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Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response Review

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children encourages the mainstreaming of gender throughout the sectoral clusters arising from the Humanitarian Response Review. As UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan has stated:

“Sixty years have passed since the founders of the United Nations inscribed on the first page of our Charter the equal rights of women and men. Since then, study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health — including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended.”¹

As the IASC policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance acknowledges², gender sensitive programming is vital in all humanitarian response efforts. With internally displaced persons, all sectors need to be cognizant of the differing impact displacement has on women, men, girls and boys as well as each groups' different protection risks and unique protection solutions. Gender sensitive programming must be done in consultation and conjunction with the displaced community as full partners.

Gender mainstreaming: the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.³

¹ UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, at the Beijing +10 meeting in New York, March 2005.

² Inter-Agency Standing Committee “Policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance” Geneva 31 May 1999.

³ Definition from UNESCO's *Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework, Baseline definitions of key concepts and terms*, April 2003.

The Women's Commission proposes the following recommendations to mainstream gender in the Humanitarian Response Review:

Participation – the engagement of individuals, communities and local organizations is a vital element in achieving gender equality and sustainable, effective programs. The IASC policy statement on integration of a gender perspective⁴ commits *as a priority* to “the participation of women in the planning, designing and monitoring of all aspects of emergency programs”. All sectors should establish a clear plan on how such participation will be realized and assessed. Steps should be taken to facilitate more equal participation among women and men including addressing potential barriers such as childcare, mobility, household tasks, literacy and language. The policy statement also commits to “integrating capacity building of women’s organizations in humanitarian response and rehabilitation and recovery phase”. Representatives from women and youth associations, including informal networks should routinely be members or otherwise consulted during assessment missions, monitoring and evaluation exercises. Where possible, their representatives should be included in training and information exchange networks as a means to enhance their ability for meaningful participation. Such inclusion should reflect the group’s sectoral expertise (traditionally in health and education) as well as broader issues such as codes of conduct, operational guidelines and community mobilization.

Emergency Shelter – women and adolescent girls must be consulted on camp layout, latrine and water point placement to enhance their protection against exploitation and abuse. Shelter construction must take into account the risks faced by women and girls and provide appropriate privacy, lighting, and security. At-risk populations, such as single women alone and female heads of household, must be placed in the most secure areas of camps – far from the camp periphery and away from areas sheltering single adult males. Protected, safe areas may also have to be designated for women and girls who may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Camp Coordination – women and adolescents must be included in camp leadership and decision-making structures. Women should represent 50% of all camp committee members and be provided with a real voice in decisions that affect their lives and that of their families. All camp coordination decisions should be undertaken in consultation with the displaced community and the displaced community must be informed of all services provided, changes therein, and decisions taken affecting them. A variety of methods for the dissemination of information to the camp population need to be implemented in order to reach those most marginalized and with least access.

Water and Sanitation – separate bathing facilities for men and women, secure toilet facilities placed near shelters, and water points within easily accessible distances are all necessary to enhance the protection of displaced women and girls. Sphere Minimum

⁴ Inter-Agency Standing Committee “Policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance” Geneva 31 May 1999.

Standards must be met and maintained on the number of toilets per population and the liters of water per person provided.

Reintegration and Recovery – all reintegration and reconstruction efforts must involve women and youth including appropriate work for food programs, micro-credit schemes, and livelihood activities.

DDRR programs must include women and girls who served as combatants, sex slaves, cooks, porters and/or as accompanying family members of combatants in all DDRR services and ‘demobilization packages.’ Additionally, women need to be engaged in the peace process and subsequent peace building as per Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security⁵ and the IASC policy statement which calls for “equal representation of women and men in peace mediation and decision making at all levels and stages of humanitarian response, as well as in the rehabilitation and recovery phase⁶”.

Special attention needs to be given to the rapid re-development of law enforcement, legal and judicial systems in order to protect returnee women and girls. Further, inheritance and property rights need to be assessed and in conformity with international legal standards that allow women to retain and inherit land and property

Logistics – food pipelines need to be maintained to prevent interruptions which put women and girls at-risk for sexual exploitation. Food should be stored and distributed in areas safe for women to access.

Nutrition/Therapeutic and Supplementary Feeding – therapeutic and supplemental feeding programs must address the special dietary requirements of pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and young children. Supplemental feeding programs should also be established within the schools to promote school retention especially for girl-child students. Food baskets in general need to be culturally appropriate and provide not just the minimum caloric intake required but also the nutritional intake.

Health – Principle 19 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement states: ‘Special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female health care providers and services, such as reproductive health care, as well as appropriate counseling for victims of sexual and other abuses.’

Reproductive health services must be in place from the onset of an emergency operation including the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) and obstetric care. Men should be engaged in reproductive health issues and may require special days or clinics to promote their access to services. Specialized services, including counseling, must be available for survivors of gender-based violence.

⁵ UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security October 2000. For further information see www.peacewomen.org

⁶ Policy statement

Protection – must be viewed in the largest sense and closely linked with assistance. All assistance agencies must be aware of, trained and monitored on the protection function of their services. Protection must include legal, physical and social protection with a focus on prevention and a minimizing of protection risks. Robust protection monitoring mechanisms must be in place, which specifically address the protection needs of displaced women and girls which can shift over time. Protection working groups, with operational partners and representatives from the displaced community, should be established. The displaced community must be involved more broadly in identifying protection risks and in proposing and working on protection solutions. Issues that can enhance protection particularly for internally displaced women and girls include:

- individual registration and documentation for women and men (UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement -- principle 21)
- liberty of movement (principle 14)
- free association and participation in community affairs, voting (principle 22)
- access to education including special measures for girls, women and adolescents (principle 23)

Without a gender sensitive approach and gender mainstreaming throughout all interventions in all sectors, operations run the risk of further marginalizing women and girls and placing them at increased and unnecessary risk. Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence remain monumental problems in nearly all IDP situations and some returnee contexts – gender mainstreaming and the equal involvement of women on all decisions and programs can serve a preventative function.

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Checklist for Measuring Gender Equality in IDP and Returnee Situations

- ✓ Equal attendance of boys and girls in primary and secondary school
- ✓ Equal access to and participation in tertiary education and vocational training programs
- ✓ Young women receive 50% of scholarships for higher education
- ✓ Female participation in non-traditional skills training activities – computer, mechanics, electrician, carpentry, and so on
- ✓ At least 50% of micro-credit loans disbursed to women
- ✓ Income generation activities target both men and women on an equal basis
- ✓ 50% female participation in all leadership and decision-making committees
- ✓ 50% male participation in sexual and gender-based violence committees
- ✓ At least 50% of workers in food distributions are women
- ✓ All refugees have individual identity documents
- ✓ Husbands and wives both included on food ration cards and food is distributed to the women
- ✓ All population data is disaggregated by age and gender
- ✓ Disaggregated data is collected for participants of all services – education, vocational training, micro-credit loans, etc.
- ✓ Equal participation of male and female youth in peer counseling programs
- ✓ HIV/AIDS awareness programs target men and women equally
- ✓ Reproductive health programs include and target men as well as women

- ✓ Awareness-raising programs for the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence target men and women equally
- ✓ Meetings between displaced populations and host community members include equal representation of men and women from both communities
- ✓ Equal participation of displaced women and men in peace-making negotiations and political processes

Good Practice for Working towards Gender Equality

- Hiring of male, in addition to female, UN and NGO Community Services staff
- Displaced men actively involved in combating sexual and gender-based violence through such committees as men for change and men against violence
- Male youth involved in youth-to-youth peer HIV/AIDS counseling programs
- Sexuality education and HIV/AIDS prevention education promote gender equality and include messages and activities targeting boys and young men
- Sports and recreational activities are implemented that target girls and young women
- 50% of UN and NGO camp-based staff are female
- Displaced women are sought out and promoted to refugee leadership positions
- Female teachers are recruited and trained to serve as mentors and role models for girl students
- Business training programs target women to build success for subsequent micro-credit loans
- Women serve on community security patrols and on host country security forces
- Traditional systems of justice practiced are open to the public and sensitized to the special needs of women and children
- Counseling and rehabilitation services are offered by men to men who commit acts of domestic violence
- Men and women are involved in protecting women at-risk (single women, female heads of household, victims/survivors of gender-based violence)

- ❑ Information dissemination strategies use multiple channels of communication in order to reach women and others with less access
- ❑ Staff are educated on the useful effects of gender disaggregated data for program planning and implementation purposes
- ❑ Gender issues and gender sensitivity are part of all programs
- ❑ Human rights education programs are conducted for members of the displaced community and include the rights of women and children
- ❑ Female doctors, security personnel, staff and interpreters are in place to address the health and protection concerns of women and girls
- ❑ Both formal and informal community leaders are sensitized, engaged and involved in gender mainstreaming efforts