entire policy and program process – was found in only a few of the survey responses. It is relevant to note here that the answers to the two questions on whether they had policies or mechanisms on mainstreaming age, gender or diversity were limited for almost all NGOs.

## **2. National Partners, Federations and UNHCR Field Offices**

This section of the report chronologically looks at the local NGOs surveyed in terms of when the AGDM rollout was/is scheduled.

The varying degree of understanding and work on AGDM among organizations can, first and foremost, be correlated with whether or not the UNHCR field office in their country(s) of operation have gone through the AGDM rollout. Therefore, with this in mind, this survey hoped to get, at a minimum, responses on each organization’s policy, guidelines and tools for gender equality and child protection. Also, for each section of the survey, we asked for information on monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. As available, information gathered from the responses by federations and UNHCR field offices is also incorporated.

Colombia and Egypt were two of the members in the 2004 pilot project for rolling out age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. Their responses are interestingly enough quite different, pointing out that there are many factors involved in the effective promotion of AGDM with implementing partners.

**Colombia’s** UNHCR office and the surveyed organization mutually reported a close working relationship, and the NGO Opción Legal (OL) has the most specific gender mainstreaming policy of all respondents. OL was a member of the initial participatory assessment – a key initial stage in AGDM rollouts – and is now a member of the MFT in Colombia. The local UNHCR office replied that OL had been significantly supported with the recruitment of a gender consultant for leading training, designing tools, etc. The strong ongoing partnership has led to OL incorporating AGDM into its mandate, its main projects like Education and Protection of Children (Pedagogia y Protección de la Niñez) developing “sex-aggregated and gender indicators,” and increased “participation of displaced women, youth and ethnic groups in decision-making fora.” OL is also actively involved in assisting community organizations of displaced populations and seems to be promoting mainstreaming to their own partners. For example, a “gender tool box” is

being created for dissemination.

Caritas **Egypt** on the other hand did not give much detail to its work in mainstreaming, nor did it seem much aware of the AGDM rollout. In its work with urban refugees the focus areas seem to be counseling for victims of violence; healthcare especially for pregnant women; nurseries and education for children; and employment search support. The response from Egypt's UNHCR office is more detailed and informative of the extent of Caritas Egypt's involvement in the ongoing rollout. It is a member of the "Best Interest of the Child Committee" formed "to provide a comprehensive response to the needs of refugee and asylum seeker minors." A focal point from Caritas Egypt was selected to address the special needs of those living with HIV/AIDS, and this staff member received training and attended workshops on SGBV and children's rights at UNHCR. In addition, according to UNHCR, Caritas Egypt (in particular medical staff and social counselors) is active in a multi-agency effort to develop a protocol for SGBV prevention and response. Most strikingly, the UNHCR office reports that "a criteria of assistance at Caritas which incorporated AGDM was developed." The stark discrepancy between these two responses reminds researchers that sometimes, for whatever reasons, an organization can do an inadequate job of fully representing their own work activities on a short survey. On the other hand, the question also arises as to whether there is full comprehension within the NGO on why these are priority activities within the framework of their involvement with UNHCR.

Caritas Egypt is an affiliate organization of the major international NGO Caritas Internationalis (CI). In response to our questions on the transfer and coordination of policies between the federation and affiliate levels, CI noted that members are "autonomous" and that the mandate in Rome (CI HQ) is "only to coordinate the network in the event of a major emergency and to provide communications and advocacy on a global level." The autonomous nature of affiliates is evident in how CI's well-developed child protection policy framework – with minimum requirements, useful models, a sample reporting form and code of behavior – is not mentioned by Caritas Egypt, even though the guidelines have been readily incorporated by other organizations like the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Another federation, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), similarly responded that federation-level policies and recommendations are just that, suggestions not imperatives, for affiliate members such as the member surveyed in the Republic of Congo. In contrast, the relationship between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and one of its affiliate members in Tanzania was closer. LWF, which was also asked to answer the survey as one of the top international partners itself, gave three responses – one from Geneva headquarters and two from field locations, Colombia and Kenya/Sudan. This information alongside the local partner's showed a consistent focus on gender equality as a cross-cutting theme.

In terms of survey respondents whose local UNHCR field office began the AGDM rollout in 2005, there is only one case where both the NGO and field office gave answers. The NGO Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) in **Tanzania**, an affiliate of LWF, is also one of the more on-track organizations in relevant policy areas. As does LWF at the federation level, TCRS highlights gender as one of three cross-cutting themes in its 2004-2008 country strategy, along with the environment and HIV/AIDS. It clearly

states as a policy goal gender equity by “creating gender awareness, political will,” and “through positive discrimination in the implementation of refugee programme activities to achieve a minimum of 30% meaningful participation by women.” For child protection, UNHCR guidelines and their own code of conduct are cited. The UNHCR office supports these answers, noting how TCRS staff have been actively involved in workshops, trainings and the MFT. Another finding is both LWF’s and TCRS’s reported emphasis on empowerment of women for self-reliance, leading to a focus in vocational training and ensuring camp food committees have gender-balanced leadership.

Two other UNHCR offices that conducted the rollout in 2005 – Nepal and Thailand – also responded, although there was no communication from the local NGOs to which surveys were sent. The **UNHCR Nepal** office noted that the amount of information it could give on their implementing partner, Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), was limited since this working relationship on Bhutanese refugee protection had been discontinued on December 31, 2005. Also, scheduling conflicts seem to have impeded the organization from participating in the initial AGDM rollout in Nepal. Nevertheless, the UNHCR office referenced NRCS’s work vis-à-vis code of conduct, encouragement of women’s participation and leadership, and involvement in developing an inter-agency manual on SGBV.

The **Thailand UNHCR** office gave detailed answers and made several insightful comments on the AGDM exercise with its local NGO partner Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Thailand (COERR). It reports a “very dynamic and amicable” working relationship with its partner and makes an important assessment saying because the organization is guided by a community-based approach, “most of the concepts and tools disseminated during the exercise seemed familiar and already in use by COERR.” As was emphasized above, this field office underlines the need to promote AGDM “through already existing networks and working groups.” It also noted it was too early to adequately assess the impact of the rollout, but that COERR could strengthen its reporting system and provide more training to social workers, especially in light of the resistance to report cases of SGBV due to kinship ties.

The AGDM rollout is scheduled for 2006/2007 in the Republic of Congo (RoC), Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Pakistan, three countries where surveyed local partners responded. The Commission Episcopale pour les Migrants et les Réfugiés (CEMIR) in the **Republic of Congo** was another organization that stressed its focus on the promotion of rights and participation in providing services for refugees, workers and other migrants such as skills training for income generation. The code of ethics, principle of human rights, international humanitarian law and the social doctrine of the church were all cited as major guidelines. Although policies on AGDM are not at present developed, CEMIR’s response conveyed strong interest to establish such a policy.

Vasa Prava (VP) in **Bosnia-Herzegovina** has one of the more specific organizational mandates. It is the largest free legal aid provider in the country, often assisting female-headed households, asylum-seekers and victims of human trafficking. The policies and guidelines followed stem from domestic and international legislations and the interaction with UNHCR seems most focused on trainings regarding how best to service priority beneficiary categories like refugees. The response from the local UNHCR office also notes the good working relationship in anticipation of rollout in the summer and says VP

actively participated in a seminar on gender and asylum. In considering the most effective promotion of AGDM with partners, it remains unclear if and which aspects of mainstreaming and policy formation, would be different for organizations like VP which provide legal aid.

Basic Education for Afghan Refugees (BEFARe), **Pakistan** has a program focus in formal and non-formal education for refugees and local communities. For example, it is providing education support to more than 20,000 girls through 375 female teachers covering 51 girls' schools. BEFARe highlights its "fully functioning" monitoring and evaluation department on the achievement of targets, but not much information was given on what sort of targets exist for gender equality, child protection and AGDM. Most notable is the training manual on gender equality and peace education developed by BEFARe and the UNESCO country office, and how it conducts training on greater political participation. It seems reasonable to predict that BEFARe will be an active participant in the AGDM rollout in Pakistan when it happens. (See further below in this section for information on other NGOs working in Pakistan.)

### **3. International Partners**

The highlights and significant points from the surveyed international partners such as Africa Humanitarian Action, INTERSOS and IRC have already been discussed earlier sections of this report (e.g., Two Initial Observations under *Major Findings*). Two additional findings, however, benefit from documentation. First, INTERSOS represents well the wishes of several other survey respondents when it remarks that recommendations and a general framework for AGDM, including a practical toolkit from UNHCR, would be appreciated and put to use. Second, the IRC is incredibly active and productive, especially in policy and program areas of child protection and child soldiers. For just one example, IRC has developed "Guiding Principles for Aiding and Protecting War-Affected Children and Youth" which undoubtedly is a relevant tool for AGDM. In general, though, better coordination and sharing of effective practices are called for between UNHCR and major international organizations so that the full extent of AGDM components can be promoted.

Out of the five international organizations that responded, the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) were the two that reported having a more substantive relationship with UNHCR, whether at headquarters or field locations. Interestingly, they were also the only two which responded that they had clear gender equality policies. JRS stresses the importance of listening as the first step towards better meeting needs and advocates solidarity with women through practical ways including "explicit teaching of the essential equality of women and men," "genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision-making" and "specific attention to the phenomenon of violence against women." JRS also has a child protection policy (incorporating that of Caritas Internationalis) and a code of conduct and responsibilities of teachers and staff for their schools in Namibia, which emphasizes protection in educational settings. Saying "there is a lot of concern to do more" JRS reported they are planning training on mainstreaming based on UNHCR's recent developments.

The Lutheran World Federation, as mentioned earlier, addresses gender equality as a

cross cutting theme and promotes empowerment and inclusion of women throughout its program activities. These issues are part of its global strategic plan which is “applied and monitored as policy” and a more specific global gender policy is being developed. In field locations, for example the Kenya/Sudan area, there is a policy of 30 percent representation of women on all camp committees and the chapter is a signatory on the Kenyan Code of Conduct for humanitarian aid workers and the Campaign for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. In addition, it has standard operating procedures for responding to SGBV and a gender unit within the community services department leads promotion of gender equality/equity in all sectors of work. LWF project evaluations include a gender focus and the answers given by the Kenya/Sudan office show a particularly systematic process of monitoring and evaluation.

#### **4. Looking at other NGOs**

This report intended to get a representation of some of UNHCR’s major NGO implementing partners within the time and resource constraints and it is fully recognized that the findings presented are by no means exhaustive. For one, it is only fair to recognize that far more organizations than included in this survey are effectively working on gender equality, child and youth protection, age-sensitive policies and increased participation of beneficiaries around the world, above and below the radar. Take for instance some of the responses given by active UNHCR partners in Pakistan who were not on our list of survey recipients but were informed by the UNHCR country office of the option to participate.<sup>6</sup>

The Water, Environment and Sanitation Society (WESS) has a very clear gender and child protection policy, a gender focal point and gender sensitive indicators “both qualitative and quantitative.” Savera already practices participatory needs assessments and follow-up with refugees, and applies the guidelines of the International Labour Organization’s International Program for Elimination of Child Labor, an issue of utmost urgency for urban refugees in Pakistan. Frontier Primary Health Care (FPHC) actively supports the growth of community-based organizations and helped establish some, for example, led by adolescents on their rights. Also, in the three refugee camps where it works, gender awareness activities have led to the male community members suggesting young illiterate girls be trained as “lady health workers.”

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<sup>6</sup> There were seven additional responses aside from BEFAre: Afghan Medical Welfare Association; Frontier Primary Health Care (FPHC); Kuwait Joint Relief Committee, Peshawar; Savera Society; Society for Community Support for Primary Education in Balochistan (SCSPEB); Society for Human Rights and Prisoners Aid (SHARP); Water, Environment and Sanitation Society (WESS).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

First, it is clear that more advocacy is needed by UNHCR to push its major implementing partners to develop their own gender and child protection policies. Among the survey respondents, very few had policies on gender equality *or* child protection, and none had policies on gender and children *and* gender, age and diversity mainstreaming. Of course, some organizations have not yet participated in the AGDM rollout. But even for those who had, including the international organizations with field locations in rollout countries, there was only one with an explicit policy on gender mainstreaming and none regarding the mainstreaming of age. It also seems important to suggest that advocacy takes place elaborating on the principles inherent in the rights-based and community-based approach central to AGDM. That is, a shift in thinking from refugee needs to refugee rights must recognize that certain actors – not just host countries and UNHCR, but also humanitarian organizations – have obligations, and thus accountability, to refugees. And, efforts for gender equality and the empowerment of women must fundamentally involve boys and men in order to uphold the premise of equality which is balance, equal access and equal participation.

Second, the major findings showed two key areas where progress is comparatively lacking: mainstreaming age concerns and monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. It is fair to recognize that all of the participating organizations work with a variety of age groups – newborns, children, youth, adolescents, adults and sometimes the elderly. An age-sensitive approach to refugee protection and empowerment would surely include meeting the needs of parents and children, adults and youth, etc., and this is happening to a certain extent. The most obvious component missing at present is the attention to the aging population. Not only may they need special medical assistance and/or particular protection, but the elderly are equal and essential members of any community who should participate and benefit from the range of services provided such as income generation activities and human rights training.

Third, given the core significance of increased accountability as both a method of achieving AGDM and a goal in and of itself, more work on accountability would be prudent. It is unfortunate that this short study was able to collect only sparse data on monitoring, evaluation and responsibility issues. The continuous process of mainstreaming age, gender and diversity is better viewed not as a program or project of its own but as an enhanced way of doing the work itself. Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized how important it is to incite and involve the participation of international and national NGO partners early on. As UNHCR proceeds in the global rollout of AGDM, a sound working relationship and good communication with implementing partners will be critical in identifying a variety of paths – fitting each organization's mandate and capacity – towards the common goal of increased access to decision-making and enhanced protection of all within refugee/displaced populations. In doing so, specific promotion and training should be undertaken to stress the significance of true accountability which entails a full range of systematic improvements, for example, strengthened reporting systems, incorporation into performance reviews, workshops for new and current staff and oversight by headquarters.

Fourth, a clear grasp of the value of AGDM is necessary especially in light of the fact that

confusion or skepticism will only exacerbate the process of institutional change which is more often than not slow. Granted, not much time has passed since the AGDM rollout started and there will be adjustments made along the way. Despite this, AGDM as a “holistic process” must be made clear from the start. It is not that NGO implementing partners do not readily grasp the concept of and need for AGDM. Rather, with a number of pushes for better approaches to providing humanitarian services for refugee and displaced populations, the particular models, examples and best practices of how to do mainstreaming must be made available. Better clarity in communicating AGDM and the analysis/dissemination of tools for application are key recommendations for UNHCR headquarters and also country offices which have better local knowledge of and more regular on-ground interaction on specific projects with implementing partners.

Fifth, for some international partners, especially at their global level of operations, more initiative may be needed on their own part to be better informed about UNHCR activities such as AGDM since, unlike field locations, the working relationship may be based less on concrete joint programs and more on reporting. Also, federations may want to seriously consider creating a position paper on AGDM for disseminating suggestions to affiliate members and/or convening a special meeting of representatives to share information and coordinate approaches.

Sixth, during these beginning stages of rolling out age, gender and diversity mainstreaming on a global scale, it is vital to conduct periodic research into how effective AGDM promotion is among all partners – from the relevance of both UNHCR priorities and the NGO partners. Again, there can be many mutually supportive ways to uphold the principles of AGDM practice. What seems certain is that with all NGO implementing partners, UNHCR headquarters and the relevant local field office can provide more substantial assistance in the form of guidelines, frameworks and tested tools. As more experience is accumulated by all those involved – UNHCR headquarters, country offices, implementing partners, local organizations, refugees and displaced groups themselves – it is likely a snowball effect will take place with regards to dissemination and application of lessons learned. At present, the priority seems to be further tweaking, for better delivery, the content of AGDM as a rights- and community-based strategy and enhancing bilateral and multilateral communication, the fundamental basis of any partnership.

## ANNEX 1: List of Survey Recipients

(Those who responded are marked in bold)

National  
(6 out of 12)

**Basic Education for Afghan Refugees, Pakistan**  
**CARITAS Egypt**  
Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Thailand  
**Commission Episcopale pour les Migrants et les Réfugiés, DRC**  
Croatian Red Cross  
Croix Rouge Camerounaise  
Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization  
Nepal Red Cross Society  
**Opción Legal, Colombia**  
Secours Catholique et Development / CARITAS Chad  
**Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service**  
**Vasa Prava, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

International  
(5 out of 10)

**Africa Humanitarian Action**  
CARE Canada  
Danish Refugee Council  
**Jesuit Refugee Service**  
**International Rescue Committee**  
**INTERMEDIOS**  
**Lutheran World Federation**  
Norwegian Refugee Council  
Qandil  
World Vision International

Federation\*  
(3 out of 5)

CARE International  
**CARITAS Internationalis**  
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
**International Catholic Migration Commission**  
**Lutheran World Federation**

UNHCR Field Office  
(7 out of 12)

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**  
Cameroon  
Chad  
**Colombia**  
**Croatia**  
Democratic Republic of Congo  
**Egypt**  
Jordan  
**Nepal**  
Pakistan  
**Tanzania**  
**Thailand**

\* These federation level organizations were not on the list of top UNHCR partners but added to the study by the Women's Commission, with the exception of LWF, which itself is on the international partners list.

## **ANNEX 2: Questionnaire for UNHCR Funded NGO Partners**

*The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is partnering with UNHCR on their **Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM)** program. At its core, AGDM promotes the principle that the meaningful participation of refugee/displaced girls, boys, women and men of all ages and backgrounds in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and operations will enhance the work to protect and empower the displaced. In recognition of the significant portion of on-the-ground protection services provided by UNHCR's NGO implementing partners, we are undertaking this survey and would be grateful for your response as we seek to further inform the AGDM work.*

***Your organization was selected because it was among the top 10-12 recipients of UNHCR funding in 2005, on either their international partners list or their national partners list. We are contacting approximately 23 of UNHCR's NGO partners for this survey. As it is a purely research initiative, the intention is not to assess an agency's standing as a UNHCR partner. Rather, the information will enable us to gain a more accurate picture of the broad challenges and successes experienced in promoting refugee protection through the AGDM framework. The brief report subsequently produced will identify model policies for promotion, identify gaps in policy development and application, and seek to enhance coherence between UNHCR's approach and its partner work. In addition to UNHCR headquarters, the report will be shared with questionnaire participants, in the spirit of highlighting best practices and promoting further dialogue/analysis on the issue.***

***Please return by 15 April 2006 to Dale Buscher and Ramina Johal at [daleb@womenscommission.org](mailto:daleb@womenscommission.org) and [ramina@womenscommission.org](mailto:ramina@womenscommission.org). Thank you!***

***For further information on the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children please visit our website [www.womenscommission.org](http://www.womenscommission.org).***

### **1. Women:**

- A. What kind of work does your organization do with and for women (their protection, rights, participation, etc.)?
  - B. What policies and/or guidelines are applied in this regard? (If no specific policies/guidelines exist, please note this in your response.)
  - C. If policies/guidelines are in place, how does your organization monitor impact and accountability both at the field level and, as relevant, at headquarters? (Please provide copy of policy/guidelines.)
  - D. What, if any, tools are being used to implement such policies (training, code of conduct, field manuals, guides, etc.)?
- \* Please send us any policies and/or publications on your work with women.

### **2. Children and Adolescents:**

- A. What kind of work does your organization do with and for children and/or

- adolescents (their protection, rights, participation, etc.)?
- B. What policies and/or guidelines are applied in this regard? (If no specific policies/guidelines exist, please note this in your response.)
  - C. If policies/guidelines are in place, how does your organization monitor impact and accountability both at the field level and, as relevant, at headquarters? (Please provide copy of policy/guidelines.)
  - D. What, if any, tools are being used to implement such policies (training, code of conduct, field manuals, guides, etc.)?
- \* Please send us any policies and/or publications on your work with children and adolescents.

**3. Other Populations:**

- A. What kind of work does your organization do with and for other populations within displaced groups (e.g., minorities, elderly, disabled, men)?
- B. If there are policies, guidelines and/or tools that are applied in this area of work, please describe them and include any relevant documents and publications.

**4. Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming:**

- A. Does your organization have any policies or guidelines on *mainstreaming* age, gender or diversity in your work?
- B. If yes, please describe the content as well as the mechanisms in place to monitor progress and evaluate the mainstreaming process (please include any relevant documents and publications).

**5. UNHCR Interaction:**

- A. What has been your interaction with UNHCR on these issues? For example, participation in their global rollout of the AGDM approach; sharing of information/trainings by your organization with UNHCR staff or vice versa.
- B. What has been the impact of such interaction in terms of refugee protection and advancing your program work more broadly?

**6. Is there anything else** with respect to Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming that you would like to inform us about? Again, please send us any policies and publications you may have.

Name (optional):

Date:

Position and Organization:

May we contact you by telephone, if necessary, to hear more about your polices and practices? Yes / No If “Yes” please provide your phone number:

**THANK YOU!**