

Chapter 2: Principles and Practices for Gender Equality

Overview

Introduction

This chapter outlines the various principles and practices that have been developed in recent years to help achieve gender equality.

It starts with a brief summary of the international legal standards which protect women's and girls' rights. Then, it goes on to show how a rights- and community-based approach and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) operate in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way to enhance the protection of women and girls who are displaced, returnee, (re)integrating and stateless and to ensure that they are able to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with men and boys. Finally, it describes particular strategies which can be adopted to strengthen the participation and empowerment of women and of girls and to work with men and boys on this issue.

Note: Specific international legal principles relating to particular rights and responsibilities are also discussed in Chapter 5. For a more detailed overview of the international legal framework, please see Chapter 6.

Purpose

This purpose of this chapter is to discuss the concepts outlined briefly in chapter 1 in more detail and show how we can use a rights- and community-based approach to mainstream age, gender and diversity, to take targeted actions to empower women and girls and thereby achieve gender equality.

In this chapter

This chapter has the following sections:

Section	See Page
2.1 International legal standards to protect women's and girls' rights	22
2.2 A rights- and community-based approach	26
2.3 UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy (AGDM)	34
2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women	39
2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls	49
2.6 Working with men and boys	55

2.1 International legal standards to protect women’s and girls’ rights

“The human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social, and cultural life, at the national, regional, and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, are priority objectives for the international community.”

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, July 1993

Introduction

One of the most significant developments in international law since the early 1990s has been the further elaboration of international and regional legal standards aimed at better promoting and protecting the rights of all women and girls.

These standards are expressed in international treaties, resolutions, declarations and decisions of the Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹ They can also be found in judgments of international courts and tribunals and in declarations made by States. They are also discussed briefly in chapter 6.

Applying legal standards to women and girls

The strengthened application of international legal standards to the situation of women and girls has been underpinned by the recognition that

- women’s and girls’ rights are human rights;²
 - gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are essential preconditions for development, peace, and security;
 - violence against women and girls, whether in private or public life, is a grievous violation of human rights and a serious impediment to enjoyment of other rights;
 - rape and other forms of violence against women and girls can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity; and
 - women’s and girls’ enjoyment of specific rights, such as their rights to education, health or land and housing, require targeted action to ensure their realization on an equal basis to men and boys.
-

Responsibility: States

The protection of women and girls, like that of men and boys, is first and foremost a State responsibility. International law establishes the responsibilities of host States to protect asylum-seekers and refugees and of governments to protect their own citizens, including returnees and those who are internally displaced, without discrimination, including on the basis of their gender or age.

Responsibility: UNHCR

UNHCR’s mandate, as set out in its Statute,³ is to provide international protection to refugees on a non-political and humanitarian basis and to seek permanent solutions for them. Under its Statute and subsequent General Assembly and ECOSOC Resolutions, UNHCR’s protection responsibilities

Continued on next page

¹ For further details see chapter 6 of this Handbook.

² See 1995 Beijing Declaration, para. 14. Chapter 6 of the Handbook provides more information on the Declaration and resulting Platform of Action.

³ UNHCR’s Statute was adopted by the General Assembly in 1950 and is included as an Annex to GA Resolution 428(V) of 1950.

2.1 International legal standards to protect women’s and girls’ rights, continued

Responsibility: UNHCR (continued)

also extend to asylum-seekers, returnees, (re)integrating and stateless persons, as well as, increasingly, internally displaced persons.⁴

Although UNHCR’s Statute does not specify any particular responsibilities in relation to the protection of refugee women and girls, numerous Conclusions adopted by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme (ExCom) articulate principles to be followed and measures to be taken by UNHCR in this respect.⁵ The Agenda for Protection, adopted by ExCom in 2002, has a special focus in Goal 6 on meeting the protection needs of refugee women and refugee children.

In addition, in carrying out our work, we are bound not only by ExCom Conclusions but also by resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Security Council that relate to our activities and mandate.

Such decisions and resolutions have given **UNHCR the responsibility to promote gender equality and work towards the elimination of violence against women and girls of concern as integral parts of our protection mandate.**

International legal principles guiding UNHCR’s work

UNHCR’s protection work is also guided by international law, including international refugee law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law. **These international principles set out the basic normative framework for our work.**

In all of our work – from setting operational objectives to advocating with States and building capacities within communities – we should respect and promote the following general international legal principles, each of which is discussed further below:

- equality and non-discrimination;
- participation and empowerment of women and girls;
- best interests of the child, and
- elimination of violence against women and girls.

This approach is reflected in UNHCR’s *Code of Conduct*. This affirms we must, “actively promote adherence to the principles of international refugee law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law”.⁶

Continued on next page

⁴ Paragraph 8 of the Statute describes the activities UNHCR should undertake to protect asylum-seekers and refugees. These have been expanded by subsequent General Assembly and ECOSOC Resolutions. Paragraph 9 of the Statute entitles the High Commissioner to “engage in such activities, including repatriation and resettlement, as the General Assembly may determine, within the limits of the resources placed at his disposal”. A series of General Assembly Resolutions have acknowledged UNHCR’s particular humanitarian expertise and encouraged its involvement in protection and assistance activities in situations of internal displacement. UNHCR’s role in any particular internal displacement situation is subject to the agency’s criteria for operational involvement. These include a request from the Secretary-General or competent UN organs, the consent of the State and the agency’s ability to operate without undue political or military influence. In complex emergencies, i.e. situations of conflict, primary responsibility and accountability for the protection of the internally displaced and affected populations as a rule should be assumed by UNHCR in line with its role as lead agency for the global protection cluster. See generally the inter-agency *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. For more on partnerships in situations of internal displacement, see chapter 4, section 1.1. UNHCR’s mandate for stateless persons derives not only from its responsibility for refugees who may be stateless, but also as the supervisory body for the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, from UN General Assembly resolutions, ExCom Conclusions, and the UN Commission on Human Rights. UNHCR’s activities in the field of statelessness fall under the following broad categories: identification of stateless populations, prevention and reduction of statelessness, and protection of stateless persons.

⁵ UNHCR ExCom Conclusions also articulate the responsibilities of, and action to be taken by, Member States in relation to the protection of women and girls. Although not legally binding on ExCom Member States, the Conclusions are adopted unanimously and form an important source of guidance for States as “soft law” (see chapter 6). ExCom Conclusions are binding, however, on UNHCR.

⁶ UNHCR, *Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes*, June 2004, p. 3.

2.1 International legal standards to protect women’s and girls’ rights, continued

**Principle:
Equality and non-
discrimination**

The standards of equality among women, men, girls and boys, and of non-discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, age or other grounds are guiding principles for our work to protect persons of concern. We must therefore:

- aim to ensure that women and girls are able to access and enjoy, equally with men and boys, their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights;
 - respect the diversity of women and girls and recognize that factors such as age, language, ethnicity, race, caste, culture, religion, disability, family and socio-economic status, and rural or urban background can create additional barriers to gender equality;
 - ensure that our operations, policies, and programmes promote the equal rights of all individuals of concern and do not directly or indirectly discriminate against women and girls;
 - undertaken age, gender and diversity analysis in all our operations, policies, protection strategies, programmes and activities and take appropriate targeted action in order to achieve gender equality;
 - work to ensure gender equity in UNHCR staffing, including in the field;⁷
 - work to ensure that the rights of women and girls are incorporated into peace processes, peace agreements, and all policies and programmes for disarmament and demobilization; and
 - work in cooperation with partners to ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in UN peacekeeping operations, post-conflict processes and UN reporting activities.
-

**Principle:
Participation and
empowerment**

Participation and empowerment of women and girls are essential to ensuring gender equality and to enhancing their protection.⁸ This means we must undertake targeted actions to:

- ensure the meaningful participation of women in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all our operations, policies, and programmes;⁹
 - promote the right of girls to participate in decision-making in a meaningful way and to express their views in all matters that affect their lives;
 - when necessary, implement specific programmes and policies to support the empowerment of women and girls so that they can access and enjoy their rights; and
 - support the participation of women and adolescent girls in all levels of conflict-prevention, management, and solutions, including in relation to peace processes.
-

Continued on next page

⁷ IOM/18/2007 FOM/19/2007, "Policy on Achieving Gender Equity in UNHCR Staffing", 8 March 2007. See also chapter 4, section 1.2 of this Handbook on "Balanced presence a precondition".

⁸ See also this chapter, sections 4 and 5, for more on participation and empowerment, section 3 for more on targeted action and chapter 4, section 3.1, for more on participation in peacebuilding processes.

⁹ The first of UNHCR's Five Commitments to Refugee Women commits all UNHCR offices to encouraging the active participation of women in all management and leadership committees of refugees in urban, rural and camp settings, including return areas.

2.1 International legal standards to protect women's and girls' rights, continued

**Principle:
Best interests of
the child**

The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all child protection and care situations and issues involving UNHCR. This principle should be applied systematically in all planning and policy-making that affect a child of concern.¹⁰

This principle applies to decisions affecting individual children, as well as to broader policy matters, decisions, and activities affecting children generally. Sex, age, diversity, and the particular protection risks faced by girls must be considered and taken into account in this regard.

**Principle:
Elimination of
violence against
women and girls**

Violence against women and girls, including violence that occurs in the family or the community or that is perpetrated or condoned by the State, is a serious human rights violation.¹¹ Customs, traditions and practices cannot be accepted as justification for such violence.

We must work towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls of concern. A broad range of activities should be carried out to do so. These include, but are not limited to, awareness-raising, capacity building, technical support, training, monitoring, reporting and follow-up action, as shown in the many field practice examples in this Handbook. As part of this work, we must also

- work in close collaboration with governments, other actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), civil society groups and local communities to establish coherent inter-agency strategies and standard operating procedures,¹² which operate to eliminate violence against women and girls;
 - ensure that none of our activities, including programming and funding decisions, contribute to violence against women and girls;
 - work to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN staff, related personnel, and partners, including in large peacekeeping operations, as UNHCR has a responsibility, including under the Secretary-General's Bulletin of 2003,¹³ and to report and follow-up if there are reports of abuses against women and girls of concern;
 - work to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including, as outlined in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000),¹⁴ in conflict and post-conflict situations; and
 - participate in UN efforts,¹⁵ including in implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), to monitor and report on grave abuses against girls and boys in armed conflict, including rape and other grave sexual violence against children.
-

¹⁰ See, UNHCR, *Policy on Refugee Children*, 1993; UNHCR, *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care*, 1994; UNHCR, *Guidelines on Formal Determination of the Best Interests of the Child*, provisional release, May 2006; and chapter 4, section 2.5 of this Handbook, which covers individual best interests assessment and determination procedures.

¹¹ See generally, "In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women, Report of the Secretary-General", A/61/122/Add.1, 6 July 2006, available in all UN languages at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/SGstudyvaw.htm>; "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child, Report of the Secretary-General", E/CN.6/2007/2, 12 December 2006, available in all UN languages at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw51/OfficialDocuments.html>; "Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children", A/61/299, 29 August 2006, available in 10 languages at <http://www.violencestudy.org/a555>.

¹² See UNHCR/IOM/62/2006 UNHCR/FOM/62/2006, 28 July 2006.

¹³ Secretary-General, "Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse", ST/SGB/2003/13, 9 October 2003, at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/textis/vtx/refworld/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?docid=451bb6764> and circulated in IOM/FOM/77/2003 of 13 November 2003.

¹⁴ See chapter 6, section 2.3 of this Handbook below.

¹⁵ See chapter 6, section 2.4 of this Handbook below.

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach

“The rights-based approach ... means describing situations not in terms of human needs, or areas for development, but in terms of the obligation to respond to the rights of individuals. This empowers people to demand justice as a right, and not as charity. And legitimizing those demands provides balance against other, less positive forces. This also implies the direct involvement of people in decisions relating to their own development. Internationally, a rights-based approach provides the community with a sound moral basis on which to claim assistance and to advocate a world economic order respectful of human rights.”

Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights¹⁶

Introduction

A rights-based and a community-based approach are both founded on the international legal framework for protection as outlined briefly in the previous section. While the rights-based and community-based approaches have developed separately, many of the principles that underlie the two are the same.

This section outlines the development of these approaches and then details the essential elements of a rights- and community-based approach that should be applied to our work. More generally, the whole Handbook also seeks to show how a rights- and community-based approach should be applied in practice in our work.

What is a rights-based approach?

A rights-based approach is a conceptual framework¹⁷ that integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the policies, programmes and processes of development and humanitarian actors. It therefore focuses on both outcomes and processes.

It is, however, more than a framework as it is founded on the principles of participation and empowering individuals and communities to promote change and respect for rights. Given the inequalities and discrimination that women and girls face, their participation and empowerment are essential aspects of a rights-based approach. This involves raising women’s and girls’ awareness of the rights to which they are entitled and supporting them to claim these rights and to enjoy and exercise them.

Adoption of a rights-based approach

UNHCR’s mandate for international protection means that international law has always formed the conceptual framework for our work, including our assistance activities. It is only recently, however, that UNHCR has explicitly recognized a rights-based approach as the framework for programming.¹⁸ ExCom has now also endorsed the adoption of a rights-based approach by both States and UNHCR.¹⁹

These developments build on the thinking and conceptual development related to a rights-based approach carried out in the development context. They are reflected in the United Nations Common Understanding of a Rights-Based Approach to Development.²⁰

Continued on next page

¹⁶ Guy Cave, “Where Are We Now: An Overview of Rights-based Programming”, Save the Children UK, Children’s Rights Information Newsletter no. 18, March 2005, p. 4.

¹⁷ The concept of a rights-based approach has featured prominently on the international agenda and in inter-agency dialogues since the Secretary-General, in the 1997 UN Programme for Reform, called on all agencies of the United Nations to integrate human rights into their activities within the framework of their respective mandates.

¹⁸ This recognition is clearly articulated in UNHCR’s *Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of Standards and Indicators in UNHCR’s Operations*, February 2006. See also the goals set out in UNHCR’s “Promoting Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in UNHCR Operations 2005–2007”.

¹⁹ ExCom Conclusion No. 107 (LVIII), 2007, children at risk, para. (b)(x).

²⁰ This Common Understanding was developed at an inter-agency workshop in May 2003 and later endorsed by the UN Development Group.

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

Adoption of a rights-based approach (continued)

A rights-based approach has been adopted by several UN agencies,²¹ NGOs, and donor agencies.²² It can also greatly enhance our protection efforts.

What is a community-based approach?

A community-based approach is a way of working that is based on an inclusive partnership with capacities of persons of concern that recognizes their resilience, capacities and resources. It mobilizes and builds on these to deliver protection, assistance and solutions while supporting community processes and goals.

A community-based approach requires us and our partners to build an equal and active partnership with women, men, girls and boys of diverse ages and backgrounds in all areas of our work. It demands that we understand and consider the prevailing context, the receiving population, gender roles, community dynamics, protection risks, community concerns and priorities, and that we work with people of concern during the various stages of UNHCR's programme cycle. It requires us to recognize our facilitation role as external actors, our limitations in terms of capacities, resources, and the temporary nature of our presence, as well as the longer-term impact of our interventions.

The community-based approach reinforces the dignity and self-esteem of people of concern and seeks to empower all actors to work together to support the different members of the community in exercising and enjoying their human rights.

Note: For further details see the forthcoming UNHCR publication *A Community-Based Approach to UNHCR Operations* to be published in early 2008. UNHCR's *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines on Prevention and Response*, 2003, also suggests how to involve the community in promoting gender equality and preventing and responding to SGBV.

Combining these approaches

These two approaches are complementary and mutually reinforcing. This is why we must adopt a rights- and community-based approach to our work.

“Rights holders” and “duty bearers”

It requires an attitudinal shift in how we work with and for persons of concern. They are not passive recipients of humanitarian aid but “rights-holders” with legal entitlements.

States are the primary “duty bearers”, who are responsible for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of persons within their jurisdiction. So we must work with States to help them to develop their capacity to meet their international obligations.

As a UN agency with a protection mandate, we are also responsible for working with communities to strengthen the protection, and promote respect

Continued on next page

²¹ FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM and WHO have explicitly adopted a rights-based approach. See, for instance, UNIFEM's “CEDAW and the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, A UNIFEM Guide”, May 2007, available in English and Russian at http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=94.

²² CIDA, DANIDA, DFID, SIDA and NORAD refer to a rights-based approach and use it as a normative reference point for their cooperation activities.

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

**“Rights holders”
and “duty bearers”**
(continued)

for the rights, of all their members equally, including women and girls. As has been recognized, one of the most important roles of organizations is “to support rights-holders to claim their rights. This requires major shifts in the way many agencies are working. Rather than delivering services and doing advocacy work on behalf of poor and disadvantaged people, a rights-based approach requires organizations to support people to demand what they are entitled to.”²³

Adopting a rights- and community-based approach also “demands that agencies work together to support broad processes of change in society. Supporting participatory processes that bring together government and civil society is one of the most effective ways to change relationships between rights holders and duty bearers”.²⁴

**Summary of
challenges**

Among the challenges to implementing a rights- and community-based approach and achieving this attitudinal shift are:

- community values that can foster violence against women and girls, and
 - cultural relativism.
-

**Challenge:
Community values
that violate rights**

Community values and traditions, including religious practices and traditions, may condone, foster or even facilitate gender inequalities and violence against women and girls and may violate their rights.

As the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has noted, such practices may sometimes be presented as having their origins in religion, but have in fact evolved as a particular cultural interpretation of religious precepts and may in some cases even go against these precepts. Cultural and religious practices which violate women’s and girls’ rights tend also to be underpinned by low literacy levels, limited female presence in public life, lack of information and a certain cultural fatalism surrounding such practices.²⁵ Sometimes different practices result from different perceptions of what constitutes violence, since most societies are seeking to contain violence and protect their members.

**Challenge:
Cultural relativism**

These differences can lead members of the community to challenge the universality of human rights on the grounds that local culture and tradition should take precedence. As the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has noted: “This is particularly the case when it comes to women’s [and girls’] human rights, which become compromised, if not totally sacrificed, by assertions of specific cultural practices and claims in many parts of the world.”²⁶

Some UNHCR staff have also resisted taking action to promote and protect the rights of women and girls on the grounds that it would interfere with local

Continued on next page

²³ Joachim Theis, “Challenges for a Rights-based Approach”, Children’s Rights Information Newsletter No. 18, March 2005, p. 28.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Rapporteur spécial sur la liberté de religion ou de conviction, “Etude sur la liberté de religion ou de conviction et la condition de la femme au regard de la religion et des traditions”, 5 avril 2002, E/CN.4/2002/73/Add.2, para. 190 (available only in French).

²⁶ Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Yakin Ertürk, “Intersections between Culture and Violence against Women”, A/HRC/4/434, 17 January 2007, para. 19.

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

Cultural relativism
(continued)

culture. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, cultural relativism is the greatest challenge to women's and girls' rights and the largest obstacle to eliminating harmful traditional practices.²⁷

Responsibility:
States

States are obliged under international law to ensure that traditional, historical, religious or cultural attitudes are not used to justify violations of women's and girls' right to equal enjoyment of human rights.²⁸ This includes a responsibility to "take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women".²⁹

The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which entered into force in March 2007, also provides some insight on this issue. Article 2 states: "Cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms ... as well as the ability of individuals to chose cultural expressions are guaranteed. No one may invoke the provisions of this Convention in order to infringe human rights and fundamental freedoms ... or to limit the scope thereof."

Responsibility:
UNHCR

UNHCR has a responsibility to build or rebuild and strengthen the capacity of the communities with which it works to make decisions regarding their present situation and future. This is why the Agenda for Protection emphasizes the importance of establishing community-based systems for protection and for empowering refugees so they can help to protect themselves and their community.³⁰ To do this we must understand the cultural and socio-economic situation and gender roles within a particular community.

"We will respect the cultures, customs, traditions of all peoples, and will avoid behaving in ways that are not acceptable in a particular cultural context. However, when the tradition or practice is considered by the relevant organ of the United Nations to be directly contrary to an international human rights instrument or standard, we will be guided by the applicable human rights instrument or standard."

UNHCR Code of Conduct³¹

Responsibility:
UNHCR staff

UNHCR staff have a responsibility in this context to:

- uphold the rights enshrined in international instruments, as these are universally applicable, in all our contacts with persons of concern and use them to guide our work;
 - raise awareness of women's and girls' rights among community leaders, such as religious leaders and village elders, who have power and influence over the community;
-

Continued on next page

²⁷ Commission on Human Rights, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Cause and Consequences, "Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective, Violence Against Women", E/CN.4/2003/75 6 January 2003, para. 70.

²⁸ Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 28, Equality of rights between men and women (Article 3), 2000, para. 5.

²⁹ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 5; Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Article 4(j); ExCom Conclusion No. 105 (LVII), 2006, preambular para. 8.

³⁰ Agenda for Protection, Goal 3, Objective 4.

³¹ UNHCR, *Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes*, June 2004, Core Values and Guiding Principles, p. 4.

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

Responsibility: UNHCR staff (continued)

- work towards the prevention and elimination of practices which violate those rights at the individual and community levels; and
 - take action to promote gender equality and ensure that individual women and girls whose rights have been, or are at risk of being, violated are protected.
-

Working with States

Adopting a rights- and community-based approach to protecting women and girls of concern involves working with governments in support of legislation which upholds the rights of women and girls of concern and capacity building to promote its effective implementation in practice.

Especially, but by no means only, in post-conflict situations, where the rule of law has broken down, our work with governments may involve lobbying for legislation to protect, uphold and fulfil women's and girls' rights, whether this relates to domestic violence, inheritance rights to enable sustainable return, or protection from forced marriage, including of the girl child. A recent example was in Sierra Leone, where legislation on each of these issues was passed in June 2007. Another example, from Austria concerning legislation on domestic violence and UNHCR's interventions, is given in chapter 5, section 3.1.2.

National capacity building efforts are an integral part of our work with States, as outlined in the "how to respond" sections in relation to specific rights throughout chapter 5.

Working with communities

At the same time, it is only by working with communities that we will be able to achieve gender equality and the protection of women and girls on an equal basis to that of men and boys. This is because many of the rights violations against women and girls occur within the family and the community and because women and girls may be stigmatized and isolated by their communities because of the violations they have endured.

Working to ensure that cultural and religious practices respect women's and girl's rights to dignity and respect in line with international standards involves engaging communities at many levels. It includes working with parents, health workers, teachers, religious leaders, and those involved in implementing traditional justice mechanisms in the community. It also involves working with individuals of different sexes, ages, social status, and backgrounds, in both larger and small groups, amongst other things to

- understand the cultural and religious origins of practices violating women's and girls' rights;
 - raise awareness of each person's right to dignity and respect, and of the health and other consequences of harmful practices;
 - identify advocates for change within the community itself; and
 - empower women and girls as outlined in sections 4 and 5 of this chapter and elsewhere in the Handbook.
-

Continued on next page

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

Why we should work with communities

Adopting a community-based approach is critical for our work to protect women and girls. As the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has emphasized: “In fighting for equality and justice in this sphere, outsiders might do more harm than good by provoking a backlash that may make future advances impossible. It is important to consult and work with women in the countries concerned to ensure that the most effective strategy is adopted. It is imperative to re-engage and take direction from the local people in a given context.”³²

She continues: “Working in partnership with women and men in the societies concerned will ... guarantee that any amendment or change receives the full endorsement of the local population. Without their participation and endorsement, no strategy to advance women’s rights will succeed. Moreover, any strategy that imposes hard choices from above may only strengthen the polarization in the world today between and within regions. A consultative participatory effort is needed to ensure that cultural practices that are harmful to women are eradicated from all societies which have endorsed the Charter of the United Nations as the basic social contract governing the community of nations.”³³

ExCom also recommends that States, UNHCR, other relevant agencies and partners “work with the displaced community, including men and boys, to rebuild family and community support systems undermined by conflict and flight and to raise awareness of the rights of women and girls and understanding of gender roles”.³⁴

Cultures are neither homogeneous nor static

In undertaking this work, it is useful to remember that social and cultural beliefs, including those about the roles of women and girls, are not homogenous. Views about the role of women and gender equality that are held by one person or group within a community will not be held by others. Attitudes will also differ among girls, women, boys and men. Other factors, such as age, class, religion, socio-economic status, or rural or urban orientation can also play a role.³⁵

Moreover, cultures are not static; they are continually being renewed and reshaped. Cultural change implies changes in gender identities and gender relations. Change is shaped by many factors, particularly conflict and displacement, as well as by deliberate efforts to influence values through revisions of law, government policy or education systems.

Note: UNFPA provides useful advice on using culturally sensitive approaches to achieve universal goals at <http://www.unfpa.org/culture/>. This includes a *Guide to Working from Within: 24 Tips for Culturally Sensitive Programming*, 2004.

Continued on next page

³² Commission on Human Rights, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Cause and Consequences, “Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective, Violence against Women”, E/CN.4/2003/75 6 January 2003, para. 70.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ ExCom Conclusion No. 105 (LVII), 2006, para. (k)(iii).

³⁵ See “Addressing Cultural Relativism in Relation to Gender Equality and Women’s Rights: An Approach by CIDA” contained in UNHCR, *Gender Training Kit on Refugee Protection*, 2002, pp. 175–180; Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Yakin Ertürk, “Intersections between Culture and Violence against Women”, A/HRC/4/434, 17 January 2007, paras. 57–66.

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

Elements of a rights- and community-based approach

Adopting a rights-based and community-based approach is critical for our work to protect women and girls. The table below sets out a number of elements for a rights- and community-based approach. Beside each element are examples of how they can be realized through actions to shift from a needs-based approach to one that is focused on rights and on community involvement and empowerment.

Element	Action to realize a rights- and community-based approach
Focus on rights rather than needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all UNHCR’s programmes, policies, and operations, including in the inter-agency context, further the realization of the equal rights of women, men, girls, and boys of concern of diverse backgrounds, as set out in international law. • Use international legal instruments and standards as the framework for UNHCR’s protection strategies and programme assessments, analyses, planning, design (including setting goals, objectives, and strategies), implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. • Base programme planning on protection objectives.
Ensure community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with persons of concern of all ages and diverse backgrounds in order to understand the community’s priorities, capacities, and resources and to build on them in order to ensure that all members of the community are protected. • Work with women, men, girls, and boys as partners in implementing, monitoring and evaluating protection and programming activities. • Work closely with individual community members and different groups within the community, in order to identify, prevent and eliminate cultural or religious practices that violate the rights of women and girls.
Duty bearers and rights holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help develop the capacity of States and their agents, as duty-bearers, to meet their obligations. • Treat women, men, girls, and boys of concern as rights-holders, not “beneficiaries”, and support them to strengthen their own capacity to claim their rights. • Support participatory processes that bring together government and civil society to discuss, establish common ground and agree solutions to challenges. • Do not tolerate or overlook practices within a community, including traditional, cultural or religious practices, that violate the rights of women and girls, but rather engage communities on these issues as outlined above.
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the capacities and skills of the members of the community and ensure programmes are designed in partnership with them and reinforce their dignity and self-esteem. • Ensure targeted action to support the empowerment of those who might be excluded so that they can claim their rights and participate meaningfully in the community. • Help empower the community as a whole and individuals within the community, particularly women and girls, to access and enjoy their rights.

Continued on next page

2.2 A rights- and community-based approach, continued

Field practice: Kenya

In 2004, UNHCR implemented a pilot project in partnership with Nike in Dadaab in northern Kenya, where some 127,000 mostly Somali refugees live in three camps. Focusing on female education, the “Together for Girls Initiative” uses sports as a tool to promote girls’ and young women’s integration in the educational system.³⁶

Among the rights supported by the initiative were the girls’ rights:

- to education on the basis of equality (Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 28);
- to develop their talents and physical abilities and to the development of respect for their own cultural identity and values (CRC Article 29);
- to rest, leisure, play and recreational activities and to equal opportunities for recreation and leisure activity (CRC Article 31); and
- to freely express their views (CRC Articles 12 and 13)

One of the obstacles to implementing this project was the traditional hijab dress worn by the Somali refugee girls. The clothing made it difficult to participate in sports. UNHCR and community representatives therefore met and decided that a women’s group would design and produce clothes that were culturally appropriate but that allowed the girls to participate more freely in sports. Nike sent a team of female designers to work with the refugees on a volley ball uniform that would respect traditional norms but give greater freedom of movement.

Despite initial condemnation of the idea of girls and young women participating in sports, in the end the views of people like Zainab Hassan Mohammed, an older woman who supports the girls, prevailed. She told them that girls’ bodies need exercise and there was nothing wrong with that. In the end, more conservative designs were passed over in favour of one the girls preferred. It still covers them from head to toe but uses less fabric and therefore allowed them to move more freely.

As part of the Initiative, Nike has also contributed funds for the employment of more teachers, the construction of more classrooms, the installation of more desks, and the construction of separate girls’ latrines in all of the camps’ schools.

Girls now make up 39 per cent of the pupils enrolled in the 18 primary schools in the three camps. Classroom sizes have also been significantly reduced, with a ratio of one teacher to 49 pupils at primary school level. Ongoing challenges include the fact that only 21 per cent of teachers in primary schools are female and that girls’ enrolment at secondary level is much lower. The system has also been strained by new arrivals from Somalia since late 2006 due to the renewed intensity of the conflict there and by serious flooding at that time.

The “Together for Girls” initiative has nevertheless involved both the community and donors to enable more girls to participate in sports for the first time and has helped raise their education, their confidence, leadership and their peacebuilding skills.

³⁶ See photograph at the start of this chapter and also UNHCR, “International Women’s Day: UNHCR and Nike Encourage Somali Refugee Girls to Play sports”, 8 March 2007, at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=NEWS&id=45efd1154> and UNHCR, “Designers on a Mission: Dressing Refugee Girls for Sports”, 6 July 2005, at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=PARTNERS&id=4405b2a32>.

2.3 UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy (AGDM)

"I had a FANTASTIC day today ... the kind of day that makes this job the best in the world ... We did participatory assessment work with Tibetan mothers identifying areas of concern to them, and especially using their knowledge to build better protection mechanisms for boys and girls. They were great: forthcoming, creative, honest, thoughtful, and unified in reaching several very helpful conclusions. We are going to get that place in great shape, just wait and see. This participatory approach is ... a lot of work, but rewarding and, I hope, effective."

UNHCR staff member, Nepal

Introduction

UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy supports the meaningful participation of girls, boys, women and men of all ages and backgrounds, who are of concern to the Office. AGDM operates to make their participation integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all UNHCR policies and operations so that these impact equitably on everyone of concern.

Its overall goals are gender equality and the enjoyment by everyone of concern of their rights regardless of their age, sex, gender or background. Their attainment is the responsibility of all staff.³⁷ A rights- and community-based approach, as outlined in the previous section, is fundamental to the strategy and should underpin all activities.

UNHCR's AGDM strategy

UNHCR's AGDM strategy involves:

- promoting a **multi-functional team (MFT) approach** to bring together the expertise and skills of all UNHCR staff and partners to enhance our protection and effectiveness;
- undertaking regular **participatory assessments** with women, girls, boys and men of all ages and diverse backgrounds to analyse their protection risks, concerns, priorities, capacities and proposed solutions and evaluating the outcomes in partnership with them;
- putting **persons of concern at the heart of operational planning** by ensuring that findings from participatory assessments are analysed from an age, gender and diversity perspective and form the basis of protection strategies and programming for solutions;³⁸
- identifying through age, gender and diversity analysis where **targeted actions** are required to address inequalities and support the empowerment and protection of discriminated groups, in particular women and girls at risk;
- mainstreaming age, gender and diversity analysis into all activities such as policy development, manuals and guidelines, **capacity building** and training and in the design and delivery of programme assistance and sharing lessons learned;³⁹ and
- holding staff accountable for mainstreaming and targeted action through an AGDM **accountability framework**.

Note: The elements of this strategy are discussed further below.

Continued on next page

³⁷ See ExCom Conclusion No. 102 (LVI), 2005, para. (p).

³⁸ ExCom Conclusion No. 105 (LVII), 2006, para. (i)(iii).

³⁹ ExCom Conclusion No. 105 (LVII), 2006, para. (i)(iv).

2.3 UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy (AGDM), continued

Multi-functional team approach

A multi-functional team is led by the Representative and, at a minimum, composed of protection, programme, community service and field staff. Ideally, it should include female and male staff, both national and international, as well as staff of different levels. Offices should ensure that multi-functional teams include the wider circle of actors on the ground, such as partners, government counterparts, NGOs, and, where relevant and appropriate, other UN agencies, donors and the community of concern.

Multi-functional teams play an important role in promoting gender equality and eliminating violence against women and girls. They are responsible for guiding the implementation of UNHCR's AGDM strategy and ensuring community mobilization, participation by all, and feedback on outcomes to the community. A successful multi-functional team approach requires the involvement and commitment of management, especially Representatives and Heads of Office, and the engagement of all staff.

Participatory assessment

Participatory assessment is a process of building partnerships with persons of concern of all ages and backgrounds by promoting their participation through regular structured dialogue and feedback. While there are many different types of assessment tools available, UNHCR has developed *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* which should be used throughout the operations management cycle.⁴⁰ Participatory assessment:

- involves holding separate discussions with women, girls, boys, and men, including adolescents, to gather information on the specific protection risks they face and the underlying causes of those risks, to identify their capacities and resources, and to listen to their proposed solutions;
 - builds on what communities are doing to enhance their own protection and when necessary mobilizes the community to take collective action;
 - is a critical tool to ensure everyone of concern is protected, in particular it gives women and girls of different ages and backgrounds the opportunity to identify and voice the protection risks they face, their priorities, and proposed solutions;
 - helps design the annual country operation plan to ensure all community members benefit to the greatest extent possible and improves ownership by the community of proposed solutions;
 - provides a basis for building trust and transparency through regular dialogue and feedback; and
 - is a critical part of situation analysis, as well as a principle of a rights- and community-based approach.
-

Targeted action

Age, gender and diversity analysis enables us to identify who is particularly discriminated against or excluded from exercising their rights, and the factors causing this. Discrimination against women and girls occurs in most societies and reduces their opportunity to participate meaningfully, to voice the protection risks they face, identify their priorities, and for their capacities to be taken into account. This means their protection needs often go unaddressed and their potential to exercise their rights is severely limited.

Continued on next page

⁴⁰ For guidance on how to undertake participatory assessment refer to UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, 2006, at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?docid=462df4232>.

2.3 UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy (AGDM), Continued

Targeted action (continued)

The protection of women and girls of concern therefore requires us to undertake targeted action to address their specific needs. This includes:

- supporting girl's education and the provision of sanitary materials;⁴¹
 - complementing short-term assistance by programmes to support women's and girls' empowerment in the economic and public decision-making domain, by training in mobilization, leadership and organizational skills, women's and girls' rights, and Security Council Resolution 1325, by capacity building for entrepreneurship, and by micro-credit support;⁴²
 - strengthening women's community-based organizations as a key activity to facilitate women's empowerment; and
 - working with men and boys to sensitize them and create space for women's and girls' empowerment (see section 6 of this chapter below).
-

Mainstreaming and capacity building

UNHCR headquarters is working to mainstream age, gender and diversity into its policies and the development of all guidance for staff, including in training manuals, learning programmes, and emergency training. The operations and protection learning programmes have increased the focus on age, gender and diversity analysis and the need for targeted action to ensure protection. Regional and national offices also have a responsibility to ensure age, gender and diversity are mainstreamed in all the capacity building activities they deliver, both within UNHCR and with partners.

Evaluations, sharing knowledge, information, ideas and lessons learned within UNHCR and with partners are an important part of the AGDM strategy. Thus, regular evaluations with women and girls of concern to obtain their views and feedback are essential to enhance our capacity and to learn. These should be encouraged regionally and globally. Information on the importance of, and responsibility for, ensuring women and girls of concern are able to access information can be found in chapter 5, section 1.

"This [Accountability Framework] is a good tool for giving concrete examples of what we need to do... It asks the right questions.... It is a useful discussion tool." "It really helps you focus on age, gender and diversity and focus on priorities." "... A brilliant exercise. It was extremely useful ... to know what we are doing right or wrong and what needs to be rectified."

Feedback from participants in the pilot project for the Accountability Framework in 21 countries, April 2007

"This initiative has been welcomed by participants as a crucial first step towards enhanced accountability within UNHCR. It is also an exciting innovation in ensuring equitable outcomes for those in whose name so many international organizations are working. UNHCR has shown a clear commitment to moving beyond rhetoric and into sustainable impact in terms of improving the lives of all its people of concern, regardless of their age, sex and background."

Evaluation of Accountability Framework pilot project, April 2007

Accountability for mainstreaming

A key objective of UNHCR's AGDM strategy is to promote accountability at the individual, team, and country office level.

Continued on next page

⁴¹ A framework for targeted action and empowerment is provided by UNHCR's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, as outlined in chapter 1, section 3, and by UNHCR's Five Priorities for Girls and Boys of Concern to UNHCR, at <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/4398146f2.pdf>.

⁴² For a more detailed explanation, see IASC, *Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs – Equal Opportunities: Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action*, December 2006, chapter 1 "The Basics on Gender in Emergencies", p. 3. For more on Security Council resolution 1325 see chapter 6, section 2.3 and for a field practice example concerning courses run by the Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development in Puntland, Somalia, see section 4 of this chapter below.

2.3 UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy (AGDM), Continued

Accountability for mainstreaming (continued)

To do so, in 2007, UNHCR introduced an "Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming and Targeted Action to Promote the Rights of Discriminated Groups".⁴³ In particular, senior managers' strong commitment is integral to the fulfilment of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming responsibilities.

At the same time, tools such as UNHCR's *Code of Conduct*,⁴⁴ the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,⁴⁵ and results-based management also act as performance and accountability mechanisms for the organization.

Accountability Framework

The Accountability Framework sets out a methodology for ensuring we are able to implement UNHCR's obligations concerning age, gender and diversity mainstreaming using a rights- and community-based approach and targeted action for women, children and other discriminated groups. These obligations are derived from ExCom Conclusions and existing UN and UNHCR policies.

The Framework establishes a system of self reporting for Representatives and senior managers based on a set of simple, measurable and clear actions. It is not in itself a full reporting mechanism but follow-up is integrated within the framework. Each accountable person reports on progress to their senior manager, while the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) has an oversight role and provides annual global analysis and follow-up.

Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- establish minimum standards for office practice to create an enabling organizational and operational environment conducive to achieving equitable outcomes and gender equality for everyone of concern to UNHCR, regardless of sex, age or background;
 - support staff, especially managers, in meeting their commitments by laying down clear responsibilities and commitments/activities for the mainstreaming and targeted action in all UNHCR activities;
 - encourage transparency and be seen as a process for organizational learning and improving the impact of work with people of concern;
 - identify global and regional trends over time and areas where further support, be it financial or technical, is needed; and
 - demonstrate organizational leadership by placing accountability with senior management and to show a commitment to go beyond rhetoric.
-

Responsibility: Representative and senior managers

Representatives and senior managers in each operation have a core responsibility and are accountable for the mainstreaming of age, gender and diversity and targeted action. Their commitment is a prerequisite to achieving the overall goals.

Continued on next page

⁴³ See IOM/36/2007, FOM/38/2007, "Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming – Roll Out", 24 May 2007. For more on humanitarian accountability generally see the Glossary and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership website at <http://www.hapinternational.org/>.

⁴⁴ See UNHCR, *Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes*, June 2004.

⁴⁵ See Secretary-General's Bulletin "Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse", S/SGB/2003/13, October 2003, as circulated in IOM/FOM/77/2003 of 13 November 2003, as well as chapter 5, section 3.1.2 of this Handbook.

2.3 UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy (AGDM), continued

Representative and senior managers
(continued)

Direct oversight and management of the process by the Representative is necessary to ensure staff fully understand and incorporate age, gender and diversity perspectives into their daily work.

In order to support Representatives, Regional Bureaux Directors, Directors of Operational Support Services, Protection Services and External Relations, Assistant High Commissioners, the Deputy High Commissioner and the High Commissioner are also required to report on this issue.

Responsibility: All staff and others

Accountability imposes responsibilities beyond leadership and the multi-functional teams. All staff – be they at headquarters or in the field, be they supervisors or others – as well as partners and donors need to be accountable for ensuring the protection of **all** persons of concern. The accountability framework assumes that senior managers will involve all staff in its implementation. Otherwise, they will not be able to fulfil the responsibilities highlighted in the Framework.

UNHCR's accountability as a UN agency

As a UN agency, UNHCR also has a responsibility to report to relevant UN bodies on progress by the Office in gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. This includes reporting on our implementation of gender mainstreaming to ECOSOC, on Security Council resolution 1325 on women peace and security, and on the Security Council's resolutions on children and armed conflict (for more on which see chapter 6, sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 respectively).

While preparation of such reports is generally coordinated at headquarters, input from the field, including through Annual Protection Reports and Country Reports, is vital to fulfilment of these responsibilities.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women

"I found that, apart from being a wife and a mother, I could contribute to making things better for the community as a leader. I feel so proud because this is a society that prefers men... In the end, it is us, women, who drive the process forward."

Olga Lucia Rodriguez, community leader, twice displaced within Colombia⁴⁶

"All UNHCR offices will encourage the active participation of women in all management and leadership committees of refugees in urban, rural and camp settings, including return areas."

First of UNHCR's Five Commitments to Refugee Women

Introduction

Men generally have more power than women. As the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women recognizes: "Historically unequal power relations between women and men ... have led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women." It also recognizes that violence against women is "one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men".⁴⁷

UNHCR has worked with women of concern for many years to raise their awareness of their rights, support their empowerment and thereby strengthen their protection. To achieve this goal, we must work in partnership with all individuals and with different groups within the community. It also requires the full participation of women of concern in all decisions affecting their lives and in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of all UNHCR's programmes.⁴⁸

Note: Section 5 of this chapter which follows is on strengthening participation and empowerment of **girls**.

Challenges to displaced women's empowerment

Forced displacement and return can present both challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment.⁴⁹

On the one hand, forced displacement can be a **disempowering** experience for women. Traditionally responsible for children, older people, and domestic work, women are often overburdened during displacement.

When they are excluded from decision-making processes, whether in camp contexts or as a result of social isolation in urban areas, they are unable to voice their opinions about decisions affecting their lives, including whether and when to return, or take control of their environment.

Relegated to the domestic sphere, they must often depend on male relatives for access to the basic necessities provided in camps. They may be too busy surviving and protecting their dependants and have little time to attend meetings or training sessions.

An increase in violence against women, including domestic violence, and the absence of policing or judicial mechanisms mean that violence against women is often undetected, unreported, or is not addressed.

Continued on next page

⁴⁶ UNHCR, "Forced Displacement in Colombia: A Woman's Story", 8 March 2006, at <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/440f04774.html>.

⁴⁷ For more on the Declaration see chapter 6, section 2.1.

⁴⁸ UNHCR, *Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women*, July 1991, including paras. 11–12, 44; ExCom Conclusions Nos. 54 (XXXIX), 1988, and 64 (XLI), 1990.

⁴⁹ The following paragraphs are based on UNHCR, "Good Practices on Gender-equality Mainstreaming: A Practical Guide to Empowerment", 2001.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

Opportunities for displaced women's empowerment

On the other hand, forced displacement and return can be an **empowering** experience for women. Their experience and the changes in gender roles brought about by displacement may enable them actively to challenge traditional gender roles that hinder their participation in the political, economic, and social realms. Where they have organized, they may be able to claim their right to participate in different aspects of camp or urban life and in return communities.

The inclusion of women in camp management, economic life, peace negotiations, and return and (re)integration processes can widen the range of choices available to women, give them greater control over their futures, and enhance the quality of their lives and those of their families and communities. Particularly in protracted displacement situations, women's involvement in income generation and vocational training programmes can increase their economic independence, their capacity to provide for themselves and their families, and their empowerment.

"The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of woman ..."
Article XI, Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, France, 1791⁵⁰

Definition: Participation

Participation refers to the full and equal involvement of persons of concern in all decision-making processes and activities in the public and private spheres that affect their lives and the life of their community. Women's participation is a key aspect of their empowerment. It enables them to achieve other rights and change their status in society.⁵¹ Participation is essential to achieving empowerment, but it is not, in itself, empowerment.

Women's equal participation in decision-making

In 2001, UNHCR committed itself to supporting women's equal participation in decision-making structures.⁵² This was an important step forward in the organization's strategy to protect women and girls.

Failure to include women and girls in decision-making processes often means that their concerns and protection risks are not addressed in the community's overall response and in their negotiations with external stakeholders, such as UNHCR and its partners. As a result, resources may be inaccurately targeted and the protection problems women and girls face regarding their security and their access to services may be exacerbated.

In June 2005,⁵³ many field offices reported that women's participation in camp committees was limited by cultural practices related to gender roles. Consequently, it is essential to adopt a rights- and community-based approach, as outlined in section 2 of this chapter above, to overcome such obstacles.

Continued on next page

⁵⁰ The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen was written by French revolutionary Olympe de Gouges. Her direct challenge to the inferiority presumed of women by the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and her attempts to promote this idea led to her being charged with treason, arrested, tried, and executed by the guillotine on 3 November 1793.

⁵¹ Guy Cave, "Where are We Now? An Overview of Rights-based Programming", Save the Children UK, Children's Rights Information Newsletter No. 18, March 2005, p. 28.

⁵² See the first of UNHCR's Five Commitments to Refugee Women quoted at the start of this section and, generally, chapter 1, section 3.

⁵³ UNHCR, "Report on the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women", EC/55/SC/CRP.17, 13 June 2005.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

Women's equal participation in decision-making (continued)

Women's participation in situations of internal displacement is equally important. As the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons has noted: "Special attention should be paid to ensuring the participation of internally displaced women in IDP consultations and in any formal decision-making structures. As primary care-givers for their families, displaced women have the best sense of what is needed to ensure their own and their family's welfare and security. Consultation with women and girls also enables them to raise particular protection concerns they may face, such as sexual violence and exploitation, as well as reproductive health issues, which likely will go overlooked if only men speak for the group."⁵⁴

Definition: Empowerment

Empowerment is not something that is done to women. Rather, it is a participatory process that engages women in reflection, inquiry, and action. By sharing life stories and doing a basic analysis of common problems, such as domestic violence, unemployment or inadequate health services, women can gain a clearer understanding of power relations in a given community. They can begin to question the world and their place in it, affirm their own sources of power, and discover how other forms of power affect their lives.⁵⁵

Empowerment requires an understanding of power relations in a given community. Power relations between women and men, as well as among different classes, races, ethnicities, and age groups influence how groups within a given community behave. Within a community, individuals are likely to be part of more powerful and less powerful groups at the same time.

The term empowerment thus "refers to a range of activities, from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest, and mobilization, which challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, caste, ethnicity, and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change existing power relationships. Empowerment therefore is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalize women and other disadvantaged sectors in a given context."⁵⁶

Principles of empowerment

Principles underpinning women's empowerment are listed in the table below.

Principle	refers to the ...
Awareness	understanding that gender roles and unequal relations are not part of a natural order nor are they determined by biology. It entails the recognition by women that their subordination is imposed by a system of discrimination that is socially constructed and can be altered. It also includes awareness of the rights to which they are entitled through legal literacy programmes and building their capacity through leadership training.

Continued on next page

⁵⁴ Commission on Human Rights, "Specific Groups and Individuals: Mass Exoduses and Displaced Persons, Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons", Addendum, Framework for National Responsibility, 23 December 2005, E/CN.4/2006/71/add.1.

⁵⁵ Adapted from Lisa Vene Klasen, Valerie Miller, Cindy Clark, and Molly Reilly, "Rights-based Approaches and Beyond: Challenges of linking rights and participation", Just Associates, Washington DC, IDS Working Paper 235, December 2004, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Srilatha Batiwala, quoted in Vene Klasen, Miller, Clark, and Reilly, *ibid.*, p. 9.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

Principles of empowerment (continued)

Principle	refers to the ...
Participation	full, equal and meaningful involvement of women in all decision-making processes and activities in the public and private spheres that affect their lives and the life of their community. ⁵⁷ It also includes working with the community, especially men, to open the space for women to participate and support their participation. ⁵⁸
Mobilization	process of bringing women together to discuss common problems. Very often this leads to the formation of women's groups, organizations and networks, and to public lobbying for the recognition of women's rights. Through mobilization, women identify gender inequalities, recognize the elements of discrimination and oppression, and devise collective strategies to solve problems. ⁵⁹
Access and control	capacity of women to be able to have access to, and control over, services, resources, and the distribution of benefits, including the benefits of their own produce. This requires use to review our own distribution systems and refugee status determination to examine and ensure that obstacles to access by women and girls are removed and that benefits are enjoyed on an equal basis with men and boys. ⁶⁰

How to respond

In order to strengthen the participation and empowerment of women of concern, UNHCR, together with local, national and international partners, should carry out the following actions:

Response ⁶¹	Actions
Coordinate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the national ministry responsible for women's rights and review how the concerns of displaced, returnee, (re)integrating and stateless women are incorporated into their agenda. • Check with other UN agencies, especially UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNICEF, what programmes they have and to what extent women of concern are accessing these organizations' empowerment and other programmes. • Identify women's groups in the displaced/returnee community, local women's associations, as well as NGOs which have experience in gender analysis and women's leadership training. • If necessary, foster the creation of a group within the community to support the work to promote women's empowerment.

Continued on next page

⁵⁷ The themes of participation and equal rights in decision-making run through the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which refers to the right of women to participate in the political and public spheres (Articles 7, 8); to participate in recreation, sports and all aspects of cultural life (Articles 10(g) and 13(e)), to participate in all community activities, and in decision-making in relation to marriage (Article 16) and family life (Article 5(b)).

⁵⁸ See also the first of UNHCR's Five Commitments to Refugee Women cited at the start of this section.

⁵⁹ See, for example, the Guatemala field practice example in chapter 4, section 3.2.

⁶⁰ For more on refugee status determination, see chapter 4, section 2.6; on livelihoods and food security, see chapter 5, section 7.1; and on food distribution, see chapter 5, section 7.2.

⁶¹ For more on the different types of protection response see chapter 4, section 1.2. This Handbook divides them into coordinate; assess, analyse and design; intervene to protection; strengthen national capacity; strengthen community capacity to support solutions; and monitor, report and evaluate. This is the framework adopted to group types of actions in each of the "how to respond" sections in the Handbook.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

How to respond (continued)

Response	Actions
Assess, analyse and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake participatory assessments with women and men in the community to analyse the degree of participation by women and any obstacles they might face. • Analyse with women and girls their capacities and skills and identify with them any gaps where additional support is required. • Agree with the community and partners on the targeted actions which may be necessary to enhance women's meaningful participation. • Develop a programme to support women's empowerment. This could include activities such as leadership training, information on rights and Security Council Resolution 1325.⁶² • Ensure that activities with men and boys to create a supportive environment, such as those outlined in section 6 of this chapter below, are included in the empowerment programme. • When designing empowerment programmes, such as training workshops, take account of women's gender roles to ensure they will be able to participate e.g. by providing childcare and establishing schedules which take account of domestic chores and distance, in case women need to return home during the day.
Intervene to protect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop with the community, areas where specific actions can be taken to support women's meaningful participation in community meetings. This can include having preparatory meetings with women first, allotting a specific time in a meeting where only women will present their views, etc. • As far as possible, avoid placing women in situations where the community is simply responding to the expectations of external actors and there is no real, genuine support for their participation. • Be proactive about informing women about forthcoming meetings, training sessions, etc. and support them in preparing well in advance for the topics. • Ensure that women at heightened risk have a mechanism to raise their concerns and participate in decisions, while guaranteeing confidentiality regarding their personal situation and without exposing them to further harm or trauma.
Strengthen national capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If required, work with other agencies to lobby and increase the capacity of the national ministry responsible for women's rights through the provision of training, gender expertise, etc. • When working with other ministries on issues related to women's participation, include the ministry responsible for women's rights. • Work with the structures that are negotiating return to ensure women participate and are fully represented in peace negotiation processes and reconciliation and reconstruction bodies as required by Security Council Resolution 1325, as discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, section 3.1.
Strengthen community capacity to support solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community leaders (women and men) to sensitize the community about the value of women's participation. • Agree on representation quotas for women with the community prior to any process for elections to camp committees etc. • Encourage and support women's community-based organizations.

Continued on next page

⁶² For more on the latter, see chapter 6, section 2.3 below. The UNIFEM Regional Project "Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building in the Southern Caucasus" has also developed a training module for gender equality advocates entitled *Advancing Gender Equality using CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, available in English at http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/AdvancingGenderEqualityManual_eng.pdf and in Russian, Armenian, Azeri and Georgian.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

How to respond (continued)

Response	Actions
Strengthen community capacity to support solutions, contd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies with the community before any internal or local elections to increase women's participation in voting and to facilitate greater support for female candidates, as outlined in greater detail in the Nepal field practice at the end of this section. • Support women to enable them to build their negotiating skills and strategies and support them to become role models within their communities by working with them and encouraging them to take on leadership roles. • Work with women and men to prepare men for the changes. • Promote men's role in the domestic sphere, especially in support of women's participation, such as in caring for children, preparation of food for events.
Monitor, report and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor with women in the community how information about decisions on assistance, livelihood projects, security mechanisms, return, etc. is transmitted. (For more on access to information see chapter 5, section 1.) • Work with male and female leaders to monitor and prevent any backlash against those women who do speak up and participate. • Evaluate the process with women regularly and draw on the lessons learned to improve programme design.

Field practice: Nepal	<p>As part of the annual elections held in the seven Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal, UNHCR worked during the run-up to the elections in May 2006 to get more women involved in the process and ensure greater diversity among the candidates. This resulted in just over 50 per cent female candidates standing in the elections, the first time that women were equally represented as candidates for the Camp Management Committees (CMC).</p> <p>Changes made in the CMC Election Guidelines in 2005 included the introduction of secret balloting to ensure better representation in the CMC of the interests of all segments of the refugee community. Core groups comprising both men and women were also formed in the camps and worked throughout the camp to increase the representation of women and support for them in taking up leadership roles.</p> <p>Men won the camp secretary or the heads of the committees posts in most of the camps. Nevertheless, after a gap of several years, this time a female candidate won the elections as camp secretary in one camp. Cumulatively, women held 61 per cent of the executive CMC posts in all seven camps and women there were pleased at being better represented. As one female voter said: "It is always easier to relate to female representatives as they understand our problems and issues better."</p> <p>The results also showed increased representation of women in food and non-food distribution committees and of younger, educated refugees. In an effort to promote greater social diversity of those elected, election focal points also recorded for the first time the caste of those elected, so that progress on this controversial and sensitive issue could be better monitored. Records showed that although all castes were represented, lower castes were relatively less well represented.⁶³</p>
----------------------------------	---

Continued on next page

⁶³ UNHCR, "The Other Election: Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal Vote to Elect their Camp Management Representatives", 5 May 2006, at <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/445b63954.html>; UNHCR Sub-office, Damak, Nepal, "CMC Election 2006 Report", May 2006.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

Field practice:
**Guinea/
Sierra Leone**

Women's associations have a particularly important role to play in skills development, especially through teaching women new and non-traditional skills. Women who learn new skills acquire enormous potential for enhancing their lives, that of their families and of other women.

This was so for Josephine, for instance, who has a physical disability. She was in her home when soldiers attacked in Sierra Leone. They led her husband to the gate and cut his throat. They took her to the federal camp where they gang raped her several times. After two months in the camp, one rebel commander took her as his "wife", from her junior captors. He left her children behind. She managed to escape. On arrival in a refugee camp in Guinea, she received medical attention, shelter and non-food items, as well as counselling from UNHCR's implementing partner there, the Organisation Catholique pour la Promotion Humaine (OCPH).

Josephine later received a scholarship as a widow with a disability to learn a new skill. She studied nursing for one and a half years and now works as a nurse for Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) in Kountaya, Guinea. She also joined the Association of Disabled People, for which she now serves as a chair person. Through the association she met and married a blind man. Although she has not managed to trace her family, Josephine says she has decided to put her past behind her and use her experience to help other refugees to move forward, especially those with disabilities. Josephine is living proof that "disability is not inability".⁶⁴

Field practice:
Somalia

In the Puntland region of Somalia, UNHCR supports the Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development (GECPD). The Centre runs a three-month course for a dozen women in Galkayo, a city hosting an estimated 50,000 people who are displaced within their own country.⁶⁵

The course is intended to give them the skills to run a non-governmental organization (NGO) effectively and efficiently. This includes learning how to define an NGO's mandate, request funding and ensure accountability. The course also supports their empowerment, so they can have an impact on their own lives and on society.

One participant runs a small NGO dedicated to peacebuilding. Another recently completed her secondary education and joined a women's NGO as a counsellor for female victims of sexual abuse.

For Farhia, 36, who runs a small NGO caring for street children, nothing is more important than empowering women in a conflict-ravaged country where females raise the children and are often the sole breadwinner. "I was able to survive only because I had skills as a teacher", said the mother of nine, whose husband divorced her. "Now I am sending all my [seven] daughters to school because I want them to have an easier life", she added.

Continued on next page

⁶⁴ Kountaya Camp, Guinea, 19 May 2001, in UNHCR and Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, *Respect our Rights: Partnership for Equality*, Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women, Geneva, Switzerland, June 2001, pp. 29–30.

⁶⁵ For further details see. UNHCR, "UNHCR Helps Women Raise their Voice in Somalia's Puntland", 15 October 2007, at <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/471377e44.html>.

2.4 Strengthening participation and empowerment of women, continued

**Field practice:
Somalia
(continued)**

Hawa Aden, chair of the GECPD, also runs a primary and a secondary school for girls in Galkayo. She said that when she was young Somali girls were encouraged to study, "but after years and years of war, all that a girl is asked [now] is why she is not married yet."

"Mothers believe their daughter will have a better life if she finds a husband fast", Aden said, although in reality divorce often followed. "If the girl has not acquired enough skills to have a decent job, she will be unable to feed her own children and she will end up living in squalid settlements outside town", added Aden.

The GECPD tries to keep its girls in school by letting them spend half their time studying and the rest working. The NGO also teaches them about issues such as violence against women and children, HIV/AIDs, peace-building and female genital mutilation. "Each time a little girl dies in town because of that harmful practice, we tell all our students", Aden said, adding that most of the girls in her schools had undergone genital mutilation.

Field practice: “Through our Eyes” participatory video, Guinea and Liberia

Introduction

A participatory, community-based video project called “Through Our Eyes” has worked to help members of conflict-affected communities broaden their awareness of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), its consequences and prevention and response. The American Refugee Committee (ARC) and Communication for Change (C4C) implemented the initiative both in Liberian refugee camps in Guinea and with returnees in eight districts in Liberia.⁶⁶

Rights promoted

Among the rights promoted by this initiative were the right to:

- life, liberty and security of the person;
 - freedom from torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
 - freedom of information, opinion and expression;
 - equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination;
 - equality in the family; and
 - the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
-

Steps to implementation

In early 2006 at Lainé refugee camp, in Guinea, C4C conducted a two-week training workshop in participatory video for ARC field staff and camp committee members responsible for referring SGBV cases to ARC. Participants learned how to use the equipment, engage community members in project goals, carry out interviews and develop team skills in programme planning and filming. At the end of the course, they made a documentary on early/forced marriage and short dramas on rape and community response to domestic abuse.

The Liberia-based ARC staff then returned home with their video equipment to share their skills with community peers who had been trained in SGBV prevention and response. The new team soon produced their first video.

Community screenings are usually attended by 30–100 people, after which members of the audience are encouraged to discuss the issues raised. Some share personal stories or offer suggestions on how to tackle problems.

Refugees and returnees viewing the videos regularly seek help for problems depicted in the videos they have seen and there has been an increase in reporting of rape as a result.

AGDM and empowerment

The project involved a dynamic process of engagement and dialogue with the refugee/returnee community on issues of local concern, including highly sensitive topics. Among these issues were gender, human rights, reproductive health, early/forced marriage, rape, alcoholism, and domestic abuse, as well as the consequences of settling rape the “family way” and of not treating sexually transmitted diseases.

Continued on next page

⁶⁶ For further information, see Tegan Molony, Zeze Konie and Lauren Goodsmith, “Through our Eyes: Participatory Video in West Africa”, *Forced Migration Review*, issue 27, 2007, pp. 37–38, at <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR27/contents.pdf>, as well as more generally at <http://www.c4c.org/about.html> and <http://www.archg.org>.

Field practice: “Through our Eyes” participatory video, Guinea and Liberia, continued

AGDM and empowerment (continued)

It was made clear that survivors of SGBV should never be pressured into sharing their stories. For those who did wish to speak out several options were developed. Many who did found it deeply empowering – a step in the gradual process of healing.

Community involvement

From conception through to production and local screening, the process was driven by individual community members. Themes and topics are relevant to local audiences and presented in culturally appropriate ways. People are always keen to see their own community members on screen. Video helps amplify voices for change from within the community and fosters peer-to-peer outreach.

Partners involved

The American Refugee Committee (ARC) and Communication for Change (C4C) were the primary organizations working on and promoting the project. UNHCR was not directly involved, although it was kept informed, including through regular meetings of the GBV Coordination Group.

Impact

The “Through Our Eyes” community video project:

- helps SGBV survivors, who are involved in the production process, to tell their own stories, to shed some of the stigma associated with their experience and to help others;
 - allows participants to benefit from learning new technical, interpersonal and team skills;
 - works as a participatory process to strengthen a sense of community;
 - is easily incorporated into existing SGBV programmes;
 - is an effective tool for awareness raising, promoting community dialogue and community mobilization and encouraging the reporting of incidents;
 - is accessible to all regardless of educational level;
 - motivates field staff; and
 - motivates the refugee video team, who plan to use their new-found skills to produce films about evolving conditions for returnees in Liberia.
-

Note: Many other field practice examples in this Handbook work to strengthen women’s participation and empowerment. They include:

- Angola field practice example in chapter 4, section 3.2, on empowerment initiatives in the return context;
 - Mexico field practice example in chapter 4, section 3.3, on the experience of empowerment in the context of local integration; and
 - Sierra Leone field practice example in chapter 5, section 7.1 on Liberian refugee women mobilizing to become drivers.
-

2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls

“Developing better methods of working with children and enabling their participation is beneficial not only to children. ... If we are unaware of the problems and issues that concern children and young people, we cannot hope to devise strategies and solutions that will address their concerns, and we will constantly be struggling to make sense of the world without some of the vital information we need.”

Ivar Smith and V. Johnson, “The Way Forward in UNHCR”⁶⁷

Introduction

Child participation, including that of girls, is integral to a rights- and community-based approach and to age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. Children participate to different degrees, but the deeper the level of participation, the more children are able to influence what happens to them and the greater the opportunity for personal development and empowerment.

Note: See the preceding section for information on strengthening the participation and empowerment of **women**.

Challenges of displacement for girls

The consequences for children of forced displacement and the loss of their normal social and cultural environment are devastating. Girls may be particularly affected. They are often required to assume more adult responsibilities, including domestic chores and caring for younger children, and may not be able to go to school. Many girls suffer sexual exploitation and violence during flight. Further abuse often takes place in displacement. They may, for instance, be abducted and/or forcibly recruited by armed groups. Adolescent girls, many of them mothers and heads-of-households, are at particular risk of social marginalization and isolation, and are often overlooked within conflict-affected populations.⁶⁸

Definition: Child participation

Child participation – including that of girls – involves encouraging and enabling children to make their views known on the issues that affect them. Put into practice, participation is adults listening to children – to all their multiple and varied ways of communicating. It ensures their freedom to express themselves and takes their views into account when coming to decisions that affect them. Engaging children in dialogue and exchange allows them to learn constructive ways of influencing the world around them.⁶⁹

The core purpose of children’s, including girls’, participation is to empower them as individuals and members of civil society, giving them the opportunity to influence the actions and decisions that affect their lives.⁷⁰

Continued on next page

⁶⁷ Ivar Smith and V. Johnson, “The Way Forward in UNHCR”, 1998; Glynis Clacherty, “Refugee and Returnee Children in Southern Africa: Perceptions and Experiences of Violence”, 2005, p. 2.

⁶⁸ See “Adolescent Girls Affected by Armed Conflict: Why Should We Care”, a fact sheet issued by the Gender and Peace Working Group of the Canadian Peace-building Coordination Unit and the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

⁶⁹ UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children*, 2003. ExCom has also affirmed in Conclusion No. 107 (LVIII), 2007, on children at risk that “States, UNHCR and other relevant agencies and partners shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of child and that mechanisms exist to inform children and adults alike of children’s rights and options”.

⁷⁰ See Save the Children Sweden, *Creating an Enabling Environment: Capacity-building in Children’s Participation*, Save the Children Sweden, Viet Nam, 2002–2004, available at http://www.crin.org/docs/seap_vietnam_environ.pdf, pp. 15–16.

2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls, continued

What participation can do

Ensuring the meaningful participation of girls, particularly adolescent girls, in decisions and activities that affect their lives is essential. Participation:

- helps ensure girls have some control over their lives and enables them to take action to improve their circumstances and their futures;
- enhances their protection – as girls are given the opportunity to express their views, in safety and in confidence, protection problems and solutions can be identified and responded to;
- is essential, as it helps to ensure that our programmes and operations address the problems faced by girls and that we build on their resources and capacities; and
- is a theme running through the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷¹ which is central to the access and enjoyment of other fundamental rights, including for instance the right to education.

It is not only important for girls to participate as individuals or as a group of girls, but also for them to engage in participatory, consultative processes with boys in a way that promotes gender equality.

Challenges for UNHCR

In practice, it has been difficult to ensure that children participate in UNHCR's protection and programme activities. We often lack an appropriate methodology and skills for working with children, even though we know that it is important to use media appropriate to their culture and age, such as drawing, mapping, singing, drama and play, to allow them to express themselves, process their experiences, develop and realize their potential.⁷²

Resistance from adults in the community can also hinder meaningful participation. Parents and others in the community may resist children's participation because they see it as undermining their authority within the family and society. Objections are often strongest against the participation of girls. It is therefore essential that we adopt a rights- and community-based approach (see chapter 2, section 2 above) and work with experienced partners.

Ethical issues

A number of ethical issues are also involved in ensuring the participation of children. The principles of consent and confidentiality must be respected at all times and children must not be put at risk. At the same time, if individual protection problems are identified, they must be addressed.

Annex II to the *UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*⁷³ for more detailed information on this issue, as does chapter 3 of this Handbook, including section 3 on individual case management systems for prevention and response.

Continued on next page

⁷¹ CRC, Article 12 requires States Parties to "assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". Among the forms of participation provided for in the CRC are social participation in family life (Articles 7(1) and 10) and in community life (Articles 15, 17) and the participation of children with specific needs, such as children with disabilities (Article 23).

⁷² G. Mann and D. Tolfree (2003) cited in Glynis Clacherty, "Refugee and Returnee Children in Southern Africa: Perceptions and Experiences of Violence", UNHCR, 2005, p. 2.

⁷³ See UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, 2006, at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?docid=462df4232>.

2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls, continued

Processes for participation

Participation by children can be achieved in three ways⁷⁴ – all of which are relevant and should be used in combination – through the following processes:

Process	Description
Consultative	These processes are initiated and led by adults. Although limited in scope for real engagement, they do help to incorporate children's views into agendas that are adult-dominated and may lead to greater participation by children. UNHCR's participatory assessment ⁷⁵ is an example of a consultative process with children.
Participatory	These give children opportunities to be actively involved in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programmes, research or activities. They provide an opportunity for children to share power with adults and to play a significant role in shaping the activities in which they are engaged.
Self-initiated	These are processes where children are empowered to take action and are not merely responding to an adult-defined agenda. Children identify issues of concern themselves and control the process, with adults playing a facilitating role.

How to respond

In order to strengthen the participation and empowerment of girls of concern, UNHCR, together with local, national and international partners, should carry out the following actions:⁷⁶

Response	Actions
Coordinate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the national ministry responsible for children's rights and review how the concerns of displaced, returnee, (re)integrating and stateless girls are incorporated into their agenda. • Check with other UN agencies, especially UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNICEF, on their current programmes, the access of girls of concern to these programmes, and empowerment strategies for girls within the programmes. • Identify women's and adolescent girls' groups in the displaced/returnee community, local associations and NGOs which have experience in working with children of different ages, especially girls. • If necessary, work to create a group within the community to support the work to promote girls' empowerment. • Coordinate with schools, teachers, parent-teachers' associations, health centres, and adolescents' groups to identify the most appropriate channels to enable girls' participation and empowerment.

Continued on next page

⁷⁴ Adapted from Gerison Lansdown, "Can You Hear Me? The Right of Young Children to Participate in Decisions Affecting Them", Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, May 2005, pp. 14–15, at http://www.bernardvanleer.org/publication_store/publication_store_publications/can_you_hear_me_the_right_of_young_children_to_participate_in_decisions_affecting_them/file.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 2, section 3.

⁷⁶ Many of these suggested actions are drawn from "The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child: Report of the Secretary-General", E/CN.6/2007/2, 12 December 2006; Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child: Report of the Expert Group Meeting", Florence, Italy, 25–28 September 2006, at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/EGM%20Report_FINAL.pdf, section VII; Gerison Lansdown,, above footnote 74; Save the Children: "So You Want to Consult Children: A Toolkit of Good Practice", November 2003.

2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls, continued

How to respond (continued)

Response	Actions
Assess, analyse and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that disaggregated data on girls and boys of different ages is collected and updated systematically to ensure that decisions can be made which take girls into account and thereby avoid the risk of making them invisible in regards to planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. • Do not necessarily assume that adults have the knowledge and insight into what is important for girls (or boys). • Create opportunities for girls to articulate their own concerns, priorities and interests, whether through consultation, participatory or self-initiated processes as outlined above. • Use child-friendly and age-appropriate strategies, for instance, through games, role plays, drama or drawing, to enable girls (and boys) to express their concerns and ideas. • Ensure that planning takes account of the views expressed by girls (and boys) and involves them in contributing to programmes they have identified as priorities. • Take a life cycle approach to assessment, identifying with girls the discrimination they face from birth until adulthood. In this way, each form of discrimination can be identified and tackled. This helps identify points of vulnerability in girls' lives and enable appropriate responses to be designed.
Intervene to protect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safe and supportive girl-friendly spaces and environments where girls can express themselves, learn about their rights, develop strategies to protect their safety and their health, practise team building, develop leadership and play. • Build girls' social assets including by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – informing them about their rights and helping them build the skills to exercise these rights; – helping them build connections with other girls, develop safe spaces to meet friends, have adults in their lives to whom they can turn in times of need, and mentors who help them aspire to their future goals; – giving girls opportunities to experience being part of a team and developing leadership skills; – enabling them to find their own voice and recognize their ability to identify their own needs and act on them as full members of society; and – encouraging them during later childhood/early adolescence, to identify themselves as economic actors and acquire basic financial literacy and thereby enable them to find decent work.⁷⁷ • Around the time of puberty, work with girls to teach them about the changes in their bodies, raise their awareness of their rights, and enable them to choose when and how they wish to become sexually active, including whether and when they may eventually wish to enter into marital partnerships and have children. (See, for instance, the Tanzania field practice example on youth-friendly adolescent sexual and reproductive health, in chapter 5, section 5.1.) • Give girls and boys of all ages the space to participate. Younger children have concerns which are different from those of older children and girls have different concerns from boys. To do so, it can be more effective to conduct separate consultations and/or training sessions for different age groups and different sexes.

Continued on next page

⁷⁷ Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child: Report of the Expert Group Meeting", Florence, Italy, 25–28 September 2006, available at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/EGM%20Report_FINAL.pdf, paras. 114–116.

2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls, continued

How to respond (continued)

Response	Actions
Intervene to protect, contd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage girls' involvement in sports, including through after school clubs and recreational activities. (See, for instance, Kenya field practice example in section 2 of this chapter above.) • Provide care arrangements for the children of teenage mothers and support the latter so they can continue/return to their education.
Strengthen national capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with government authorities, such as education authorities, departments responsible for the reception of asylum-seekers or refugee status determination, to raise awareness of the value of girls' and boys' participation in projects and programmes affecting them and thereby reduce any opposition to such participation. • Support the training of government and other officials, such as health professionals or social workers, working with girls and boys of concern to ensure their commitment to the principle of listening to children, their awareness of children's rights, and their understanding of the various factors which may lead to girl children being invisible.
Strengthen community capacity to support solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with different groups in the community to raise their awareness of the value of gender equality and of girls' rights and potential. Agree on strategies to realize both, including in relation to continuing education and access to sports, play, and health care. • Support parents in promoting and protecting their children's rights. • Engage parents, guardians, teachers, elders, and other community members in raising awareness of the value of girls' and boys' involvement and meaningful participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and projects that affect them. • Ensure processes are transparent and honest, that children understand what a given programme or project is about, and the boundaries of what they are able to influence. • Engage female teachers, health workers, and young women in secondary or further education and encourage them to become role models and mentors for girls' empowerment and participation.
Monitor, report and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on criteria for monitoring participation with girls (and boys) at the outset of a programme. • Solicit girls' (and boys') views on what should be evaluated and ensure they play a part in evaluation programmes. • Give feedback on the results of monitoring and evaluations to girls and boys and discuss the results with them in child sensitive and accessible ways.

Continued on next page

2.5 Strengthening participation and empowerment of girls, continued

Field practice: South Africa

During 2005, UNHCR in South Africa conducted a research project with refugee and returnee children in Angola, South Africa, and Zambia. This study was submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.⁷⁸ The methodology developed for the project, which used art as a medium to engage children, was found to be an effective way of understanding children's thoughts and feelings, particularly regarding SGBV.

The methodology was then used again as part of the participatory assessment in other countries in the region. Information gathered was reflected in the formal participatory assessment reporting and integrated into programme and protection planning.

A child-friendly version of the report was produced for the children who took part in the workshops. One of the refugee girls who participated in the study was chosen to be a representative in a children's and young people's consultation in New York on the draft report on the United Nations Study on Violence against Children.

Field practice: Australia

In 2003, UNHCR's office in Australia organized a high school writing competition in which school children were invited to interview child and older refugees living in their community, write a story about the person interviewed, and reflect on their own responses to the story.⁷⁹

The exercise promoted dialogue between refugee children and their classmates and proved empowering for the refugee children involved. The winners, Sophie Weldon and Adut Dau Atem (who is resettled from Sudan),⁸⁰ went on to become Special Youth Representatives for UNHCR's national association in Australia. By interviewing refugees, Australian children became more aware of the situation of refugees.

In the second year of the competition, a large number of refugee children, many of them Afghan girls who had arrived in Australia by boat and had been subject to mandatory detention, submitted entries themselves, eager to tell their own stories.

The idea of listening with compassion and writing with respect has emerged as a strong theme in the competitions. In 2006, thousands of copies of the publication "Refugees Telling their Stories: 2005" were distributed to Australian high schools and a similar competition was undertaken in New Zealand.

Note: Many other field practice examples in this Handbook work to strengthen girls' participation and empowerment. Examples include in this chapter above, section 2, that for Kenya on the "Together for Girls" initiative; in this chapter below, section 6, that for Namibia on the girls' and boys' clubs established in Osire refugee camp; and chapter 5, section 5.1 on adolescent sexual and reproductive health initiatives in Tanzania.

⁷⁸ See <http://www.unhcr.org/doclist/protect/43994c3d2.html> and, for the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, A/61/299, 29 August 2006, presented to the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 11 October 2006, see <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>.

⁷⁹ See <http://www.unhcr.org.au/writingcomp.shtml> and for the publication see <http://www.unhcr.org.au/pdfs/WritingComp05.pdf>.

⁸⁰ For more on Adut Dau Atem's story see chapter 4, quote at the start of section 2.4.

2.6 Working with men and boys

"We need to bring men and boys front and centre, in line and in place with women and girls, in the promotion of gender mainstreaming and in the march for gender equality. We need to stress that promoting gender equality is not about granting privileges to women while disempowering men. It is about creating integrated approaches that benefit all. It is about creating a more socially just world."

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, "Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality, A Resource Packet", September 2005⁸¹

Introduction

To date, UNHCR's activities to enhance the protection of women and girls have primarily focused on working with women. Yet gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and girls cannot be achieved without the active participation of men. It is also critical to reach out to boys and young men, as our beliefs about gender roles are formed at an early age.

This section explores some of the concepts underlying our work with men and boys to achieve gender equality and to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). It provides examples of such programmes from the field and suggests actions that can be taken.

What women's empowerment means for men

Even though protecting women and girls is an organizational priority for UNHCR, there is considerable misunderstanding among staff members, persons of concern, and partners as to how such a priority affects our mandate to protect all persons of concern, including men and boys.

For instance, at a workshop on gender equality and the prevention of SGBV for refugee men in Sierra Leone, many men said that they believed that the goal of such activities is to empower women to dominate men and to discriminate against men.⁸²

"The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to another – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; ... it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other."

John Stuart Mill (English philosopher), *On the Subjection of Women*, 1869

Goal is equality not dominance of either sex

Prioritizing the protection of women and girls does not mean doing so at the expense of the protection of men and boys. The goal of UNHCR's age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming strategy is not to ensure that women and girls have greater access to and enjoyment of their rights than men and boys, but that they have **equal access and enjoyment**.

Similarly, the goal of empowering women is not to enable them to have power over men, but rather to be **equally empowered**, without one being dominant over the other. This requires a transformation in

- both men's and women's attitudes about their own gender roles;
 - how we understand the use of power; and
 - power relations between men and women.
-

Continued on next page

⁸¹ Available at http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc_res.pdf and as a six-page brief "Redefining Manhood, Rebuilding Nations: How Men Can Empower Women to Lift Post-Conflict Communities" at http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc_brief.pdf.

⁸² UNHCR Field Office, Bo, Sierra Leone, Training and Mobilization of Men's Groups for Gender Equality and the Prevention of SGBV, Final Report, 25 April 2004.

2.6 Working with men and boys, continued

Summary of challenges

Some of the challenges faced by UNHCR in working with and engaging men and boys are discussed further below and include:

- socialized male roles;
 - SGBV, an extreme manifestation of unequal power relations;
 - the impact of forced displacement on men and boys; and
 - resistance to changing male privilege.
-

"In Chechnya, I couldn't, for example, cradle or kiss my baby in front of my father, uncle, or any other family elder. It is a kind of shame, according to our laws. But here we are alone and I feel that I have to help her [referring to his wife] with the kids. And I am OK with it; I feel closer to them than before."

Aslamabek, 26-year-old male refugee from the Russian Federation living in a refugee camp in the Czech Republic⁸³

Challenge: Socialized male roles

Like women, men are socialized into their gender roles. Masculinity is widely associated with bravery, strength, authority, independence, and sexual activity. Men are often expected to be in control, authoritative, and successful providers and protectors. These expectations influence the way men relate to their wives and children, as well as other women and children.⁸⁴

These socialized roles also influence the way men and boys relate to members of their own sex. They can result in homophobia towards men and boys who do not conform to stereotypically male values, as well as towards women and girls who do not conform to socially expected female roles.

Women play an important role in this socialization process, too. The privileging of boys begins early. Different expectations for boys and girls and child-rearing practices are fostered by their mothers, fathers and other family members.⁸⁵ Women's attitudes and behaviours may also inadvertently maintain gender inequalities. Consequently, gender equality requires a change in the attitudes of women *and* men toward male identities and roles, as well as female ones.

Gender roles are also influenced by prevailing cultural and religious norms, although, as already pointed out in section 2 of this chapter above, cultures are neither homogenous nor static and can and do change.

Challenge: SGBV an extreme manifestation of unequal power relations

As the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has noted: "Gender-based violence is a manifestation of the difference in power relations at its most extreme. For this reason, it is important to recognize that sexual and gender-based violence is made up of a perpetrator, almost always male, a victim, usually female (sometimes there are boys and men) and an act or acts of violence. Yet very often our responses to sexual and gender-based violence are designed as 'women's programmes'. To see rape and other forms of violence as a women's issue ignores gender analysis entirely."⁸⁶

Continued on next page

⁸³ Quoted in Alice Szczepanikova, "Gender Relations in a Refugee Camp: A Case of Chechens Seeking Asylum in the Czech Republic", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2005, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 281–298.

⁸⁴ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, "Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality, A Resource Packet", September 2005, pp. 8, 11.

⁸⁵ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸⁶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Inter-Agency Lessons Learned Conference Proceedings on Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Situations, Geneva, 27–29 March 2001, p. 6.

2.6 Working with men and boys, continued

SGBV an extreme manifestation of unequal power relations (continued)

The IASC continues: “One of the goals of looking at violence from a gender perspective is to see both women and men as agents of change in a collaborative partnership... A comprehensive response includes focusing on the role of both women and men and generating new knowledge on how this partnership can end violence and work towards gender equality.”⁸⁷

“One of the worst things about living in the camp is that a man loses his self respect. He is not worth anything. You are supposed to be the head of the household – and here you do not have enough money to give your children to buy bread. This creates a conflict and problems in the home. ... it seems that you have lost your role and you were supposed to be the key provider.”

Justin, 30-year-old Burundian male living in a refugee camp in Kasulu, Tanzania⁸⁸

Challenge: Impact of forced displacement on men and boys

Gender inequities and unequal power relations can affect men and boys negatively too. This particularly affects their physical and mental health, as they strive to live up to the male “norm”.

Forced displacement and violence can have a devastating impact on men and boys.⁸⁹ When men lose their traditional role as provider and protector as a result of displacement, this loss of status, especially when combined with boredom, frustration, and a sense of powerlessness, can lead to increased violence, including domestic violence. It can also lead to alcohol abuse – a major problem contributing to violence against women and girls.

Challenge: Resistance to changing male privilege

Because men wield greater power in all spheres of public and private life, “the dividends of male privilege can make it very difficult for men to see the benefits of working towards gender equality. Some men fear that others will think that they are not living up to the demands of manhood; others will resist changing their ideas, behaviours, and beliefs – much as we all resist change.”⁹⁰

As in other contexts, it is often powerful refugee and displaced men who feel most threatened by strategies to empower women in the community, as they see this as a direct challenge to the power and privilege (even if limited) which they enjoy.

Other challenges

Other barriers to men’s and boys’ involvement include:⁹¹

- lack of opportunities for them to engage in open discussion about gender roles, their fears and expectations;
 - fear of being derided and ridiculed by other men and boys;
 - lack of opportunities to report on how they can support change, including by addressing SGBV;
 - humanitarian actors’ failure to engage men and boys on these issues; and
 - women’s and girls’ lack of understanding of the strategic importance of male engagement.
-

Continued on next page

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ UNHCR film, “Living within the Limit”.

⁸⁹ Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, “Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality, A Resource Packet”, September 2005, p. 16.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 13.

2.6 Working with men and boys, continued

“The question is not ‘Can men change?’, but ‘How do we promote change?’”

Dean Peacock, Sonke Gender Justice Network, UNHCR workshop, Geneva, December 2006⁹²

Promoting change Engaging men and boys in the process of achieving gender equality requires us to raise awareness about the positive effects that gender equality can have for them. It also involves reinforcing masculine roles, norms and behaviours that are positive and non-violent.⁹³ This must be done in a way that appeals to men and boys, enables them to empathize with women and girls, builds on their skills and capacities, and empowers them. It is also critical to reach out to boys and young men.

Approach to adopt In our work with men and boys we should adopt the following approaches:

- understand male gender roles and identities in the society and context in which we are operating and the impact of forced displacement on those roles and identities;
 - develop programmes and projects that appeal to men;
 - emphasize the positive norms and values that are part of masculine identities in the cultures and communities concerned;
 - develop programmes that involve men and women working together and that build on men’s skills and capacities to help redress the disempowerment felt by men as a result of displacement, and mitigate male resentment over an apparent focus on women, while bringing about positive change for women and girls;
 - involve respected male community leaders in promoting gender equality and eliminating violence against women and girls, and
 - engage boys of all ages, particularly adolescents, in efforts to promote gender equality and the rights of women and girls.
-

Suggested approaches

As outlined in greater detail below, some suggested approaches for engaging men and boys include:

- reaching out to boys and young men early;
 - helping men and boys realize the advantages of gender equality through their own displacement experiences; and
 - finding different entry points for discussion.
-

**Approach:
Reach out to boys
and young men**

Reaching out to boys and young men early is critical in our work to achieve gender equality and eliminate violence against women and girls.⁹⁴

It can be useful to identify boys and young men exhibiting positive male roles, whether during workshops or in public life, and encourage them to act as role models for their peers. Boys who grow up around positive male role

Continued on next page

⁹² Sonke Gender Justice (SGJ) strives to create a Southern African region in which men, women, youth and children can enjoy equitable, healthy, and happy relationships that contribute to the development of a just and democratic society. To achieve this, it works to build the capacity of government, civil society organizations and citizens to achieve gender equality, prevent gender-based violence and reduce the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS. See <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/>.

⁹³ Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, “Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality, A Resource Packet”, September 2005, pp. 8, 11.

⁹⁴ See, for instance, the “Learning Circle” encouraging young internally displaced Colombians to re-enter education, UNHCR, “Clinton Global Initiative: From Angry Young Man to Model Student”, 20 September 2007, at <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/46f2695f4.html>.

2.6 Working with men and boys, continued

Reach out to boys and young men (continued)

models are more likely to question gender inequalities and harmful stereotypes and are less likely to become perpetrators of SGBV.

Young males aged between 15 and 24 generally exhibit the riskiest behaviours related to HIV transmission, including having intercourse with multiple partners.⁹⁵ So it is essential to engage boys and young men at an early age if this issue is to be tackled.

Approach: The advantages of gender equality

The experience of displacement can provide an opportunity for men to realize the advantages and benefits gender equality may hold for them. It may result in a better understanding of, and empathy for, women's and girls' experience of violence and discrimination.

For instance, at a workshop for men on gender equality held by UNHCR, "several participants were able to link the empowerment and vulnerability which they themselves felt as refugees to the existing rights disequilibrium between men and women in the household. Establishing this link enabled many of the participants to empathize with the position of many women and view domestic violence in a different way. Subsequent discussions highlighted how domestic violence negatively affects children, the survivor, the perpetrator, and the community."⁹⁶

In addition, during displacement, some men share household responsibilities more equitably with their wives, thereby recognizing, for instance, the benefits of closer contact with their children. Others support their wives' employment outside the home, recognizing the benefits for the family as a whole.

"... Innovative projects have reached out to men in bars and brothels, in barbershops and truck stops, at sports fields and youth centres, in military barracks and police academies, in mosques and churches, and in classrooms and clinics. ... They have addressed men in their roles as sons, fathers, husbands, sexual partners, elders, educators, health providers, journalists, policy makers. They have used comic strips and rap music, internet sites and hotlines, peer educators and group counselors, games and theatre productions, radio and talk shows."⁹⁷

Approach: Entry points for discussion

Men and/or boys may provide an entry point for discussions on certain types of rights violations against women and girls which the latter may not be willing to discuss because they have internalized a perception of their own inequality. (See field example relating to Sierra Leone below.)

More generally, where men and boys have a family member or close friend, such as a sister or classmate, who has suffered domestic violence or been attacked, awareness of and empathy regarding this experience can provide an opening to understanding the wider problem and make the man or boy concerned an ally in raising awareness among his peers.

Continued on next page

⁹⁵ UNFPA, *State of the World's Population, 2005*, Chapter 6, www.unfpa.org.

⁹⁶ UNHCR, "Training and Mobilization of Men's Groups for Gender Equality and the Prevention of SGBV-Final Report", 25 April 2004.

⁹⁷ UNFPA, *State of the World's Population, 2005*, chapter 6, www.unfpa.org.

2.6 Working with men and boys, Continued

Entry points for discussion (continued)

Often discussions with men focus on negative behaviour and SGBV. Alternative positive entry points include themes such as fatherhood, the benefits of close relations with children or of being married, their expectations, and what makes a good relationship.

How to respond

In order to engage men and boys more effectively, UNHCR, together with local, national and international partners, should carry out the following actions:⁹⁸

Response	Actions
Coordinate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network with human rights and women's rights organizations and with men's groups and invite them to work with UNHCR to address gender-based violence against women and children of concern and to implement programmes involving their male counterparts. • Work with partners and the authorities to devise and promote educational materials for men and boys and for women and girls on gender, reproductive health issues, and on the unacceptability of violence and abuse. • Share and analyse good practices of working with boys and men to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence and abuse.
Assess, analyse and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a rights-and community-based approach to tackling violence and include power and gender analysis in the design of programmes. • Identify role models – men or boys who already behave in ways in which we want more men and boys to behave – and persuade them to take part in programmes addressing violence and abuse. • Ensure a gender perspective in protection strategy and programme design by analysing the situation of women, men, girls and boys and the impact of measures on each.
Intervene to protect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that boys and occasionally men can also be victims of SGBV, that they may fear great stigma if this were to be found out. Work with these men and boys not only to provide support and bring cases to justice but also to use this experience to raise awareness of how unequal power relations in a community can affect all members of a community, whether male or female, young or old.
Strengthen national capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby governments to persuade them to draft and implement laws against sexual and gender-based violence and provide support in doing so. • Raise awareness about gender issues among professionals (e.g. health workers and teachers) and support their inclusion in school curricula. • Stress the benefits to society of men, especially fathers, playing a more active role in nurturing their children and abandoning a culture of violence as a proof of masculinity.
Strengthen community capacity to support solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with groups of men and boys in the displaced/returnee community to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – determine and understand how they are socialized, – identify men and boys who question resulting rigid and discriminatory gender socialization, and – train them in critical thinking skills to help people question inequitable views and practices.⁹⁹

Continued on next page

⁹⁸ Many of these suggestions have been adapted from Child Rights Information Network, CRIN Newsletter, No. 19, May 2006.

⁹⁹ Gary Barker, "Engaging Boys and Men to Empower Girls: Reflections from Practice and Evidence of Impact", expert paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence Against the Girl Child, organized by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with UNICEF, Florence, Italy, September 2006, EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.3, at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/ExpertPapers/EP_3%20%20%20Barker.pdf.

2.6 Working with men and boys, continued

How to respond (continued)

Response	Actions
Strengthen community capacity to support solutions, contd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify with them ways to question narrow definitions and perceptions of gender roles and relations, including the concept of masculinity, showing how this can encompass concepts such as engaged parenting, supportive roles vis-à-vis family members, authority based on listening and taking account of others, sharing of domestic tasks. • Support street theatre, radio programmes and other “edutainment” to raise the awareness of the “man in the street” about how male roles are formed and establish positive male roles and behaviours. • Call on and organize boys and men to protest against violence and abuse and to take initiatives promoting more equal gender roles and relationships. • Promote programmes on parenting and responsible sexual behaviour for men and adolescent boys. • Create focus groups, for instance, of married men, to raise awareness of issues such as domestic violence and agree on approaches to tackle them.
Monitor, report and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with the community how monitoring will take place. • Reconvene groups of men and boys six months after awareness raising initiatives have been undertaken to see how participants may have changed their attitudes and behaviours and how the situation may have changed in the community more widely. Ask them what their concerns and priorities now are. • Hold focus group discussions with women and girls to monitor and evaluate changes in male attitudes and behaviour. • Report back to governments on their progress in reforming legislation against SGBV and implementing it and work with them to enhance this.

Field practice: Namibia

In the Osire refugee camp in Namibia, the Jesuit Refugee Service team found an inventive way of not only promoting girls’ education, but also reducing violence against them.

A girls’ club was established in 2002 with the aim of keeping girls in school. Soon afterwards, male teachers suggested that boys should be educated in non-violent behaviour and respect towards women.

The teachers felt that by raising awareness on issues such as teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, violence, and conflict-resolution, the programme would help to change the patterns of life in the camp.

Ten mentors were identified and the expanded club opened in 2003. Some 2,700 young males and females, aged between 10 and 20 years, are now members of the club.

Continued on next page

2.6 Working with men and boys, continued

**Field practice:
Sierra Leone**

UNHCR in Sierra Leone worked with men's groups to promote gender equality and prevent SGBV. The project used talking drums and dramatizations to raise awareness and encouraged men to engage with women with the aim of empowering women. Men taught women how to read and were involved in seed and tool distribution for agricultural projects through which half the harvest was donated to families with specific needs. Community leaders acted as peer counsellors on questions concerning domestic violence. On the issue of harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, UNHCR and its partners were not able to engage women's groups, because of the women's strongly held beliefs. It was men who appeared more open and willing to discuss and confront this issue.

**Field practice:
Egypt**

In 2005, UNHCR Cairo and Musa'adeen (Refugees Helping Refugees) held a series of sessions with refugees and others of concern to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Building on this work in 2006, a number of participants decided to work together on key SGBV problems in their communities, as part of a working group on involving men in sexual and reproductive health.

The group comprised refugee and migrant men from countries including Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan who were ready to take up the challenge of working as agents of change in their communities and as men standing against violence. Many had been appalled at seeing their mothers badly beaten and wanted to treat their own wives and families differently.

At some 10 sessions in 2006, the men brainstormed on different types of violence in their communities, including domestic violence, forced marriage and son preference. Using resource materials provided by UNHCR, the Inter-Agency Gender Working Group and others, they asked themselves why men behave the way they do. This allowed them to identify the root causes, gender assumptions, and attitudes behind such behaviour. These came from prevailing cultural attitudes, which said a man was a wimp if he did not control his wife and family by force. They were also linked to the problems of exile, such as alcoholism, sexual exploitation abuse of women and girls by peacekeeping forces, and their own experience of discrimination.

This process of "deconstructing" social norms and "unlearning masculinity" allowed them to work together to identify healthier gender roles, including as derived from the teachings of different religions. This provided a basis for a different approach: masculinity can also be a power for care, support and constructive companionship with women as fellow human beings on the basis of equality, dignity and respect. The process of working together enabled each member of the group to strengthen his resolve to speak out against such practices in his own community.

One participant said, "Gender-based violence has long been a hidden problem in my community, but I do not want it to be hidden any more and want to work against it." Another stated: "Masculinity in my community represses women's and girls' expression of their rights and their involvement in making and taking decisions." A third recalled: "When I was a young boy, I remember that I used to stand up to my father when he used to beat my mother. I want to stand today against all men who beat their wives."

Continued on next page

2.6 Working with men and boys, Continued

Field practice:
Chad

In one refugee camp in Chad, the elder (local administrator) speaking at celebrations on International Women's Day was dismayed to find that the men had left all the preparations and family responsibilities to the women, who served the men during the celebration. He said that International Women's Day was a day for men to think about the difficulties women encounter, to thank them for their hard work, and to respect and support them.

The next day at similar celebrations in a neighbouring camp, he discovered that his words had not been wasted. The men had organized the celebration and the women sat in the front instead of the back as before. The men served the women drinks and performed sketches supporting women and gender equality.



Chad / An internally displaced girl and her siblings seek shelter beneath a tree / She is one of several thousand people on the outskirts of Goz Beida, southeastern Chad, who have sought safety from inter-communal fighting / Living in such conditions often exposes women and girls to multiple protection risks / UNHCR / H. Caux / November 2006



Colombia / The mother of an internally displaced family talks to a UNHCR protection officer in Los Altos de la Florida, near the capital Bogotá / Living conditions for the internally displaced in the shanty town are often very poor and if they cannot secure registration with the authorities they are unable to access essential services / UNHCR / B. Heger / January 2006