

## **From 1975 to 2013: UNHCR's Gender Equality Chronology**

UNHCR has promoted gender equality among persons of concern to the Organization for almost forty years. The Organization's approach has changed considerably in this time – from focusing on women as a specific target group, to adopting a much broader age, gender and diversity approach. This chronology sets out the main materials and events that have marked this evolution, dating from 1975.



## Introduction: UNHCR's evolving approach to working with women and girls

UNHCR has promoted gender equality among persons of concern to the Organization using various tools and approaches for almost forty years. The proclamation of 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace prompted UNHCR to begin to systematically study the problems of refugee women.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, UNHCR's approach to working with women and girls and addressing their specific needs has evolved considerably – from perceiving refugee women as vulnerable to promoting their empowerment, from isolating refugee women's issues to mainstreaming them, from focusing only on refugee women in order to understand the problems they face to analyzing the roles of both men and women, and from promoting gender equality to adopting an age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach. This chronology sets out the main materials and events that marked this evolution and have made UNHCR one of the more progressive UN agencies in promoting gender equality, through a human rights and community-based approach. The accompanying introductory text is grouped into three parts, which roughly reflects UNHCR's changing approach over time.

### *Refugee women as a target group*

There was an early assumption within UNHCR that the Organization's protection and assistance policies were gender neutral and reached all relevant population groups, regardless of age and sex. In its 1980 report for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, UNHCR explained that '[i]n the past, women have primarily been assisted as part of the group; only in certain cases were special provisions made to meet their particular needs.'<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of programmes, therefore, did not differentiate the needs of men, women, boys and girls. Yet UNHCR began to realize that ignoring the specific needs of refugee women and girls in planning and implementing programmes may have inadvertently overlooked them, unintentionally marginalized them, or even reinforced inequitable relationships. As a result, adequate protection often did not reach the entire population of concern.

By 1980, UNHCR recognized the need for a 'specifically targeted approach if women are to receive fair and equal treatment,'<sup>3</sup> which called for specific measures designed to satisfy their 'special needs'.<sup>4</sup> Yet in applying such an approach, UNHCR often cautioned against singling women out or simply creating special women's projects. In instructions sent to field offices concerning refugee women and children in 1988, for example, UNHCR made clear that '[t]he first implication of [refugee women's] special needs for Field Offices is not the development of special projects on women and children, although these may be needed, but first to ensure that projects for the general population address the special needs of women and children adequately and appropriately.'<sup>5</sup> Similarly, UNHCR's 1990 Policy on Refugee Women explicitly states that integrating refugee women's resources and needs in all aspects of

---

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, 'The Situation of Women Refugees the World Over', July 1980, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, Memorandum from the Senior Advisor to the DHC on Women Refugees to the Deputy High Commissioner and all Members of the Steering Committee, 'Policy Paper on Refugee Women', 7 March 1988.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, Memorandum from SSO/Technical Support Services to Head, Programme Management Service, 'Instructions for Field Officers concerning refugee women and children', 4 November 1988.

programme planning and implementation does not mean that separate women's projects are to be initiated or added on to existing programme activities.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, UNHCR sought from a very early stage to 'mainstream the women's issue'<sup>7</sup> or 'mainstream refugee women'<sup>8</sup> – to use the terminology of the late 1980s. Mainstreaming has since formed a central part of UNHCR's approach to working on issues concerning refugee women, though its focus has changed over time. Alongside mainstreaming, UNHCR has consistently recognized that special targeted measures may be needed to address inequalities or discrimination. For example, one objective of the 1990 Policy on Refugee Women was 'to ensure that the differing needs and resources of refugee women and refugee men are considered in programme activities and where necessary, for cultural or social reasons, undertake special efforts to develop specific activities to ensure women benefit equally from programmes.'<sup>9</sup> UNHCR's Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, developed the following year, similarly recognize that in addition to integrating the resources and needs of refugee women into all aspects of programming, special efforts may be needed to resolve problems faced specifically by refugee women.<sup>10</sup>

### *From women to gender equality*

By the early 1990s, UNHCR had started to move away from focusing only on women when seeking to address their problems, and increasingly acknowledged the need to analyze the roles of both men and women. The 1990 Policy on Refugee Women explains that '[a] programme which integrates refugee women will have taken into consideration factors influenced by the male/female roles in a society and included these in the planned activity with a view to benefiting the whole target population, not marginalizing a portion of it.'<sup>11</sup> In 1992, UNHCR also focused on the impact of gender roles by introducing a People Oriented Training Programme (POP), which gave UNHCR staff a framework for analyzing the different socio-economic roles of men and women and the implications these have on the implementation of projects, with a view to planning projects which would benefit the whole community.<sup>12</sup>

It was around that time that UNHCR began speaking of 'gender analysis' and 'gender equality.' This was largely the result of global developments in the field of women's rights, which led to gender mainstreaming becoming what has been described as 'a globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality.'<sup>13</sup> For example, the outcome documents of the 1995 World Conference – the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action – emphasized the need for men to participate in all actions towards gender equality, explaining that 'women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership

---

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women, 20 August 1990, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, Memorandum from Jenifer Waugh to All Steering Committee Members, 'Next Steering Committee Meeting', 27 April 1988.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, Memorandum from Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women to Steering Committee and Focal Points for Refugee Women, 31 August 1989.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women, 20 August 1990, p.8

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, July 1991, para. 4.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women, 20 August 1990, p.6.

<sup>12</sup> See UNHCR and CIDA, 'People Oriented Planning Training Strategy, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs – Equal Opportunities, Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action', December 2006.

with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world.<sup>14</sup> The 1997 ECOSOC Conclusions were another landmark influence on UNHCR and other development and humanitarian agencies, re-emphasizing the need to shift from mainstreaming women to mainstreaming gender. These Conclusions offered a definition of and principles for gender mainstreaming, which have often been referred to by UNHCR and are reflected in its own approach to mainstreaming.<sup>15</sup>

By 1998, UNHCR had undergone a ‘perceptible paradigm shift from focusing on women to focusing on gender.’<sup>16</sup> UNHCR developed a Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Equality into UNHCR’s Protection and Programmes, the objectives of which included ensuring that UNHCR assesses the implications of all its protection and programme activities for men and women and incorporates strategies to redress any discrimination; creating a permanently gender-sensitive culture within UNHCR; and ensuring that staff are able to apply gender relation analysis, devise strategies to reduce inequities and strengthen the participation of women and communities in resolving protection and assistance problems.<sup>17</sup> This Strategy helped UNHCR to move away from analyzing the different experiences of men and women to undertaking specific programming aimed at redressing gender-based discrimination.<sup>18</sup> This approach was followed in a Gender Training Kit developed by UNHCR in December 2002.<sup>19</sup>

#### *From gender equality to age, gender and diversity*

By late 2003, UNHCR had reviewed its approach to gender mainstreaming and introduced an additional focus on age, in response to the findings of three evaluations on women, children and community services that were undertaken in 2002 and 2003.<sup>20</sup> UNHCR’s Executive Committee had also recognized ‘the importance for States to promote an age and gender-sensitive approach in the application of international refugee instruments and for UNHCR to ensure consideration of age and gender in its policy making and operations through further mainstreaming.’<sup>21</sup> The rationale of including age into UNHCR’s mainstreaming approach was to draw attention to how individual needs change during the life cycle and to ensure adequate protection of the rights of all members of the community. In February 2004, UNHCR launched a gender and age mainstreaming pilot project in sixteen countries. The pilot project defined age and gender mainstreaming as ‘a strategy to promote gender equality and respect for women’s rights and child rights in order to enhance the protection of refugees, rather than a goal in itself.’<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995, Chapter 1, para. 3.

<sup>15</sup> See UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1997/2: Agreed Conclusions, 18 July 1997, 1(A).

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR, Progress Report on Refugee Women, 25 May 1998, SC/1998/INF.1.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Equality into UNHCR’s Protection and Programs, October 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, ‘UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on Their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation’, May 2002.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, Gender Training Kit on Refugee Protection and Resource Handbook, December 2002.

<sup>20</sup> ‘UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on their Protection: An assessment of 10 years’, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, May 2002; ‘Meeting the Rights and Needs of Refugee Children’, Valid International, Oxford, UK, 2002; ‘The Community Services Function in UNHCR’, CASA, Montreal, Canada, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR, Executive Committee General Conclusion No. 95 (LIV), October 2003.

<sup>22</sup> UNHCR, ‘UNHCR’s age and gender mainstreaming pilot project: synthesis report’, EPAU/2005/03, April 2005, p.3.

Around this time – and particularly during the course of the gender and age mainstreaming pilot projects – UNHCR began to realize that an age and gender mainstreaming approach was inadequate in so far as it did not include other aspects of diversity such as ethnicity, religion, membership of a minority group or ability. In Colombia, for example, by the time an age and gender pilot project was introduced in 2004, colleagues there explained that they had already moved beyond an age and gender approach to one which also considered aspects of diversity. They pointed to a report produced for UNHCR on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia in 2002, which explained the need for a ‘differential’ approach which would take into account gender, age and ethnicity. This was based on recognition that displacement not only had a gender-differentiated impact on the IDP population, but also affected particularly the Afrocolombian and indigenous populations.<sup>23</sup> Other operations around the world were similarly moving beyond considering just age and gender, and UNHCR began to realize that improving protection at the field level required a better understanding of the ways in which age, gender and other social and cultural characteristics can create particular protection risks.<sup>24</sup> UNHCR’s age and gender mainstreaming approach was, therefore, expanded to include diversity.

During the first stage of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) – from 2004 to 2007 – UNHCR focused primarily on process, developing the tools needed to ensure a consistent approach to AGDM and increased accountability throughout the organization. Its AGDM strategy aimed to empower refugee women through a rights- and community-based approach, by mainstreaming age, gender and diversity on the one hand and undertaking targeted actions on the other. UNHCR was guided by the findings of the 2002-03 evaluations which had highlighted the need to strengthen the participation of women and children; increase contact with communities; improve internal coordination; undertake situation analysis with partners and build greater accountability among staff.<sup>25</sup> For example, in order to strengthen participation and increase contact with communities, in 2006 UNCHR developed a Tool for Participatory Assessment. To improve staff accountability, it released an Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Accountability Framework in 2007. That same year, UNHCR announced that guaranteeing an age, gender and diversity perspective in operations would be one of its Global Strategic Objectives for 2008-2009. Consultations were held with internal and external stakeholders to assess the Organization’s progress in mainstreaming age, gender and diversity and, based on the results, UNHCR developed a three-year AGDM Action Plan. This built upon the Accountability Framework and sought to ensure a consistent approach across policy development and field support services, by setting out the rationale, objectives and outputs of AGDM. Both the Framework and Action Plan were rolled out in 2007.<sup>26</sup>

In 2008, UNHCR developed a Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls<sup>27</sup>, which replaced the 1991 Guidelines on the Protection of Women and provides practical guidance

---

<sup>23</sup> D. Meertens, ‘Colombia: Internally Displaced Persons and the Conditions for Socio-Economic Reintegration’, UNHCR Emergency and Security Service, WRITENET Paper No.12/2002.

<sup>24</sup> V. Thomas and T. Beck, ‘Changing the way UNHCR does business? An evaluation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, 2004-2009’, UNHCR, PDES/2010/08, June 2010, p.16.

<sup>25</sup> UNHCR, Mainstreaming Age, Gender and Diversity Summary Report, June 2006.

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, ACTION Plan to support UNHCR’s Global Strategic Objective on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming 2007-2009.

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR, Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls, 6 March 2008.

for UNHCR and partner staff on how AGDM, through a rights- and community-based approach, can help to achieve gender equality. It sets out the legal standards and principles that guide UNHCR's work, and outlines strategies and suggests actions that UNHCR and partners should adopt to support women's and girls' enjoyment of their rights. In 2010, UNHCR commissioned an evaluation of AGDM, which found that 'while important gains have been made to date, the mainstreaming process is far from complete, nor are the gains made yet sustainable over the longer term.'<sup>28</sup> It observed that the AGDM Action Plan tended to focus on activities and outputs, rather than higher level results,<sup>29</sup> and commented that UNHCR's AGDM Strategy did not have 'the weight of official UNHCR policy.'<sup>30</sup> In 2011, UNHCR's AGD approach was consolidated into an Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, the objective of which is to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities.<sup>31</sup> In 2011, UNHCR also developed a five-year AGDM Forward Plan, a living document which aims to address some of the gaps identified in the 2010 evaluation of UNHCR's AGDM strategy.<sup>32</sup> It provides concrete measures for implementing the 2011 Policy and sets out seven strategic results which, once achieved, will represent UNHCR's vision of an organization that has mainstreamed an AGD approach.

---

<sup>28</sup> V. Thomas and T. Beck, 'Changing the way UNHCR does business? An evaluation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, 2004-2009', UNHCR, PDES/2010/08, June 2010, p.17.

<sup>29</sup> V. Thomas and T. Beck, 'Changing the way UNHCR does business? An evaluation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, 2004-2009', UNHCR, PDES/2010/08, June 2010, p.31.

<sup>30</sup> V. Thomas and T. Beck, 'Changing the way UNHCR does business? An evaluation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, 2004-2009', UNHCR, PDES/2010/08, June 2010, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR, Age, Gender and Diversity Policy: Working with people and communities for equality and protection', 1 June 2011.

<sup>32</sup> UNHCR, Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Forward Plan 2011-2016.

## CHRONOLOGY

### 1975

- 19 June – 2 July:** The First World Conference of the International Women's Year was held in Mexico City, and a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the International Women's Year was adopted.
- 15 December:** The UN General Assembly proclaimed 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (see Resolution 3520 (XXX)).

### 1979

- 18 December:** The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly.
- 20 December:** UNHCR sent its first questionnaire to field offices to obtain information on the situation of refugee women for UNHCR's report to the 1980 World Conference.

### 1980

- 14-30 July:** The Second World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, was held in Copenhagen. The Conference adopted three resolutions specifically relating to UNHCR's work with refugee women, and a Programme of Action for the second half of the UN Decade for Women. Resolution 12 urged UNHCR 'in cooperation with other concerned UN agencies, to establish programs necessary for dealing with the special needs of displaced and refugee women, especially in the areas of health, education and employment.'
- 11 December:** The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 35/135, which 'urges the High Commissioner to work with host country Governments to encourage the participation of women, including refugee women, in the administration of refugee assistance programmes, notably the provision of essential food, shelter and medical services in asylum countries and to promote their participation in training and orientation programmes in asylum and resettlement countries.'

### 1985

- April:** UNHCR organized a Roundtable on Refugee Women.
- 30 April:** The UN Secretary-General issued a report on UNHCR's work on behalf of refugee women (A/CONF.116/11), which emphasized that the protection of refugee women must be a fundamental part of

UNHCR's international protection role and outlined UNHCR's efforts to address the specific needs of refugee women and girls with regard to material assistance (health, education and employment).

- 15-26 July:** The Third World Conference to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace was held in Nairobi. The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were adopted by the Conference and endorsed by the General Assembly in Resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985. These emphasized the need for the full integration and active participation of women in all spheres of society, particularly decision-making processes, and as agents and beneficiaries of development.
- 18 October:** UNHCR's Executive Committee included refugee women on its agenda for the first time, and adopted a Conclusion on Refugee Women and International Protection, No. 39 (XXXVI).
- No specific date:** UNHCR set up a working group on refugee women, mostly comprising women of junior rank.

## 1987

- 9 February:** UNHCR issued an internal memorandum (IOM 4/87-FOM 4/87) which provided guidelines on how to improve the protection of refugee women. This called to attention the particular problems they face, presented policies to guide UNHCR's actions and specified measures to be taken by field offices for the international protection and assistance of refugee women.
- 12 October:** UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted a General Conclusion on International Protection (No. 46 (XXXVIII) 1987) which noted that refugee women have special protection and assistance needs as well as resources, which require special attention in order to improve existing protection and assistance programmes. It also recognized the need to collect reliable information and statistics about refugee women.

## 1988

- March:** A UNHCR Steering Committee on Refugee Women was established, Chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner. Its objective was 'improving UNHCR's activities to ensure greater attention to the needs and potential of refugee women, both in terms of international protection and material assistance.' (See Report on Refugee Women, ExCom 40<sup>th</sup> session, A/AC.96/727, 19 July 1989).
- September:** UNHCR submitted a Note on Refugee Women (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.1) to its Executive Committee.

- October:** At the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting of UNHCR's Executive Committee, UNHCR was requested to 'mainstream' women's issues.
- 10 October:** Conclusion No. 54 (XXXIX) urged UNHCR to pay more attention to and deal more effectively with the special needs of refugee women.
- November:** The first international consultation with refugee women took place in 1988 in Geneva, organized by the NGO Working Group on Refugee Women. It brought together refugee women from all over the world to discuss inadequacies in refugee assistance and protection.
- No specific date:** UNHCR distributed internally a project planning and review checklist on refugee women and children, which lists examples of project design and implementation issues concerning refugee women and children to be considered when preparing and revising UNHCR project submissions, reviewing submissions at Headquarters and monitoring and evaluating projects in the field.
- No specific date:** A Special Resettlement Programme for Women at Risk was created, with programmes in Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

## 1989

- July:** A UNHCR Report on Refugee Women (A/AC.96/727) was submitted to the Executive Committee.
- No specific date:** The first Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women was appointed. This was intended to be a temporary post. Prior to this, the main focal point on refugee women was the Senior Adviser to the Deputy High Commissioner on Women Refugees.
- August:** The Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women defined 'mainstreaming' for the first time in an internal memorandum, encouraging staff to shift away from programmes and projects in which refugee women are passive beneficiaries.
- 13 October:** UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted Conclusion No. 60 adopted on Refugee Women, which reiterated concern about physical security and sexual exploitation and requested UNHCR to provide '(e) a 'policy framework and organizational work plan for the next stages in mainstreaming of refugee women's issues within the organization...'
- No specific date:** Gender awareness or 'people-oriented planning' training was introduced in UNHCR, to promote better analysis of socio-cultural and economic roles in any given refugee population.

## 1990

- 20 August:** UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Women was adopted.
- 5 October:** Executive Committee Conclusion No. 64 (XLI) on Refugee Women and International Protection was adopted, which emphasizes in particular the importance of refugee women's full and active participation in all aspects of planning, implementing and evaluating/monitoring refugee programmes.

## 1991

- July:** UNHCR issued Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, U.N. Doc. ES/SCP/67. These complement the 1990 Policy on Refugee Women, and provide guidance for UNHCR staff and implementing partners on ways to identify and respond to the risks and issues facing refugee women.
- 17 July:** UNHCR submitted a Progress Report on the Implementation of the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women to the Executive Committee.
- 11 October:** General Conclusion on International Protection No. 65 (XLII) requested that the Guidelines be made an integral part of all UNHCR protection and assistance activities.

## 1992

- 19-21 February:** A Forum on Uprooted Women in Central America (FOREFEM) was held in Guatemala, in the context of the International Conference on Refugees in Central America (CIREFCA) process.
- 26 August:** UNHCR submitted a Progress Report on Implementation of the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women to its Executive Committee.
- December:** UNHCR finalized a Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations Taking Account of Women, Men and Children.
- December:** UNHCR's Central Evaluation Section published a review of the implementation and impact of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Women.

## 1993

- 13 May:** UNHCR submitted a paper to its Executive Committee: 'Making the Linkages: Protection and Assistance Policy and Programming to Benefit Refugee Women'.
- October:** UNHCR's Women Victims of Violence Project was launched in Kenya.

**8 October:** UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted Conclusion No. 73 (XLIV) on Refugee Protection and Sexual Violence.

**November:** UNHCR entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with UNIFEM, establishing a framework for collaboration and coordination.

## **1994**

**April:** An Informal Working Group on Refugee Women and Refugee Children was convened, following a request from the Executive Committee at its forty-fourth session in October 1993. The Working Group was tasked with identifying and examining obstacles to the effective implementation of the Policies and Guidelines on Refugee Women and Refugee Children, then reviewing available options and recommending concrete counter-measures.

**June:** UNHCR released 'A UNHCR Guide to Women's Rights Awareness Training: A Practical Tool for UNHCR and NGOs'.

**December:** UNHCR released a People Oriented Planning Handbook.

**No specific date:** Four Regional Advisor on Refugee Women positions were created in Costa Rica, Nairobi, Ankara and Cairo.

**No specific date:** High Commissioner Ogata relocated the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women from her Office to the Division of Operational Support.

## **1995**

**8 March:** UNHCR released 'Sexual Violence Against Refugees – Guidelines for Prevention and Response.'

**September:** The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, was held in Beijing. A Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted.

## **1996**

**March:** UNCHR sent a survey to all field offices on the provision of sanitary supplies to refugee women. Based on the results, the Deputy High Commissioner sent a memorandum indicating that lack of sanitary supplies posed a significant health risk for refugee women and that it should be mandatory to include sanitary supplies in country programme budgets.

**March:** The High Commissioner instituted the Permanent Working Group on Women (PWGW), with the mandate of promoting women's advancement in the organization.

## 1997

**April:** The first meeting of a regional gender team was held in the Americas.

**14 July:** The Economic and Social Council adopted Conclusions which define gender mainstreaming: 'Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes 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... Responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and rests at the highest levels. Accountability for outcomes needs to be monitored constantly.'

**24-26 November:** An Inter-Agency Workshop was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to examine best practices on women's participation in peace building and conflict management in selected African countries. This was the first one of this kind.

**December:** UNHCR released a Policy on Harmful Traditional Practices.

**No specific date:** UNHCR's Bosnian Women's Initiative was launched.

## 1998

**October:** UNHCR developed a Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Equality into UNHCR's Protection and Programs, which included objectives and key definitions.

**No specific date:** The Rwandan Women's Initiative was launched.

**June:** The High Commissioner instituted the Group for the Advancement of Gender Equity to replace the Permanent Working Group on Women (PWGW), with the mandate to promote tools for reaching gender equity among staff.

## 1999

**No specific date:** The Kosovo Women's Initiative was launched

## **2000:**

- January:** UNHCR released a Position Paper on Gender-Related Persecution.
- September:** The United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, which includes what have become known as the Millennium Development Goals. Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women.
- 31 October:** The Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 which urged Member States ‘to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict’ (para. 1).
- No specific date:** A follow-up survey was sent to UNHCR field offices to assess compliance with the Deputy High Commissioner’s 1997 memorandum on the provision of sanitary materials. Another memorandum was sent by the Deputy High Commissioner in October 2001 setting out the findings of the survey and emphasizing that sanitary supplies must be seen as a critical element of the effective protection of refugee women, and must immediately be included in each office’s budget for domestic and household goods.
- November:** The GAGE completed its report on the advancement of gender equity among staff in the organization.
- No specific date:  
(estimated 2000)** UNHCR issued ‘Step by Step Guide for Protection Officers: Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence’.

## **2001**

- 15 February:** UNHCR submitted a paper to the Standing Committee on ‘Reinforcing a Community Development Approach’ (EC/51/SC/CRP.6).
- June:** UNHCR released ‘Good Practices in Gender Equality Mainstreaming: A Practical Guide to Empowerment’, which sets out and elaborates five dimensions of women’s empowerment: access, awareness raising, mobilization, control and gender equality mainstreaming.
- 20-22 June:** UNHCR’s first Dialogue with Refugee Women was held in Geneva, involving nearly 50 refugee women. This was the culminating event in a series of local and regional consultations which had taken place around the world in early 2001, involving over 500 refugee women, UNHCR staff, non-governmental organizations and host governments. The report of the Dialogue, which summarizes the discussions and recommendations made, was issued in December 2001, entitled ‘Respect our Rights: Partnership for Equality, Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women.’

**December:** In follow-up to the recommendations from the Dialogue with Refugee Women, UNHCR made 5 commitments to refugee women.

## **2002**

**7 May:** UNHCR issued Guidelines on ‘International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees’.

**22-24 May:** UNHCR’s Global Consultations process included a focus on the protection of refugee women and refugee children. A report on Refugee Women (EC/GC/02/8) was issued on 25 April.

**May:** The Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children undertook an independent assessment of UNHCR’s implementation of its policy and guidelines. The report, published in May, is entitled ‘UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on Their Protection: An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation.’

**December:** UNHCR released a Gender Training Kit on Refugee Protection and Resource Handbook.

## **2003**

**March:** UNHCR commissioned an independent evaluation of its community services function, the report of which was published in May and is entitled ‘The community services function in UNHCR: an independent evaluation’, EPAU/2003/2.

**May:** UNHCR published its Guidelines for Prevention and Response to SGBV: Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons.

**October:** UNHCR published its Agenda for Protection (third edition), Goal 6 of which is ‘meeting the protection needs of refugee women and refugee children.’

**19 November:** UNHCR developed a strategy paper on gender and age mainstreaming.

**November:** UNHCR released an Introductory Training Module: ‘A Practical Field Tool for Understanding Gender, Women and Children’s Rights and Sexual and Gender-based Violence’ (revised).

## **2004**

**February:** UNHCR launched an age and gender mainstreaming pilot project in sixteen countries.

**No specific date:** UNHCR created the Community Development, Gender Equality and Children Section (CDGECS)

**No specific date:** UNHCR developed its Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy to ensure the meaningful participation of women, girls, boys and men of all ages and background in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all UNHCR policies and operations.

## 2005

**April:** The report of UNHCR's age and gender mainstreaming pilot project was published: see 'UNHCR's age and gender mainstreaming pilot project 2004: Synthesis report', EPAU/2005/03.

**13 June:** UNHCR submitted to the Standing Committee a 'Report on the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women', EC/55/SC/CR/P.17.

**September:** the IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) issued its Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings. These guidelines are an update of those published by UNHCR 2 years earlier.

**24 October:** The World Summit Outcome Document recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality: see General Assembly Resolution 60/1, 2005 World Summit Outcome, UN Doc. A/RES/60/1, para.59.

## 2006

**May:** UNHCR released a Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations.

**June:** UNHCR produced a Summary Report on Mainstreaming Age, Gender and Diversity.

**6 October:** UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted Conclusion 105 on Women and Girls at Risk, which recognizes that forced displacement can expose women and girls to a range of factors which may put them at risk of further violations of their rights.

**December:** IASC published the first Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action: Women, Girls, Boys and Men – Different Needs, Equal Opportunities.

**No specific date:** UNHCR developed a draft Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming, which was piloted with 20 Country/Regional Representatives.

## **2007**

- January:** UNHCR published its Policy on Achieving Gender Equity in staffing
- May:** UNHCR published a Heightened Risk Identification Tool.
- December:** UNHCR's rollout of Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming was completed (the Accountability Framework and Action Plan).
- No specific date:** The University of New South Wales developed a training module for use by UNHCR staff and partners, 'Power through Participation: Leadership Training for Young Refugee Women.' This was aimed at supporting the meaningful participation of displaced women.
- No specific date:** UNHCR developed a three-year AGDM Action Plan, which sought to ensure a consistent approach across policy development and field support services, by setting out the rationale, objectives and outputs of AGDM.

## **2008**

- January:** UNHCR released the manual 'A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations,' to support UNHCR staff in placing people of concern at the centre of all decisions affecting their lives.
- January:** UNHCR published a Handbook on the Protection of Displaced Women and Girls, which replaced the 1991 Guidelines. The Handbook describes some of the protection challenges faced by women and girls of concern to UNHCR, sets out the legal standards and principles that guide UNHCR's work, and outlines strategies and suggests actions that UNHCR and partners should adopt to support women and girls' enjoyment of their rights.
- 2 June:** UNHCR submitted a Report on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming to its Executive Committee: EC/59/SC/CRP.14.
- 19 June:** The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1820 to address the issue of widespread sexual violence in conflict, either when used systematically to achieve military or political ends, or when opportunistic and arising from cultures of impunity. Resolution 1820 identifies sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security that necessitates a security response, by recognizing that such acts can exacerbate situations of armed conflict and can impede the restoration of peace and security.
- 22-25 September:** A workshop was held in Cape Town, South Africa, on Engaging Men and Boys in Refugee Settings to address sexual and gender-based violence.

**21 November:** UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

**No specific date:** UNHCR published an AGDM information note.

## **2010**

**June:** UNHCR undertook an evaluation of the AGDM Strategy: ‘Changing the way UNHCR does business? An evaluation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, 2004-2009’, PDES/2010/08.

**October:** In a report entitled ‘A Call to Better Protect Women and Girls: Visibility, Dignity and Livelihoods’, UNHCR identified nine “core areas” related to women and girls in which it sought to improve reporting and data collection: (1) Women’s participation in decision making that affects their lives; (2) individual documentation and registration; (3) prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV); (4) distribution of sanitary materials; (5) education; (6) shelter; (7) economic self-reliance; (8) health; and (9) access to legal remedies.

**October:** UNHCR issued an in-depth report on the Provision of Sanitary Materials to Women and Girls Assisted by UNHCR

**No specific date:** UNHCR developed a Film Series for the Protection of Women and Girls and a Companion Guide to the Film Series to enhance the impact of the films.

## **2011**

**2010-2011:** Dialogues were held with refugee women and girls in India, Colombia, Jordan, Uganda, Zambia, Thailand and Finland. The report, entitled ‘Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Refugee Women Speak Out,’ was published in December 2011.

**May 2011:** UNHCR submitted a report to its Executive Committee on ‘Protecting refugee women: promoting gender equality’ EC/62/SC/CRP.14.

**June:** UNHCR issued its Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, which seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities.

**June:** UNHCR issued its SGBV Updated Strategy.

**No specific date:** UNHCR developed an Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Forward Plan 2011-2016 which provides concrete measures for implementing the 2011 Policy and sets out seven strategic results

which, once achieved, will represent UNHCR's vision of an organization that has mainstreamed an AGD approach.

**No specific date:** UNHCR issued video clips on the 5 commitments to refugee women and produced a video report on the advancement of each of the commitments 10 years after they were taken by the High Commissioner.

**No specific date:** UNHCR issued three Need to Know Guidance on: 1) Working with Persons with Disabilities; 2) Working with National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and Indigenous People in Forced Displacement; 3) Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Persons in Forced Displacement.

### **2012- 2013**

---

**No specific date:** UNHCR issued one Need to Know Guidance on Working with Men and Boys Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Forced Displacement.

**October:** Guidelines on International Protection No. 9: Claims to Refugee Status based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

**December/January:** UNHCR completes a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations made by refugee women and girls during the Regional Dialogues held in India, Colombia, Jordan, Uganda, Zambia, Thailand and Finland.

**No specific date, 2013:** UNHCR issued one Need to Know Guidance on Working with Older Persons in Forced Displacement.