UNHCR STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONERS’S PROGRAMME (51ST MEETING)

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Gender Audit

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Contents

Background ................................................................................................................. 3
Methodology ............................................................................................................... 3
Key findings and themes .............................................................................................. 5

Non-Gender Specific Agenda Items ................................................................. 6

Agenda Item 3 – International Protection .......................................................... 6
3a – Note on International Protection ................................................................. 7
3b – Note on Statelessness .................................................................................... 8

Agenda Item 4 – Programme/Protection Policy ............................................... 11
4b – HIV/AIDS and Refugees ........................................................................... 11
4d - Staff Safety and Security Issues, including refugee security ................. 11
4e – The role of Host Countries: The Cost and Impact of Hosting ............... 12
4f – UNHCR’s Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons affected by Natural Disasters ...................................................... 12

Agenda Item 5 – Regional Activities and Global Programmes ................. 13
Technical Integrity of UNHCR Programmes ......................................................... 13

Item 6 – Management, Financial Control, Administrative Oversight and Human Resources ........................................................................................................... 13
6a – Update on the Introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards .......................................................................................................................... 13
6b – Funding of End-of –Service and Post-Retirement Benefits ................. 14
6c – Establishment of an Independent Audit and Oversight Committee .......... 14

Agenda Item 7 – Programme Budgets and Funding .................................... 14
7a – Update on Budgets and Funding in 2010 and 2011 ............................... 14
7b – Global Report on Activities in 2011 ........................................................... 14

Gender Specific Agenda Items ......................................................................... 15
Agenda Item 4 – Programme/Protection Policy ............................................... 15
4a – Protecting Refugee Women: Promoting Gender Equality & .............. 15
4c – Community Services: Towards a Community Development .............. 15

Non-Gender Specific Side Meetings ................................................................. 20
Count Me In! Birth Registration – A Protection Tool for Children ............. 20
Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: The 10-Point Plan in Action – Official Launch ......................................................................................................................... 21

Gender Specific Side Meetings ..................................................................... 21
Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming: The State of Play in 2010–2011 .... 21
Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Regional Dialogues with Women and Girls .... 23

Appendix A – Gender Tally Chart ................................................................. 26
Appendix B – Definition of indicators ............................................................. 27
Appendix C – Acronyms ..................................................................................... 28
Background

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Agenda for Protection, Conclusion on Women and Girls at Risk (No. 105 (LVII) – 2006), and the Guidelines on Gender-Related Persecution are among many examples of documents which highlight the importance of considering gender as a crosscutting issue in protection of displaced persons. Through UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) initiative, the organisation has sought to consider and incorporate the gender and diversity related elements of refugee protection across the range of its programming and functions. There are a number of guidelines on the inclusion of gender in all aspects of programs that are available to states and UNHCR offices. While recognising that the organisation has some way to go before gender and diversity considerations will be institutionalised within its culture and programming, UNHCR claims that gender issues have been significantly mainstreamed. This Gender Audit provides both qualitative and quantitative assessments of the manner in which gender issues were addressed by UNHCR and states at UNHCR’s Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme (51st Meeting) 21-23 June 2011 in Geneva.

In this report, the term ‘gender’ is defined as including all refugee groups who face discrimination based on their gender, or based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. A particular emphasis has been placed on the risks faced by women and girls. Groups who face discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation are collectively referred to as LGBTIs and are identified in the report as vulnerable people who require specific considerations and who have unique protection needs.

For more information, context or background on the meetings this report covers, please consult the full report of the 51st UNHCR Standing Committee and Annual NGO Consultations produced by the Australian Refugee Rights Alliance (ARRA).

Methodology

Each agenda item at the 2011 Standing Committee, held in Geneva from 21-23 June 2011, was documented and a quantitative tally was taken of any mention of a gender-related issue. See Appendix A for the 2011 Standing Committee Agenda Item Schedule.

The documentation of each of the meetings’ agenda items was important in order to assess the progress of ‘gender mainstreaming’ by States and UNHCR. The context of the discussion was noted, including the level of detail given by both speakers and participants in each session. This report provides analysis on whether gender was mentioned cursorily, or if detailed observations or concrete suggestions were made. It was noted whether the discussion involved UNHCR staff, states or both.

Agenda items specifically gender focused were excluded from the quantitative gender audit in order to allow for a more accurate analysis of the level that gender related issues were discussed and consequently the progress of “gender mainstreaming”. The quantitative gender audit tally also includes gender issues mentioned within side meetings.
The documenters assessed the treatment of gender issues at the Standing Committee Meeting using the following as “gender mainstreaming” indicators. The indicators are defined in Appendix B of this report.

1. Accountability (monitoring and accountability)
2. AGDM Framework (AGDM)
3. Education for girls (Education)
4. Gender disaggregated data and UNHCR’s data software, Focus and proGres (GDD)
5. Handbook on Women and Girls (Handbook)
6. Heightened Risk Identification Tool (HRIT)
7. LGBTI
8. Livelihoods for women (Livelihoods)
9. Sanitary Materials (Sanitary)
10. SGBV
11. Survival Sex
12. Women and Girls

Recommendations

Some recommendations were developed during the gender audit, based on findings from the Centre for Refugee Research (CRR) and UNHCR Regional Women’s Dialogues (Women’s Dialogues) Report, in order to improve scope, accuracy and maintain consistency for future gender audits.

• It is recommended that the gender audit “gender mainstreaming” indicators be aligned with the findings of the ten core international protection areas for women and girls proposed by UNHCR as documented in the Regional Dialogue’s Report. These are:
  1. Individual Documentation
  2. Women’s Representation in Leadership
  3. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)
  4. Shelter
  5. Sanitary Materials
  6. Health Issues
  7. Legal Remedies
  8. Education
  9. Economic Self-Reliance
  10. General Violence

• It is also recommended that LGBTI as a very important women and girls international protection issue be included as an additional indicator.

• However, it remains important that the international protection for women and girls tools continues to be included within the quantitative gender audit tally, in order to gauge the use and engagement of these tools by UNHCR and States. This would mean the use of the above indicators as well as tool indicators, including:
  1. Accountability (monitoring and accountability)
  2. AGDM Framework (AGDM)
  3. Gender disaggregated data and UNHCR’s data software, Focus and proGres (GDD)
Key findings and themes

This year’s meeting had a stronger focus on the protection of refugee women and girls than past meetings, due to the Regional Women’s Dialogues conducted with refugee women as part of the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention. UNHCR and NGOs acknowledged that many of the protection issues identified in the Women’s Dialogues have been ongoing issues for women and girls in previous years, such as SGBV and a lack of provision of sanitary materials. The Women’s Dialogues were well received and supported by UNHCR, States and NGOs, however there was little discussion on concrete responses to addressing these issues.

The need to improve consistent use and implementation of the AGDM and participatory assessments in all UNHCR processes and programmes, to ensure the identification and support of vulnerable persons, including at risk women and girls, was a consistent theme throughout the Standing Committee meeting and side meetings. UNHCR, States and NGOs all reiterated the need to utilise the AGDM to ensure interagency accountability to promote equality and participation in addressing protection issues. UNHCR, States and NGOs reinforced the need to ensure ongoing participation of refugee women and girls in developing and implementing protection policies and programmes to support and protect displaced women and girls. UNHCR, States and NGOs further acknowledged the need to include the participation of men and boys in this process.

SGBV was a recurring theme throughout the Standing Committee meeting and side meetings as a prevalent refugee women and girls protection issue. UNHCR, NGOs and States supported the focus on SGBV and the programmes and policies implemented by UNHCR to address this issue. In the 48th session under ‘regional activities and global programmes’ UNHCR made the commitment to developing programmes and policies in order to prevent, report and investigate instances of SGBV within refugee communities. It can be seen in the current session the ongoing commitment of UNHCR to address this issue through the continued acknowledgement and discussion of SGBV within refugee communities and through the development of the global SGBV strategy. Although there was much discussion and support for SGBV initiatives, the discussion revolved around response and support programmes for SGBV victims rather than prevention of SGBV. As UNHCR acknowledged that SGBV is a cross-cutting theme of all the ten core protection issues, particularly as a result of the Women’s Dialogues, this suggests that policies and programmes need to address all of these protection issues in ensuring the prevention of SGBV.

Another theme in the meetings relating to women and girls at risk was the discussion and acknowledgement by UNHCR, NGOs and States of the discrimination of women through nationality laws. UNHCR and States linked the lack of nationality for women to statelessness and the lack of ability to pass nationality onto children. There was some support by States with UNHCR’s encouragement to ensure national laws are in line with international laws related to gender and nationality.

The Gender Audit found improvement of the mainstreaming of gender related issues within the Standing Committee meeting compared to previous Gender Audits, however
it can be seen, particularly in the tally that not all gender related issues received the necessary attention. The involvement and support for the Women’s Dialogues and the inclusion of gender specific Agenda Items however indicate the ongoing commitment of UNHCR to address and include gender related protection issues.

Non-Gender Specific Agenda Items

As would be expected there was no mention of gender related issues within the opening address and administration related agenda items 1. Adoption of the Agenda and 2. Adoption of the draft report of the fiftieth meeting of the Standing Committee.

Agenda Item 3 – International Protection

Discussion of Gender Issues - Opening Statement - UNHCR

During the opening statement of Agenda item 3 on International Protection, Assistant High Commissioner (Protection), Erika Feller, brought attention to a recurrent theme arising from several recent international missions of the ongoing vulnerability and need to promote the protection of women and children and the increasing trends in SGBV. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that these missions had illustrated clearly that SGBV was continuing to be an endemic problem, which she states became particularly apparent during the Regional Dialogues for refugee women. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) acknowledged that there is a disturbing pattern of the repeated and endemic violence and rape against girls and boys in all UNHCR operations and an ongoing presence of SGBV in their daily lives. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that there were repeated reports that indicated girls were being forced to pay for grades in schools with sex, and that forced early marriages, survival sex and teenage pregnancies were increasing. Furthermore, the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that there is an increasing trend of pregnancy as a chosen means to get out of detention, as pregnant girls are given a special dispensation. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that UNHCR was in constant discussion with authorities regarding these issues however without making much impact and advised States that sober consideration by all is required.

In response to these concerns the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) reported that many missions were conducted to review the physical and mental health and support available to women and children in several camps. These missions found that supports were inadequate and legal remedies were unavailable and ineffective which meant that incidents of SGBV went largely unpunished. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that UNHCR in a renewed effort to address these issues held an SGBV workshop with representatives from ten key operations around the world. This workshop produced an SGBV Global Strategy that UNHCR will be issuing imminently. Key features of this strategy include multi-year planning on the full understanding that change is an incremental process requiring a focus on key objectives with coherence and continuity. A number of other issues identified to address SGBV were multi sectoral strategies, partnerships, more intensive coaching and training with field officers and participatory processes to be focused on SGBV to enhance understanding and response. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that interagency accountability remains a key issue in addressing SGBV; and can be
progressed through utilising the AGDM framework. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that SGBV is the most recurrent objective in UNHCR operations and therefore it has a high budget allocation and there are aims to have at least one of every six implementing partners conducting enhanced SGBV activities.

3a – Note on International Protection

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background Document
The background document “Note on International Protection” for Agenda item 3a made several references to women and girls in relation to international protection issues.

The document noted that gender-related persecution has been accepted as falling within the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol’s definition of a “refugee” and discussed the advancements of this interpretation. The note acknowledges that SGBV continues to occur at an alarming rate to refugee women and girls, particularly within longstanding unresolved conflicts as the rules of engagement are rarely clear. The note further explores the difficulties in preventing SGBV and the current projects and programmes UNHCR are involved in to address the issue. There is mention of UNHCR’s efforts to support family reunification ensuring the inclusion of common-law and same-sex partnerships. The note reaffirms the importance of utilising the AGDM in all UNHCR’s processes to ensure all persons of concern, including women and girls, are able to participate in all aspects of programme development and to ensure improved protection of these groups. The note further reaffirms the importance of ‘a high-level accountability framework’ related to AGDM in order to ensure minimum standards of practice. The note states that women and girls at risk made up 9% of all resettlement submissions, which is higher than the last five years.

For further information please see the “Note on International Protection”.

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR
In the opening statement on the Note on International Protection, the Director of International Protection, Volker Turk, acknowledged the use of the 60th anniversary of the Convention to launch the Women’s Dialogues for refugee women. The Director of International Protection stated that the outcome of these dialogues emphasised the need to focus more on diversity and encouraged states, as an integral part of the AGDM policy, to embrace and celebrate diversity in their approach to refugee challenges. The Director of International Protection stressed the importance of utilising the AGDM in identifying vulnerable persons and acknowledged that a 2010 evaluation of the AGDM indicates that much remains to be done. The Director of International Protection further expressed the hope that the results of the Women’s Dialogues would inform the pledging process.

The Director of International Protection, within the theme of legal systems issues, discussed the importance of building legal systems that reflect the convention, however noted there are discrete legal issues, including those related to women and SGBV which would be considered in separate agenda items.
Discussion of Gender Issues – States

Germany, the USA and the UK expressed their support of AGDM strategies throughout all UNHCR policies, projects and programmes.

Germany, USA, Canada, Zambia, UK, France, Netherlands and Lebanon reinforced their support of UNHCR’s focus on SGBV strategies and programmes.

Ghana, on behalf of the Africa group acknowledged the effect of SGBV on the human dignity of refugees and supported the need to include SGBV in rules of engagement.

Germany reinforced the importance of the empowerment and education of women and girls and feels UNHCR is making all efforts to address women and girls at risk.

The USA noted that the protection of women and girls has been an ongoing priority for the State. The USA highlighted the need to increase UNHCR protection staff in operations, particularly in West Africa and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Norway expressed its concerns of conditions for women and children, particularly with regard to those women and children that have been separated.

Canada urged UNHCR to continue SGBV strategies and protection of women and girls at heightened risk by making broader management intersect with protection mechanisms, particularly in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Chad. Canada further recommended UNHCR to focus on SGBV prevention and stated that SGBV measures are consistent with their national guidelines.

Zambia voiced their privilege at being part of the Women’s Dialogues and stated it increased awareness among refugees, law enforcement, teachers and other officials.

The UK acknowledged that SGBV remains a serious threat to refugees and other internally displaced persons and described the development of the national strategy to address women at risk and violence against women nationally and internationally. The UK further reinforced the need for internal accountability of AGDM.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs

ICVA commended UNHCR’s focus on SGBV strategies, however voiced concern that UNHCR is not dedicating sufficient resources at the field level and in order to address policy changes, particularly with regard to SGBV and AGDM. ICVA further commended UNHCR on increasing protection for LGBTI refugees and encouraged UNHCR to implement appropriate training for field staff.

3b – Note on Statelessness

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background Document

The background document ‘Note on Statelessness’ made some reference to women and girls. The note states that a trend has developed among party states and non-party states to incorporate international law into national law, with regards to such issues as equality between men and women with the ability to pass nationality onto children. However the note further identifies 30 States that continue to implement discriminatory laws against women in this regard. The note also stated that a joint
The seminar was held in 2009 with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in order to discuss the committee’s recommendations on prevention of statelessness and forced displacement.

For more information please see the ‘Note on Statelessness.’

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR
The Director noted that the UNHCR is confident that several states will soon enhance national legislation with regard to changing nationality to improve protection for children and consideration from a gender perspective. The Director further expressed his optimism that the Ministerial-Level meeting will be used by States to consider making pledges with relation to Statelessness, including from a child protection and gender perspective.

In the summary the Director of International Protection acknowledged that there are a number of countries that have eliminated gender discrimination with relation to nationality issues, including Egypt and Tunisia. The Director of International Protection also welcomed the USA’s concerns on child protection and gender discrimination. The Director of International Protection further stated that UNHCR has done an analysis of States’ domestic laws from a gender perspective and are in consultation with a number of governments regarding how close each State’s national legislation is to accession with the convention in terms of eliminating gender discrimination.

Discussion of Gender Issues – States
The USA voiced their concern about the impact of Statelessness on children and women and acknowledged the need to identify by age and gender diversity for an accurate understanding of who is being affected and of what is occurring. The USA argued that a key factor in relation to gender inequality is the inability of women to gain nationality and therefore pass it on to their children and reported that there are 30 countries globally which currently limit women’s ability to find nationality and give it to their children. The USA further commended States that have changed this practice and argue that birth registration is the key to solving this challenge.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs
No Mention.

Analysis
There was a stronger focus of women and girls at risk within the International Protection agenda item this year compared to other years due to the launch of the Women’s Dialogues

Although the seriousness and need to address SGBV within the International Protection Agenda item was discussed by UNHCR in the 45th (2009) and 48th (2010) Standing Committee meeting, this year there was more discussion by UNHCR around the developments and projects that have been implemented to address this issue. Many States, developed and developing, this year acknowledged the need to address SGBV issues with women and girls at risk and were very supportive of the projects and programmes being implemented by UNHCR. This differs significantly according to Gender Audit reports from the 45th session and the 48th session where the only States
to mention concerns regarding SGBV within this agenda item were Estonia and New Zealand respectively.

UNHCR and some states emphasised the need to improve the implementation of the AGDM framework and internal accountability of the AGDM within all UNHCR’s processes and by all States to ensure accountability to vulnerable persons, including women and girls, and to address issues, such as SGBV. UNHCR has consistently supported and encouraged the need to implement the AGDM framework throughout the 45th and 48th Sessions. There were few states that discussed the AGDM framework in the 45th Session. Interestingly the USA both in the 45th Session and current Session has shown its strong support for the implementation of AGDM, not however in the 48th Session. The 48th Session indicates much support by many states to implement the AGDM framework. Noteworthy, is that in all three Sessions the States that have shown their support for the AGDM framework are all developed States. There was no mention of ICVA mentioning the AGDM framework in the 45th Session, however in the 48th Session ICVA showed their support for the continued use of the AGDM. In the current session ICVA showed its support for the AGDM by indicating its concern for the lack of resources dedicated to ensure implementation.

UNHCR in the background document for ‘Note on International Protection’ discussed the need to address sexual oppression and discrimination and explored their efforts to support same-sex couples,. In this current session ICVA showed its support for increasing protection of LGBTIs, however no states mentioned the issue of protection of LGBTIs. In the 48th Session UNHCR, ICVA and two States, Ireland and USA acknowledged the need to address protection issues of LGBTIs, however there was limited discussion about implementation of protection policies for LGBTIs. It is interesting that protection gaps for LGBTI’s were identified in the 48th Session and there was little discussion in the current Session of how to address these gaps. There was no mention in the 45th Session of protection issues for LGBTIs at all.

The ‘Note on Statelessness’ and the UNHCR did address the issue of gender related discrimination with regard to nationality and the need for States to align national laws with international laws from a gender perspective. The USA was the only State to address this issue and women’s lack of ability to pass on nationality to children. ICVA did not mention the issue of gender discrimination within nationality, although they did address concerns around child statelessness there was a lack of discussion about the impact of the lack of nationality by the mother with regard to child statelessness. There were very few states that commented on the ‘Note on Statelessness’ let alone the gender perspective to statelessness. In the 48th Session no States made mention of this issue, however UNHCR acknowledged discrimination in national policies making it difficult for women to pass nationality to children and encouraged States to change these policies. There was no mention in the 45th Session of protection issues related to gender and nationality.
Agenda Item 4 – Programme/Protection Policy

4b – HIV/AIDS and Refugees

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background Document
In the HIV/AIDS and Refugees background document references to women and girls are mentioned in terms of UNHCR partnership programmes and projects. The document mentions HIV prevention and mother-to-child programmes that have improved access for vulnerable populations, the cross-border partnership programmes to address HIV/AIDS and SGBV that UNHCR does with the World Bank and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in support of reproductive health and HIV through programmes addressing survivors of SGBV.

For further information please see HIV/AIDS and Refugees Background document.

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR
The Director of Program Support and Management Division gave the opening statement and acknowledged that SGBV multiplies the risk of HIV transmission. The Director further stated that HIV was a curse as it impacts on the reproductive health of women.

During the presentation of the ‘One Campaign’ by Melissa Fleming it was noted that there have been noticeable improvements in prevention in Mother to Child Transmissions in Djibouti and Chad.

Discussion of Gender Issues – States
Ghana on behalf of the Africa group supported UNHCR in services to reduce mother to child transfer.

Belgium acknowledged the need to address the stressors of SGBV and welcomed the increase in protection staff to support SGBV initiatives.

The USA and Ireland stated they were pleased with improvements in this area, particularly for mother to child transmissions. Ireland further congratulated UNHCR on achieving 75% in access to mother-to-child transmission prevention programmes.

The Netherlands encouraged UNHCR to extend its focus to the rights dimensions of sexual and reproductive health, particularly of vulnerable groups including women, children and gay and lesbians.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs
No Mention

4d - Staff Safety and Security Issues, including refugee security
No Mention in the background document or by UNHCR, States or NGOs.
4e – The role of Host Countries: The Cost and Impact of Hosting

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background Document
The background documents for ‘The Role of Host Countries: The Cost and Impact of Hosting Refugees’ makes no mention of women and girls issues.

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR
No mention.

Discussion of Gender Issues – States
Pakistan in response to burden sharing stated that there could have been more in the conference paper 18 about burden sharing for gender equality, child protection and disability.

Sri Lanka noted their commitment to protecting all citizens including women and girls.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs
No Mention

4f – UNHCR’s Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons affected by Natural Disasters

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background Document
The background document for ‘UNHCR’s Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons Affected by Natural Disasters’ mentions some gender issues related to humanitarian response. The document notes that a failure to address issues of livelihood for women in a humanitarian response can lead to sexual exploitation, abuse and school drop-outs. The document acknowledges the protection risks in natural disasters including SGBV and the need to target vulnerable groups, including women and girls, and the need to utilise AGDM. The document also notes UNHCR’s contribution in humanitarian response in areas such as AGDM and partnerships with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to work with survivors of SGBV.

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR
The Director of International Protection agreed with ICVA in relation to UNHCR’s expertise to address issues that arise, such as SGBV.

Discussion of Gender Issues – States
No Mention

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNICEF
UNICEF stated that it is an active protection cluster member and co-lead the response to gender based violence in natural disaster situations.
Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs
ICVA in their support for UNHCR to take lead role in response to the protection of persons affected by natural disasters stated that UNHCR already has the skills to address protection needs of affected populations, including programming for prevention of SGBV and AGDM approaches.

Analysis
There were a limited number of mentions of women and girls at risk issues within Agenda 4 items.

The Background Document, UNHCR and many States acknowledged women and girls at risk particularly through the links between HIV/AIDS and SGBV and reproductive health within Agenda Item 4b ‘HIV/AIDS and Refugees.’ This is significant when considering there was no mention of HIV/AIDS, let alone in relation to women and girls at risk within the 45th and 48th Session.

The Background Document and UNHCR made several references to women and girls at risk particularly related to SGBV and the need to utilise the AGDM within Agenda Item 4f regarding UNHCR’s role in humanitarian response situations. ICVA further made reference to UNHCR having skills to deal best with SGBV and AGDM within humanitarian response situations. However, there was no mention or acknowledgement by any States regarding the particular vulnerability of women and girls in these situations.

Agenda Item 5 – Regional Activities and Global Programmes

Technical Integrity of UNHCR Programmes

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background Document
In the background document ‘Technical Integrity of UNHCR Programmes’ the only reference made to a gender related issue is the mention of the developing and updating of guidance tools for UNHCR staff on a range of issues, including gender equality within education.

No Mention by UNHCR, States or ICVA of gender related issues.

Item 6 – Management, Financial Control, Administrative Oversight and Human Resources

6a – Update on the Introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards
Gender Audit not documented.
6b – Funding of End-of –Service and Post-Retirement Benefits

Gender Audit not documented.

6c – Establishment of an Independent Audit and Oversight Committee

No Mention in the background document, by States or by ICVA.

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR

The UNHCR Senior Policy Analyst noted that an equitable approach to age, gender, ethnicity and geographic location would be utilised with the selection of the final committee members.

6d – Oral Update on UNHCR’s Structural and Management Change Process

Gender Audit not documented.

Agenda Item 7 – Programme Budgets and Funding

7a – Update on Budgets and Funding in 2010 and 2011

Gender Audit not documented.

7b – Global Report on Activities in 2011

Gender Audit not documented.
Gender Specific Agenda Items

Agenda Item 4 – Programme/Protection Policy

(Agenda items 4a and 4c where combined in the meeting).

4a – Protecting Refugee Women: Promoting Gender Equality

4c – Community Services: Towards a Community Development

Discussion of Gender Issues – Background

The Deputy Director of International Protection, Louise Aubin, introduced the ten refugee women representatives for more than 1000 refugee and IDP women from the Women’s Dialogues. The refugee women presented on international protection areas of concern for women, including individual documentation, SGBV, Sanitary Materials, Health, Education, Women in Leadership and Shelter.

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR

The Chairperson commented that these were all simple requests and yet there are still problems in fulfilling these requests.

The Deputy Director stated that the issues presented by the refugee women were all issues expressed by their communities. The Deputy Director advised states that the best opportunity to address and respond to these protection needs would be at the Ministerial Meeting in December 2011. The Deputy Director commended the Assistant High Commissioner’s strong emphasis on SGBV as this ensures that creating a safe environment is an important focus, precisely because of the horrifying reality of SGBV, which can increase in forced exile. The Deputy Director encouraged the need for women to be participants in the solutions to address protection needs and to ensure gender equality and that the use of the AGDM is essential in this process. The Deputy Director stated that one of UNHCR’s achievements in addressing SGBV included the release of a conference report on action to prevent and respond to SGBV which provides an updated strategy for action and identifies growing areas that need attention. The report is based on broad in-depth consultations and complements current strategies and provides further guidance for new and overlooked areas of SGBV. The report provides a better understanding as to how communities can contribute to prevent SGBV and how to engage men and boys.

The Deputy Director stated the main strategic intervention of women’s protection must focus on gender equality and that the community development approach supports this focus. The Deputy Director stated that the conference document related to community development as a durable solution, emphasising how an integrated approach, such as a community development approach, can best capitalise on the skills of refugees. The Deputy Director further identified that the Women’s Dialogues assisted in this integrated approach by providing an in depth understanding of refugee women’s communities and their economic, social and political reality. The Deputy Director
reiterated the need to develop participation and leadership roles of refugee women, particularly in urban settings. The Deputy Director acknowledged the refugee women representatives’ concern of the limited access to school for refugee girls and stated that in response UNHCR is supporting targeted education programs, increased and stabilised enrolment levels, promoting food incentives, waiving school fees and childcare services and scholarships to teens. The Deputy Director noted that there is a new released report on protection and platform for durable solutions, which explores access to education and provides an operational guidance note of education in urban areas.

Discussion of Gender Issues – States
Colombia stated that the refugee women representatives are an example of strength of the fight in Colombia and the world. Colombia stated that the issue of displacement continues in Colombia and noted that 24% of IDPs were women. Colombia stated that it has an advanced legal institutional framework to respond to displacement and SGBV, however acknowledged that much still needs to be done to put the framework into practice. Colombia further noted that on the 10th June 2011, the Colombian President sanctioned a law on restitution of land to victims, with provisions for restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation and special guarantees for those who suffer the most rights violations, including women, children, the elderly and disabled. This is a 10 year program and aims to reach 4 million displaced people.

Colombia further admitted that SGBV affects women in Colombia and stated it is unacceptable. Colombia stated that the Government is very interested in addressing this issue and in response has released a nation-wide handbook on a framework of supporting SGBV victims of armed conflict. Colombia hopes that this will increase complaints and inform better response and assistance to victims. Colombia acknowledged that they still have major problems under registration of SGBV, especially within conflict situations as there are no appropriate registration of complaints and as victims are fearful of re-victimisation by officials. Colombia stated that SGBV is not confined to refugees and IDPs and occurs in all spheres of society across the world.

Finland expressed their gratitude for the dialogues which they felt were very successful. Finland acknowledged that the refugee women not only presented the problems with current protection but also presented their gratitude to host states. Finland noted the media attention as a positive outcome in order to get refugee women’s voices heard. Finland stated that their representatives are waiting with interest for the Ministerial Meeting in December to hear if the ministers will hear the women’s messages.

Ghana on behalf of the African group commended UNHCR for the Women’s Dialogues presentation. Ghana acknowledged that the women’s stories had a humbling effect and recognised the need to do much more to alleviate suffering. Ghana recognised the need to focus on the five themes of protection of women noted in the background document. Ghana commended UNHCR’s commitment to women’s participation in decision making, which has encouraged greater participation in decision making in camp committees. However, Ghana argued the need for concrete actions targeted to specific protection needs, such as SGBV, which are founded on evidence based practice and international and regional human rights instruments. Ghana called on all states to engage with UNHCR and to commit to prevent and respond to SGBV for refugees and IDPs. Ghana noted there are new patterns of SGBV impacting not only women and girls but also men and boys. Ghana further expressed the hope that measures in the note
will be implemented. Ghana further requested more detail about the new policy based on a 3 year plan defining UNHCR as an AGD sensitive organisation. Ghana noted that SGBV is inextricably linked to gender inequality.

Estonia agreed that women and children are the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs and commended UNHCR on their efforts to address SGBV and looked forward to the new strategy being implemented. Estonia asked how cooperation and division of labour between UNHCR and UN Women relates to SGBV.

Canada acknowledged their support of UNHCR with regard to the protection of refugee women and welcomes the resolutions as providing coherence across the UN and promoting equality and security of women. Canada questioned why standard operating procedures regarding SGBV are not universally applied and stated they would welcome additional strategies to address SGBV. Canada further enquired about the human and financial resources dedicated to the implementation of SGBV policy and AGDM action plan.

The USA acknowledged that the dialogue feedback will impact on policy and programme development. The USA questioned how the recommendations would be followed up by UNHCR. The USA asked about a more specific strategy than the broad ‘Next Steps’ outlined in the paper, which includes targets and timelines. The USA advocated the need to integrate men and boys more in strategies. The USA stated references to men and boys in the paper are limited and should be included as victims, as community leaders, and consideration of the impact of men’s attitudes towards women and girls. The USA identified women in leadership and meaningful participation as important issues and expressed their disappointment that women only represent 40% of leadership positions in camps. The USA stated it regrets that only half of UNHCR operations provide sanitary materials and as one of the most basic of needs it should be of the utmost importance to UNHCR. The USA stated they are putting together a NAP, which aims to mainstream gender concerns in international and national policy.

Ireland welcomed the emphasis on women in participation and leadership, especially in urban settings. Ireland argued that meaningful participation depends on the quality and impact of participation not the quantity of women. Ireland further welcomed the focus on economic empowerment and noted the need to consider the burden of unpaid domestic work. Ireland acknowledged that childcare facilities are part of economic empowerment, particularly to ensure older girls are not taken out of schools to look after siblings. Ireland stated would welcome some examples of UNHCR cooperation with UN Women.

Japan thanked the refugee women representatives and advised they would take the recommendations and report back. Japan stressed the importance of capacity building and self-reliance to the resolution of protection needs in order to achieve sustainable development.

Bangladesh welcomed refugee women representatives and acknowledged and endorsed the 5 operational clusters, including SGBV. Bangladesh further expressed desire for more information on UNHCR’s gender interventions, referred to in the notes. Bangladesh noted that within the national context with regard to school enrolment there is gender parity for the local population, however stated it is sad this is not the case for the refugee population. Bangladesh stated that the government is willing to
ensure progress and is willing to work with UNHCR to redress the lack of secondary school enrolment in refugee populations.

The UK recommends a broad approach to address these issues and a balance between prevention and response. The UK acknowledged the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is an important tool for international coherence. The UK urged UNHCR to ensure all programs in this area incorporate impact evaluations. The UK welcomes data collection improvement and sex disaggregated data and the examining of impacts of interventions on women and girls. The UK acknowledged that there is limited information on what works in this area and therefore measuring results enables an opportunity to share experiences of methods and best practice. Particularly welcomes good examples of refugee women’s roles in participation and decision making.
France welcomed the refugee women representatives and argued the need to improve community services to strengthen women and girls participation.

Denmark questioned how the 2004 AGDM initiative is implemented in the field. Denmark also concurred with the UK’s encouragement of sex disaggregated data, to redress women’s disadvantage in the allocation of resources.

Zambia as a hosting state noted that the commitment through the dialogues allowed them to express their commitment to refugee women to develop strong policy on gender issues at the national level. Zambia identified a need to better link programs with UN agencies and states in order to identify gaps in women’s participation and gaps in documentation. Zambia suggested that national policies should extend rights of citizens to refugees.

The EU commended UNHCR and its long standing commitment to gender and gender related issues. The EU welcomed the ongoing development of policy and tools in the 5 focus areas outlined in the background document, particularly for SGBV as this is a pressing concern. The EU encouraged the cooperation between development actors to support gender informed humanitarian operations. The EU stated there is a stronger gender sensitive approach of EU policies and that EU’s asylum policy is aimed at substantive gender equality. The EU stated that asylum seeker accommodation facilities provide women effective opportunities to relate personal experiences privately to authorities and appropriate responses. The EU gave its full support to UNHCR in continuing to mainstream AGDM. The EU on community services stated that gender sensitivity in community services policies promotes overall effectiveness.

The Netherlands thanked the refugee women representatives for sharing and speaking out. The Netherlands reiterated the importance of women and girls in receiving special protection. The Netherlands further underlined the importance of reproductive health.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs

No Mention

Discussion of Gender Issues – UNHCR Summary

The Deputy Director acknowledged and underscored Columbia’s testimony. The Deputy Director stated that sexual violence is plaguing entire societies and that SGBV is not just a refugee and IDP issue but it is exacerbated by conflict. The Deputy Director stated that the engagement of men and boys as protectors and as survivors is part of
recognising the scope and magnitude of problems. The Deputy Director stated that there needs to be an emphasis on community development in view of gains in mainstreaming of AGD in protection.

The Deputy Director stated the link with men and boys is an area that we have not adequately developed. The Deputy Director stated with regard to the new SGBV strategy, that there are already some good practices, eg. Liberia, where boys and men were engaged in the role of camp protection. The Deputy Director argued that these best practices must be put forward and tapped into and the new SGBV strategy builds on these existing practices. The Deputy Director stated that the new SGBV strategy provides some guidance in this area, however noted that there is a whole chapter on ‘emerging’ areas, but more accurately, ‘overlooked areas’ of SGBV, ie. children, survival sex and working with men and boys. The Deputy Director further stated that education is a prominent feature of SGBV.

The Deputy Director acknowledged that the Women’s Dialogues have shown the appropriateness of ensuring women have a safe space to share experiences and engage in leadership training and that it has been touted as one of the best leadership trainings ever put forward. The Deputy Director stated that UNHCR will be replicating this participatory approach in other SGBV strategy approaches. The Deputy Director admitted that much still needs to be done, particularly in areas such as provision of sanitary materials. The Deputy Director acknowledged that operations have noted significant challenges in local sourcing, logistics, funding and proper consultation with women and girls about choices. The Deputy Director stated that the reviewing of results based reporting in terms of data is required by UNHCR in order to ensure room for disaggregated data, different indicators and measuring spaces for protection of women. The Deputy Director further stated that the AGDM policy reiterates a commitment to equality and diversity beyond the participatory approach and re-centres participation assessment as a cycle and shared decision making role for persons of concerns.

Analysis

This year’s protecting refugee women agenda item focused on the refugee women representatives presenting the findings of protection issues from the Women’s Dialogues.

UNHCR encouraged a strong focus within this agenda item on the issue of SGBV and on the importance to ensure community participation in developing and implementing strategies to address protection issues for women and girls. Many States shared this view of the importance of meaningful participation by communities to address protection issues and of the need to address the issue of SGBV. Many States, including several States involved in the dialogues, showed their support for the refugee women representatives and concern for the protection gaps identified, with particular concern regarding SGBV. Although most states identified their support for the need to address SGBV, some states questioned how the protection issues identified in the Women’s Dialogues will be addressed and how to implement the SGBV strategy and AGDM framework in the field, with regard to resources and partnerships.

Many states further acknowledged the need for sex disaggregated data in identifying impacts of strategies on women and girls to develop best practice models.
The fact that there is an agenda item on ‘Protecting Refugee Women’ in this session is already an acknowledgement and improvement for the need to address women and girls as particularly vulnerable on other years where this agenda item has not previously existed. In the 48th Session there was no similar agenda items related to women specifically and in the 45th Session there was a gender specific agenda item but only in relation to women and girls in displacement.

However, when comparing the 45th Session agenda item on ‘Report on international protection of women and girls in displacement’ to this current agenda item, similar concerns by UNHCR and States were identified. In the 45th Session similar protection concerns, including education, lack of access to livelihoods and lack of sanitary materials, and the need for a participatory approach with refugee women and girls, while incorporating men and boys, were identified as needing to be addressed.

Non-Gender Specific Side Meetings

Governments Join Hands to Resolve the Refugee Situation in the Western Balkans
Not Documented.

Count Me In! Birth Registration – A Protection Tool for Children
There were only a few mentions of gender related issues within the birth registration side-meeting, particularly related to the girl child.

Discussion of Gender Issues - UNRRC
Ms Agnes Aidoo, Rapporteur, United Nations Committee on Rights of Child, stated that children most at risk of becoming stateless and enduring serious human rights violations, include those born out of wedlock and girl children.

The Rapporteur further identified structural problems, such as gender discrimination, as barriers to birth registration.

Discussion of Gender Issues - UNHCR
In response to a discussion about the relationship between birth registration and statelessness, The Director of International Protection noted the gender dimensions, such as the registering of boys and not girls.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs & States
No Mention

Analysis
Although there was acknowledgement of some gender issues, such as the increased vulnerability of girl children and of gender discrimination within the issue of birth
registration, there was no mention of the lack of birth registration of many children being the specific result of women’s lack of nationality documentation.

**Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: The 10-Point Plan in Action – Official Launch**

There was no mention in the discussion of the 10-Point Plan for Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration regarding the increased vulnerability of women and girls.

**Discussion of Gender Issues - UNHCR**

There was a brief mention during the example given of Yemen and the increases to protection services for new arrivals that 26% of these arrivals are women at risk. UNHCR stated that the introduction of reception centres have meant identification of vulnerable people, including trafficked women. The improvement of documentation and profiling, has meant identification of protection issues along the road to Yemen, such as the reporting of SGBV in the Red Sea from Djibouti, which has meant UNHCR can report back to the Red Sea countries. The improvement on transport means vulnerable people identified at reception centres, such as women at risk, can be transported to hospital or others services they may need.

**Analysis**

There was little mention in the Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration side meeting regarding protection issues related to gender. As examples of gender related protection issues arose in the discussion of the Yemen example, this suggests room for further discussion within the subject area regarding gender related protection issues and service supports. Furthermore, considering this is a UNHCR plan there could have been some mention as to the need to incorporate the AGDM within the strategy.

**Gender Specific Side Meetings**

**Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming: The State of Play in 2010-2011**

**Discussion of Gender Issues - UNHCR**

UNHCR was represented by Volker Turk, Leslie Groves and Bettochi Guillermo in this side meeting.

UNHCR discussed the journey towards improving support with people of concern, exploring past models and the implementation of the current model of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM).

Volker Turk, Director of International Protection, emphasised the need for UNHCR to implement an accountability framework to evaluate UNHCR’s mainstreaming of AGD. The Director of International Protection stated that this should be reported at the annual side event at the Protection Committee Meeting in June and through conference
papers. UNHCR further noted that an AGD policy and five year plan for AGD mainstreaming will be implemented. The Director of International Protection emphasised the need for States to further their involvement and use of AGD and participatory assessments.

UNHCR discussed the development, purpose and importance of the accountability framework, including the three roles of the AGD as a Management Tool, Accountability Tool and Performance Management Tool. A five point scale of self-reporting on minimum standards was developed for several issues which included AGDM, protection of women and girls of concern and response to and prevention of SGBV.

UNHCR discussed and explored the findings of the 2010/2011 results of the self-reporting, which suggests an overall improvement from last year’s results and that UNHCR was committed to submitting the framework as part of their work.

UNHCR explored the constraints to mainstreaming AGD for UNHCR operations and provided recommendations to address these issues and constraints.

UNHCR gave examples of good practice of the use of AGD participatory assessments were discussed including in Yemen, Mozambique and Malawi. UNHCR further explored Central Europe’s use of AGD participatory assessment in all refugee operations as a best practice example.

In response to a question about raised expectations within refugee camps, UNHCR stated that the AGD participatory assessment does not raise expectations as it is designed to advise refugees of what can and cannot be done and how UNHCR and refugees can work together to go forward.

In response to a question about protecting women as victims of domestic violence that are living in shelters with women offenders, UNHCR acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and need to address SGBV and stated that UNHCR have updated their strategy on this after significant community engagement. UNHCR further stated that they are continuing to undertake dialogues to develop strategies to address the issue of SGBV.

In response to a question about monitoring the quality of sanitary material, UNHCR stated that a detailed analysis was conducted last year.

Analysis

The discussion within the AGDM side-meeting indicates that there has been some improvement in the mainstreaming of the AGD over the past year, however it appears much more still needs to be done. The results and the focus on improving the framework, the increasing use of the framework and the importance on AGDM internal accountability indicates UNHCR’s commitment to identifying and working with vulnerable persons of concern, including women and girls at risk.

Although some good examples were given of states utilising the AGD participatory assessments, it seems that more States need to implement and improve consistent use of the AGD framework.

It should be noted that although in the 48th Session in the AGDM side-meeting there was a strong focus on addressing the issue of sanitary materials, this issue was again
Survivors, Protectors, Providers: Women’s Dialogues with Women and Girls

Discussion of Gender Issues – Introduction – UNHCR
The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection introduced the refugee women representatives and described and explained the process and reasons behind the Women’s Dialogues. The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection further stated that the 5 commitments that were identified by UNHCR 10 years ago still remain an ongoing issue today as can be seen in the dialogues.

Discussion of Gender Issues – Zambia
Ms Mutiti, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, from Zambia recognised the importance of the Women’s Dialogues and participation of the refugee women, as she noted that women almost always outnumber the boys with regards to refugees in Zambia. The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs described the link between national and international refugee laws utilised in Zambia and the use of settlements in partnership with UNHCR. The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs identified key challenges in the Settlements, including documentation and SGBV and stated that although there are some supports in place more must be done to address these issues. The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs specifically identified the need for ongoing partnerships from all stakeholders to address women and girls protection issues.

Discussion of Gender Issues – NGOs
Dr Eileen Pittaway, Director for Centre for Refugee Research, discussed the identification of the ten protection issues and SGBV as a cross-cutting theme for all issues. The CRR Director re-enforced the need to resolve these issues, by addressing the root causes.

The ten refugee women representatives presented the ten core protection areas identified in the Women’s Dialogues with refugee women and girls. The refugee women representatives discussed in detail each protection concern, the impact of the issue, the human rights violations and recommendations on addressing each protection issue to ensure the support and protection of refugee women and girls.

Discussion of Gender Issues – Response – UNHCR
The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection acknowledged that the requests of the refugee women involved in the Women’s Dialogues were basic requests that need to be met and urged all stakeholders that ‘we need to do better.’ The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection reiterated the interconnectedness of each and all of the protection issues.
The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection acknowledged the recommendation of a dialogue with men and boys on women’s protection issues and agreed UNHCR would follow this up.

The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection in response to concerns raised by CRR regarding ongoing participatory assessments, similar to the Women’s Dialogues, stated ‘this is not a one off.’ The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection agreed with AMES recommendation of reporting back about responses to the requests from the dialogues and committed UNHCR to this process. The Deputy Commissioner of International Protection urged participants to encourage their governments to make pledges to address these protection issues and hold them accountable to these pledges.

Discussion of Gender Issues – Response – States

The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, from Zambia also acknowledged that the refugee women requests were simple requests and noted that although more resources are required since the dialogues there has already been changes in Zambia. The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, from Zambia further acknowledged that more effective measures need to be implemented to prevent and encourage reporting of SGBV.

The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, Zambia stated that there is a need to address cultural traditions and root causes of attitudes to prevent violence against women and girls. The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, Zambia stated that it is a cultural issue that encourages less participation by women than men in education in Zambia. The Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, Zambia acknowledged the need for a participation approach to finding appropriate solutions and understanding of underlying values, beliefs and cultural norms.

George Okoth-Obbo, the Director of The Regional Bureau for Africa noted the importance of UNHCR and States acknowledgement of issues and concerns raised in the dialogues. The Director of The Regional Bureau for Africa supported the need for ongoing participatory approaches, with the inclusion of men, in discussions of women’s protection concerns. The Director of The Regional Bureau for Africa acknowledged the need to address the ten core protection issues and committed UNHCR and States to work to achieve solutions to these issues and to be accountable by reporting back in a year’s time on progress made. The Director of The Regional Bureau for Africa further argued the need to address the issue of donorship and urged donor States to respond to these needs as well.

Discussion of Gender Issues – Response – NGOs

An NGO stressed the need to involve men and boys in addressing these issues and recommended that UNHCR organise regular dialogues with men and boys about women’s protection issues. The NGO stated that over 25 years there has been little improvement on issues of SGBV.

AMES stated they have found that there is a lack of cultural education in men in resettlement on women’s protection issues. AMES further supported the notion of ongoing dialogues with men on women’s protection issues and suggested the need for reporting by stakeholders on the response to these women’s requests to ensure accountability.
The Centre for Refuge Research encouraged UNHCR to continue to utilise this participatory approach in years to come.

**Discussion of Gender Issues – Response – UNFPA**
UNFPA reinforced their commitment in supporting and protecting refugee women and in inter-agency collaboration and particularly in partnership with UNHCR. UNFPA acknowledged the need to support women with regard to reproductive health and rights and stated that a recent UNFPA survey found similar results on the issue of sanitary napkins.

**Analysis**
It is concerning and an indication of inadequate development, that the five issues that were identified ten years ago as impacting on the protection of refugee women are still an ongoing issue today.

It is disappointing that there was a lack of response to the presentation from different States in this Side Meeting compared to Agenda Item 4a, particularly from States involved in the dialogues. However, there was a very strong positive response from the Africa Bureau and Zambia to address these issues in order to protect refugee women and girls and to ensure accountability of responses. UNHCR and NGOs further acknowledged the need to address these simple issues identified and supported the need to ensure accountability through the reporting back in one year’s time of achievements made to address these issues.

UNHCR, NGOs and The Africa Bureau acknowledged the need for ongoing participatory approaches with refugee women and girls to prevent and address these protection areas, while also including men and boys in this process.

Refer also to the Report from the Regional Dialogues with Women.
Gender Mentioned Indicators
- Women & Girls
- HRIT
- Handbook on Women & Girls
- Sanitary Materials
- LGBTI
- SGBV
- AGDM
- Gender Aggregated Data and Gender Indicators: Focus and Program
- Accountability (Monitoring and Accountability)
- Survival Sex
- Livelihoods
- Education of Girls
Appendix B – Definition of indicators

AGDM Framework – Specific reference to UNHCR’s efforts to ‘mainstream’ gender and diversity considerations across their programming.

Education of girls – Any specific reference to the education of girls and young women, including challenges that may prevent them from accessing education.

Gender disaggregated data and UNHCR software programs Focus and progress – Specific mention of the collection of specific data related to gender and the capacity for disaggregation of this data. Includes any specific reference to the inclusion of gender indicators within UNHCR’s Focus or proGres software.


HRIT – Any specific reference to the Heightened Risk Identification Tool.

LGBTI – Any mention to the need of refugees who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender or intersex.

Livelihoods – Any specific mentions of livelihood programs for women.

Monitoring and accountability – Any mention of efforts, by UNHCR or NGOs, to monitor and hold themselves accountable for the consideration of gender and diversity considerations, and particularly any mention by UNHCR of their AGDM Monitoring and Accountability Framework.

Sanitary materials – Any reference to women’s sanitary materials, including challenges faced by women who do not have sufficient access to sanitary materials, and the challenges faced by UNHCR or NGOs in providing sanitary materials to refugee women.

SGBV - Any reference to sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and domestic abuse.

Survival sex – Any mention of women or girls being forced, by necessity, to engage in sex as a means of providing for their own basic needs, or the basic needs of their families.

Women and Girls – Any mention of women or girls.
Appendix C – Acronyms

**AGDM** – Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming

**CRR** – Centre for Refugee Research

**DRC** – Democratic Republic of Congo

**GBV** - Gender-based violence

**HRIT** – Heightened Risk Identification Tool

**IDP** – Internally displaced person/peoples

**LGBTI** – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex

**NGOs** – Non government organisations

**RSD** - Refugee status determination

**SGBV** – Sexual and gender-based violence

**UN** – United Nations

**UNPFA** – United Nations Population Fund

**UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees