



Country evaluation
of the age and gender
mainstreaming pilot project

Ecuador

Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

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Executive Summary

Following three independent evaluations on refugee women, refugee children and the role of community services, UNHCR launched an age and gender mainstreaming pilot project in early 2004. This report presents the evaluation of the pilot project in Ecuador, where work has taken place in an urban and rural refugee context over a six month period.

The evaluation took place over a four day period and aims to be a learning tool, not only exploring impact on attitudes, work practice and accountability but also exploring the value of the methodology and ways in which it could be improved in the context of a roll out. Interviews were held with desk staff, staff in country, people of concern and partners.

Impact on attitudes and analytical approaches: Members of the multi-functional team (MFT) interviewed felt that the project had had an impact on their attitudes and analytical approaches and has encouraged MFT staff and Implementing Partners (IPs) to deepen their consideration of age and gender differences and inequalities. Thinking on the male element of the gender equation and on age groups other than children needs to be further developed, however. With regard to non-MFT staff, discussions revealed that there still seems to be a lack of clear understanding as to the purpose/ value of the age and gender mainstreaming approach. Therefore, more capacity building is needed if such a transformation in analytical approaches is to take place.

Procedures and work processes: A number of capacity building workshops have taken place with staff and partners. Work with partners has been most influential with the findings of the participatory assessment influencing the development of project submissions and with partners stating that their technical capacities have improved which has had a direct impact on improving their work, notably with women and children. The MFT is up and running but staff changes and a lack of clarity on responsibility for action has potentially slowed down progress.

Management and leadership: The Representative has taken an active role in the pilot project and was the only Representative to attend the regional workshop. He felt that attendance was of personal and professional benefit and has been an active 'leader' of the MFT. Greater emphasis in 2005 will need to be placed on providing leadership to the rest of the office staff, as their awareness of age and gender mainstreaming is limited. Clarification is also needed in terms of allocating responsibility to team members in terms of reporting and co-ordinating activities. The arrival of a new Representative raises concerns about continuation. It will be crucial to ensure a good handover as well as capacity building and motivation building of the new Representative.

Pilot methodology and delivery: Overall it is felt that the structure of the methodology is sound and that it was well delivered. The clear outputs and timeframes were an important motivator to action. Further time for preparation

would have improved the process, however, as would clarification as to next steps for 2005. Further follow up by HQ would also have been helpful.

Learning: Key benefits of the pilot are seen to be: training, networking, and confirmation of mandate. The age and gender mainstreaming approach is still not sufficiently clear, however. Engaging IPs is challenging and needs follow up as well as participation in the MFT. Regular follow up from HQ and the Representative is important in sustaining motivation and prioritisation. Finally, all staff need to be engaged if mainstreaming is to occur, not just MFT members and the Representative.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the age and gender mainstreaming initiative continues in Ecuador. Staff are working well as a Multi-Functional Team and this has had an impact on improving the quality of their work.
- Staff interviewed and the evaluator feel that there should be a roll-out of the age and gender mainstreaming initiative. Specific recommendations provided by staff, partners and the evaluator for HQ are provided in the main text.

Overall conclusion: The Ecuador team has been enthusiastic in embracing the age and gender mainstreaming strategy. The most successful element has been in terms of using the participatory assessment to influence the development of project proposals and consequently the LOI. Greater focus needs to be placed on mainstreaming age and gender internally, with more capacity building of all staff, as well as on systematising the participatory assessment.

Introduction

Background to the evaluation

1. Following three independent evaluations on refugee women, refugee children and the role of community services, UNHCR launched an age and gender mainstreaming pilot project in early 2004. To date, country assessments followed by capacity building and planning workshops have been conducted in Iran, North Caucasus, Guinea, Zambia, Greece, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, India, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Sierra Leone.

2. The three key elements of the pilot project methodology are: Situation analysis using a participatory approach, integration workshop, and the use of multi-functional teams. In South America, each country did their own participatory assessment and then a regional integration workshop took place. The Representative for Ecuador was the only Representative from the Region to attend the workshop. Staff from the Ecuador office attending the regional workshop went on to form the Multi-functional team.

3. Each country conducted a mid-term review of the work¹ and it was agreed that a process evaluation would be conducted at the end of the pilot phase. Evaluations have taken place in Zambia, Colombia, India, Egypt, Syria², Greece, Venezuela and Ecuador. These countries were recommended for the evaluation exercise as they represent diverse situations: camp setting, urban and internal displacement situations. This report presents the findings of the Ecuador evaluation³. Work with refugees in Ecuador takes place in an urban and rural context.

Evaluation purpose and objectives

4. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the age and gender mainstreaming pilot project and to use this learning to inform the planned rollout of the project in 2005. Four areas of impact are explored. These are analytical approaches; procedures and work processes; leadership; and pilot methodology.

5. This evaluation is a process evaluation and is expected to be a learning tool. It has been designed to be a two way process, whereby the evaluation team and participants in the pilot project come together to explore learning and to build on experience. The evaluation is part of the wider mainstreaming project and as such is one important step in the process. In this way, the evaluation differs from a conventional end of project evaluation, which focuses on measuring impact. The

1 This evaluation should be read alongside the Mid-Term Reviews which contain additional examples of impact.

2 Meetings were also held with Jordan and Lebanon projects to explore impact and learning. Findings are presented separately as 'Notes for the File'.

3 The evaluator would like to thank the Regional Representative and all staff, partners and people of concern who kindly gave their time to ensuring that this mission was a success.

process focus also arises from the practical reason that a key focus of this project is to change attitudes and ways of working. The impact is thus less clear to measure than in a more quantitatively defined initiative (see also paragraph 11).

6. The objectives of the evaluation are:

- to document and explore progress towards age and gender mainstreaming
- to examine the appropriateness/ effectiveness of the methodology used as a first step towards mainstreaming
- to highlight lessons and recommendations for the roll out of the project

Methods and approach

7. This evaluation was based on semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. Interviews were conducted on a one to one basis as well as in groups.

8. Stakeholders interviewed included:

- UNHCR desk staff in Geneva
- UNHCR field staff (Country and branch office (Ibarra) staff: members and non members of the MFTs and the Representative.
- Relevant partners: meetings with three partner organisations
- Persons of concern: four focus group discussions, with women and men

9. A document review was also conducted and included workplans, Country Operation Plan (COP), project submissions and other relevant documents.

10. This evaluation was conducted over a three day period. While this limits the scale of analysis it was sufficient time for meeting key stakeholders as well as providing an opportunity for learning and exchange of ideas. It did not allow, however, for much observation which would have helped to cross-check some of the opinions given during interviews.

11. In terms of measuring impact, it is important to note that this is a process evaluation, taking place after only six months of activities. Measuring the impact of the project on attitude change and sustained change in work practices is a long-term process. This evaluation can therefore only be the first step to measuring the sustainability of the initiative.

Findings

12. The UN guidelines for gender mainstreaming suggest that attention needs to be given to three areas of work⁴: analytical approaches, procedures and work processes and, leadership. These areas, and an additional area on the pilot methodology, formed the framework for this evaluation.

13. The opinions of partners and people of concern are integrated within the reporting on the opinions of UNHCR staff. This allows for triangulation of information.

Analytical approaches

Findings regarding attitude change and the extent to which the age and gender mainstreaming pilot has encouraged the consideration of age and gender differences and inequalities.

14. Members of the MFT interviewed felt that the project had had an impact on their attitudes and analytical approaches and has encouraged MFT staff and Implementing Partners (IPs) to deepen their consideration of age and gender differences and inequalities:

‘There has been a big effect for me personally and for the IPs that I work with. Before we knew that there were differences between sex and age groups but we didn’t realize to what extent. There has been a total change in IP attitudes.’ MFT staff member.

“There has been a change in the planning activities of the IPs. Before they saw ‘gender’ as an obligation and they thought that giving assistance through women was ‘gender support’. For 2005, things have changed, they are looking at how to differentiate the needs of women, children of different sexes.” MFT staff member.

15. The participatory assessment also showed staff that men are affected by changing gender roles and this has helped staff broaden their thinking on gender issues. However, the above quote reveals that thinking on the male element of the gender equation and on age groups other than children needs to be further developed.

16. The pilot project has also increased awareness of the need to take into account the specificities of people’s situations, which in turn has highlighted a need to change approaches to planning and working: “With age and gender mainstreaming it is not possible to standardize action”.

⁴ UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender issues and the Advancement of Women, Division for Advancement of Women, Office of Human Resources Management. Undated. ‘Facilitator’s Manual Competence Development Programme on Gender Mainstreaming. P.4.

17. It was acknowledged, however, that further time is needed to change people's attitudes and approaches leading to a diversification of work with different groups. The sustainability of these changes will be tested in 2005.

18. With regard to non-MFT staff, there is still considerable way to go. Discussions revealed that there still seems to be a lack of clear understanding as to the purpose/ value of the age and gender mainstreaming approach. Discourse still appears to be focusing on women as a vulnerable group by virtue of their sex and children as a vulnerable group by virtue of their age. The age and gender mainstreaming approach aimed to focus on broadening these perspectives to explore the impact of difference and power relations on individuals. More capacity building is needed if such a transformation in analytical approaches is to take place.

19. It is important to note that most of the activities, discussions and documents are less focused on age mainstreaming than gender mainstreaming. There is thus a need for a greater focus on the relevance of age differentiation.

Procedures and work processes

Findings regarding changes to practice and the extent to which the age and gender mainstreaming pilot has encouraged consideration of gender equality and age equality issues at critical decision-making steps of normal work routines.

Mainstreaming age and gender into day to day work

20. Prior to the pilot project, staff felt that they were already taking gender issues on board. For example, the 2003-2004 Country Operation Plan highlighted the vulnerabilities of men. Age mainstreaming issues have been less emphasised.

21. After the Regional Workshop, the MFT held a one day training workshop for the rest of UNHCR Ecuador in order to brief them on the Terms of Reference of the pilot project as well as capacity building on the participatory assessment process and on age and gender mainstreaming. Further capacity building is needed, however as non MFT staff interviewed were not clear on the purpose of the project or on the conceptual framework of age and gender mainstreaming.

22. Other mainstreaming activities have included a workshop on gender and unaccompanied children, conducted jointly with UNIFEM in September. This workshop aimed to build the capacity of partners and governmental counterparts. It is felt that this workshop led directly to improvements in the work of the protection staff of IPs and the Refugee Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who have now developed more gender sensitive approaches to working with refugees. For example, women are now interviewed by women staff and the Eligibility Commission has recognized the first few cases of women refugees on the basis of 'membership of a social group'.

23. The most significant impact of the pilot project on work processes has been in encouraging the consideration of gender equality and age equality, to a lesser extent, in the development of partners' proposals and the LOI. Findings of the participatory assessment, disaggregated by age, gender and urban/rural context formed the basis of a two day workshop with partners, the focus of which was to design projects for

2005 that incorporated the problems that refugees had identified during the assessment.

24. Partners interviewed felt that sharing the participatory assessment and the development of the problem tree helped them to plan their own activities better as well as to develop their capacity on issues of age and gender. They also felt that the two workshops were extremely helpful in developing their technical capacities, as well as in confirming the value of work already being done.

25. Another impact of the age and gender mainstreaming approach has been encouraging IPs to understand the need for disaggregation of data: "Now we know why it is important to disaggregate data, before we did it as we had to. It was a UNHCR criteria. We use the same language now, including age ranges." Systematic collection and disaggregation of data is crucial to age and gender mainstreaming so is an important indicator of success.

26. It is felt that the protection of refugee women and refugee children has improved, notably with the government now more systematically considering the specific needs of single women with children. There have also been improvements in monitoring of young unaccompanied children and ensuring that they are provided with a more appropriate response. Co-ordination with other partners on age and gender mainstreaming issues has also improved, which has led to better collaboration on supporting young people, for example. It is important to note that the caseload is still principally single women, and only one man with children has been successfully resettled in Switzerland.

27. The need for income generation came out strongly in the participatory assessment. As a result the Caja Comunitaria (community income generation) projects were developed in Ibarra. Refugees interviewed have found these very helpful:

"Now we can earn a living and show that we are not just taking from society but giving and creating jobs. This helps combat discrimination."

28. This has also involved a greater recognition by UNHCR of refugees' own capacities to address their situations.

29. Staff do not yet have age and gender mainstreaming work in their performance appraisal but the Representative has asked each staff member to add a specific CMS objective on age and gender mainstreaming in their 2005 CMS. This will need monitoring.

Participatory assessment

30. A participatory assessment was conducted prior to the regional workshop. It was then conducted in two further geographical areas. The situation analysis tool has been extremely influential in the development of sub-agreements and it will be used in the development of the Country Operation Plan. It is felt, however, that the tool could be used more systematically in 2005, particularly to gain information about those people of concern who do not make it to the office: "The tool showed staff how

little knowledge we have of the client group, particularly in urban context.” MFT staff member.

31. People of concern interviewed felt that the participatory assessment exercise was beneficial to them. As one refugee stated:

“It was good to talk, to be listened to, it helps alleviate our stress”.
Woman refugee.

32. On the other hand:

“ Realities haven’t changed since the talks though. The help is still good. But we still get harassed by police” Woman refugee.

33. This reveals that the participatory assessment tool can and should be used to monitor all UNHCR activities, including training of police/ migration officers.

34. Staff highlighted the importance of being realistic about what can and what cannot be changed through participatory assessment. This is a key point in terms of transparency and should be made clear during all consultations with refugees.

Multi functional team

35. The MFT has changed over the pilot period. Originally the MFT consisted of: Representative; Protection Assistant; Programme Assistant; Community Services Officer and Local Integration Assistant from a partner agency. The latter has left and no replacement has been allocated by the partner agency. The Team now consists of UNHCR staff only. The selection criteria in the draft terms of reference have been met.

36. The key strengths of the Multi Functional Team center on the diversity of experiences and skills brought together and the opportunity for the legal, social and community development staff to work together and learn from each other.

37. The key weaknesses of the Multi Functional Team centre on a lack of clarity as to who has responsibility. While it is clear that there should not be a focal point, at the time of reporting someone needs to be responsible. This confusion led to the mid-term review not being written. Lack of time, staff changes, and the additional work involved have also been important challenges.

38. There is seen to be a future for the MFT who plan to continue meeting as well as to conduct more training of IPs on participatory assessment and gender issues. Age mainstreaming was not mentioned, further revealing the lack of clarity around this area.

Management leadership

Findings regarding changes in managerial behaviour and the extent to which management has taken an active role in providing guidance to staff about objectives and responsibilities for age and gender mainstreaming, and provided a supportive environment for staff to explore issues and approaches.

39. The Representative has taken an active role in the pilot project and was the only Representative to attend the regional workshop. He felt that attendance was of personal and professional benefit: 'I learned a lot and really enjoyed it'. He did feel that further emphasis on leadership and accountability could have been placed in the workshop.

40. The Representative feels that in terms of mainstreaming 'Leadership has to come from the top'. His main leadership role has been in leading the MFT and in laying down foundations for mainstreaming in terms of capacity building with partners. He has allocated staff time to the initiative and has been personally involved in correspondence with HQ and partners.

41. Greater emphasis in 2005 will need to be placed on providing leadership to the rest of the office staff, as their awareness of age and gender mainstreaming is limited. Clarification is also needed in terms of allocating responsibility to team members in terms of reporting and co-ordinating activities.

42. The arrival of a new Representative raises concerns about continuation. It will be crucial to ensure a good handover as well as capacity building and motivation building of the new Representative.

Pilot methodology and delivery

Findings regarding the extent to which the age and gender mainstreaming pilot was delivered effectively and appropriately, highlighting areas of learning and for improvement.

43. Overall it is felt that the structure of the methodology is sound and that it was well delivered. The clear outputs and timeframes were an important motivator:

"We wouldn't have done so much participatory work with refugees of partners if we hadn't signed agreements to engage in the AGM process, within a specific timeframe. This helped us prioritise in a busy schedule with limited staff."

44. It is felt, however, that further time for preparation should have been given. For example the first participatory assessment was conducted with limited understanding of the methodology. Conducting the assessment before the workshop was, however, seen to be a helpful way in:

"Having this before the workshop gave us a lot of information, feedback from refugees gave us a different perspective. Before the issues were very theoretical, now we could hear them from their own voice". MFT member.

45. The workshop was also an important motivator:

"The workshop gave us the necessary push. Sincerely if it wasn't for the workshop this wouldn't have been triggered. Before we worked on gender issues but more subconsciously, in a less planned and structured way. Now we are more strategic". Representative.

46. The flexible approach taken was seen as helpful but it is felt that there could have been more analysis and presentation of results from the participatory assessment. It was also helpful to start developing the workplan in the workshop. Although it needed to be finalised later it did provide a framework upon which to work. The focus on the importance of rights based approaches was also highlighted as particularly interesting.

47. In terms of methodology, it is worth noting that there is currently confusion as to the continuation of the pilot and next steps. Staff suggest that the methodology should also incorporate working with other UN agencies (UNICEF/ UNIFEM) engaged in similar work

48. Follow-up by HQ could be improved as there has been no contact with WCCDS other than the workshop and email requests for documentation. While this has been encouraging it would have been helpful to have more documentation in Spanish, a shorter version of the participatory assessment tool, more feedback on reports as well as a later follow up evaluation, for example, after one year of work, as opposed to six months.

49. There is also a concern that there needs to be wider organisational ownership to ensure that the initiative is mainstreamed throughout the organisation and does not disappear when HQ champions move on.

Learning and recommendations

Learning

50. The key learning to arise out of the pilot project in Ecuador is as follows:
- Engaging IPs is challenging and needs follow up. Presenting the findings of the participatory assessment is a good way to engage them in incorporating age and gender mainstreaming into their project proposals, as is having an IP member of the MFT. The loss of the IP member of the MFT has been unfortunate and has slowed progress down.
 - Staff need to be provided with age and gender indicators to help them improve the monitoring of their mainstreaming work.
 - Discourse still focuses on women and children, rather than age and gender. Where age and gender mainstreaming discourse is used the focus tends to be on gender as opposed to age. There is therefore a need for more systematic capacity building on the value of age mainstreaming.
 - In day to day work it is easy to lose focus and therefore ongoing capacity building and follow up from HQ and the Representative is important.
 - Key benefits of the pilot are seen to be: training, networking and confirmation of mandate. The age and gender mainstreaming approach is still not sufficiently clear, however.
 - All staff need to be engaged if mainstreaming is to occur, not just MFT members and the Representative.
 - Six months is insufficient time for age and gender mainstreaming initiatives. The first few months are needed for planning before activities can be started.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the age and gender mainstreaming initiative continue in Ecuador. Staff are working extremely well as a Multi-Functional Team and this has had an impact on improving the quality of their work. Recommendations are as follows:

Multi-Functional Team:

- Continue to build on good work. The Team has been proactive in encouraging partners to mainstream age and gender perspectives into their work.

- Membership of the MFT should rotate to ensure that all staff benefit from engaging with age and gender mainstreaming approaches.
- Ensure that a replacement IP member is brought into the MFT.
- Look at how to further build the capacity of other non-MFT staff in terms of age and gender mainstreaming. The workplan has had an external focus and it is important to ensure that internal mainstreaming takes place.
- Look at how to use the participatory assessment tool for better engaging the capacities of refugees, including children.

Non- Multi-functional Team staff:

- MFT work plans and other relevant documentation should be shared with the office team
- Office meetings should be used as an opportunity to highlight MFT activities and for other staff to talk about how they are mainstreaming age and gender into their work
- Additional training of all office staff on age and gender mainstreaming strategy and relevant tools
- All staff should be involved in participatory assessment

Participatory Assessment:

- This should be systematic and integrated into the office workplan. Regular assessment will support participatory monitoring as well as planning.
- Further participatory assessment should be scheduled, if this is not possible before the 2006 COP then there should at least be one before the next LOI is developed. This should be shared with partners and partners should be involved in carrying out the assessment.

Representative:

- The commitment of the Representative has been extremely valuable. It will be crucial to ensure that his replacement is well briefed, trained and takes ownership over his or her important leadership role.
- Time needs to be allocated for capacity building all staff on age and gender mainstreaming.
- Look into the options of forming a Regional MFT for the next phase. This may allow for tapping into a higher level of resources as well as addressing common issues around Colombia case loads.

Staff interviewed and the evaluator feel that there should be a roll-out of the age and gender mainstreaming initiative. Recommendations provided by staff, partners and the evaluator for HQ are as follows:

Conceptual framework:

- There is a need to improve emphasis on the age element of age and gender mainstreaming as well as to further explore the male element of the gender equation.

Participatory Assessment:

- WCCDS needs to provide clearer understanding of why POP is no longer being used and the added value of the participatory assessment tool

Multi-Functional Teams:

- The principle question here is: what next? Clarity needed for the phasing out of WCCDS support and the full ownership in country.
- HQ needs to sustain and improve follow-up through regular contact and feed back. This includes follow-up of the new Representative.
- WCCDS should ensure that field staff, administration and resource staff are included in the Terms of Reference for the Multi-Functional team

HQ linkages:

- Age and gender will only be mainstreamed when UNHCR organizational culture has changed so an important role needs to be played at headquarters level in terms of working in a more integrated and participatory way, as well as at field level.
- Linkages need to be developed within DOS and with other departments to ensure that the pilot is part of a wider organisational strategy of mainstreaming.
- Age and gender mainstreaming has to be in HQ not just in field. Age and gender need to be mainstreamed from the top down as well as from the bottom up.
- To address the challenge of sustainability in times of staff rotation, DOS to work with Bureaux to ensure that briefing of new staff, including new representatives, covers the mainstreaming initiative.

Methodology:

- Expansion of time frame from six months which is seen to be insufficient to sustainably ensure mainstreaming.
- Encourage staff to work with other UN agencies, share the workplan and look at how to work in collaboration, where possible.
- Continue to provide regular evaluation and capacity building. One workshop is insufficient to adequately build capacity.
- Develop and distribute a good practice document: interesting initiatives should be shared with all offices, along with a more practical guide as to 'How to mainstream', with concrete examples for people working in different contexts.
- Provide further emphasis on leadership and accountability during the workshop.
- DOS should work with Bureaux to ensure that age and gender mainstreaming is a requirement that needs to be incorporated into the COP.
- Ensure that age and gender mainstreaming initiatives co-incide with the financial year and are incorporated into the planning cycle.

- Develop indicators for measuring progress in age and gender mainstreaming and instruct pilot and roll out countries to use these for reporting progress.

Overall conclusion

51. The Ecuador team have been enthusiastic in embracing the age and gender mainstreaming strategy. The most successful element has been in terms of using the participatory assessment to influence the development of project proposals and consequently the LOI. Greater focus needs to be placed on mainstreaming age and gender internally, with more capacity building of all staff, as well as on systematising the participatory assessment.