

GENDER AUDIT REPORT ON THE SECOND AND THIRD THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES, 17th - 18th OCTOBER 2017

SUMMARY

The Gender Audit of the preparatory meetings for development of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is motivated by the recognition that many of the ground-breaking legal and policy advances designed to improve protection for refugee woman and girls are not implemented. This failure to implement crucial commitments to gender equality leaves women, young women and girls at ongoing risks of endemic sexual and gender-related violence, which is directly linked to social and economic exclusion. The strong commitments to inclusion and gender equality outlined in the New York Declaration (NYD) provide a critical window of opportunity to change this. The audit is being undertaken for UNHCR by a team from the University of New South Wales, Australia. It involves two parts: 1. Monitoring the process of each meeting to assess gender inclusion and references to gender equality and 2. An analysis of the content of the panels and side meetings, with recommendations.

Part 1 -The process of the meetings with a focus on gender equality and the inclusion of women's voices and experience, and recommendations to improve this

Strong leadership was demonstrated in remarks made by senior UNHCR representatives on several panels and plenary sessions. Notably, the importance of clearly recognising the gender equality dimensions of protection and the Age, Gender and Diversity approach in the Programme of Action (POA) was emphasised by UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

Furthermore, several State and Civil Society representatives from both the Global South and North made strong interventions which highlighted the importance of recognising and responding to the different needs of women and girls and called for a strong focus on gender equality in the POA.

Young people and women from refugee backgrounds were active in the meeting and the importance of refugee participation in the POA was frequently reaffirmed by many States, however, this focus lacked gender analysis¹, and the different needs of women and girls, men and boys were seldom addressed.

Concerns re the lack of consideration of Gender Equality in the Thematic meetings

- It was disappointing to note that despite the clear institutional support for reflecting Gender Equality in the GCR and across UNHCR's Programs, plus important support and comprehensive recommendations from some States, in many of the of the panel discussions any serious consideration of gender equality was absent.
- With some notable exceptions, the majority of panel speakers and interventions neither raised nor addressed the gender-related dimensions of the issues discussed. There was little or no discussion of the

¹ Gender analysis is a critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, interventions, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls and boys in certain situation or contexts. (UNFPA et al, *Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You: Gender Mainstreaming in the UN System*.

www.unicef.org/gender/training/content/resources/Glossary.pdf)

dimension of endemic sexual and gender based violence and the impact of this on women's participation in all aspects of protection and durable solutions.

- With the exception of the interventions by the Gender Audit team and a small number of States, most did not recognise the importance of including women or of considering intersecting factors such as age, sexuality, ethnicity or disability as is emphasised in the UNHCR AGD approach.
- Women speakers were significantly under-represented on the formal panels and side events. Gender parity was not achieved on either of the Opening and Closing plenaries, and was achieved on only one of the eight panels and one of the five side sessions. Overall only 31% of all panel speakers were women.

On a positive note, it was observed that when gender-equality concerns were directly and systematically addressed by panellists, including the panel chairs, they were more comprehensively discussed in both the interventions and in plenary summary report of the session. It was also noted that the side event on Gender on the first Day appeared to trigger a stronger gender focus in some of the following panels.

Key recommendations Part 1

The following recommendations are designed to address the concerns noted above and support the full integration of gender equality in the forthcoming meetings and in the final draft of the Programme of Action

1. In keeping with the International Gender Champions parity pledge, ensure that 50% of all panellists are women experts, including State, UN agency, NGO and refugee women representatives, who bring their lived experience as well as their experience in service delivery, project design and in policy advocacy.
2. Recognising that over 50% of refugees are women and girls, request all panellists to address the gender dimensions of their topic and ensure that at least one panellist on every panel speaks directly and comprehensively to the gender dimensions of the topic, including the direct link between gender equality and SGBV.
3. In order to support the achievement of Recommendations 1 and 2, and in addition to invited specialist speakers, it is suggested that gender expertise and expert women speakers be identified from among those participating in both the November meeting and the High Commissioners Dialogue. This would include State, NGO, UN Agency, academics and refugee delegates who could be invited to present on panels relevant to their experience ensuring an equal mix by gender and from countries of the Global South and North.
4. Brief all chairs to pick up gender concerns, and provide them with a pre-prepared gender question, which addresses the different needs of refugee women and men, girls and boys to pose to panellists in the opening plenary. This is essential for as is noted below, it was identified that introducing gender concerns early in the meeting is one of the keys to ensuring that they are more comprehensively discussed.
5. Include at least one refugee community representative on each panel with equal representation of women and men across each meeting. These representatives, both women and men, should be chosen based on their ability to reflect on the gender dimensions of the issues, SGBV and other the risks and barriers faced by women and girls. If they are not already familiar with the UNHCR Age Gender and Diversity (AGD) framework, training should be provided to all refugee community representatives participating in the meetings.

Thematic Discussion Two: Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees (17 October 2017)

Key Points Raised in the Panel Sessions

The need for systemic gender equality and empowerment approaches as well as immediate responses to groups with specific needs at the onset of large movements of refugees was highlighted in several sessions. The most important of these was the side meeting on Gender Equality at which the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection emphasized that gender equality is not a standalone issue but needs to be incorporated into every aspect of work for refugees and host communities. While it was noted that all refugees face risks and vulnerabilities, the different needs and risks faced by women and girls resulting from socially embedded gender inequality was also recognized.

These include high risks of sexual and gender based violence including rape, trafficking, being forced to engage in survival sex and early and forced marriage.

“SGBV is the main reason to flee the country of origin... it is vital to create safe {reception} spaces” (Mexico, Panel 4).

The importance of effective and gender-sensitive evaluation and of collecting data disaggregated by age, gender and disability was strongly emphasised by several states.

“A gender sensitive monitoring evaluation plan should be developed from the outset” (Canada, Panel 1)

“Need good information systems, also disaggregation based on AGD,” (Ecuador, Panel 3)

Recommendations from States, UNHCR and NGOs included:

- i. That all refugees have access to basic services which recognise of gender different needs and provide timely distribution of food, sanitary materials, health services, trauma counselling and information on legal options and access to justice;
- ii. That safe and effective reception processes for women and girls, by officers fully trained on gender guideline, be implemented in all situations. This should include early identification of protection needs, risks of SGBV, and provide access to effective local services including women and children only shelters and access to individual registration for women and girls;
- iii. That gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems be established from the outset of all emergencies with support for refugee women to be actively included in the design and implementation;
- iv. That data disaggregated by age, gender and disability be collected from the start of all refugee movements to better understand both the needs and how people from diverse groups can contribute to identify and implementing solutions;
- v. That an age and gender and diversity approach be applied in all in service delivery including women, young women and girls, men and young men and boys, people with a disability, the LGBTI community and supporting their active participation in designing and implementing solutions;
- vi. That good practices be catalogued, including in inter alia The Sanctuary Clinic in Mexico which provides treatment asylum seeking women, men and transgender persons with HIV and Safe spaces and multi-sectoral services for SGBV survivors in Jordan.

Additional suggestions for the Programme of Action with an added gender equality lens

The recognition in all sections of the PoA of the strong links between gender inequality, SGBV and access to other forms of protection and inclusion for refugee women and girls.

Creation of a global refugee response group and solidarity conference - a gender informed proposal

The work of the **Global Response Group** would be enhanced by a comprehensive gender strategy, including the involvement of gender specialists and targeted support to ensure the participation of refugee women's community organisations. This should also include targeted support to States to extend and enhance national, and local gender policy frameworks and services for both refugee and host community women and girls.

Reception arrangements

The **Programme of Action** and the proposed accompanying **Community of Practice** should include existing best practices which address the **intersection of gender and asylum**, to support enhanced models for the sustainable and safe reception of refugee women and girls and others identified at heightened risk.

Incorporating guidance on specific needs

The continued and expanded use of the **UNHCR Heightened Risk Identification Tool** as a mandatory part of the assessment and registration process to identify specific assistance needs and protection arrangements.

Thematic Discussion Three: meeting needs and supporting communities (18 October 2017)

Key Points Raised in the Panel Sessions

"Increased recognition of the leadership of women in refugee communities is needed" (Germany, Panel 2)

Panel sessions included discussion of key gender concerns which must be addressed in the context of supporting refugees' integration in national health, education and social services. This included, inter alia, the need for increased humanitarian financing, greater recognition of refugee women's leadership potential, improved responses to SGBV, greater access to education in particular for girls and to sexual and reproductive health services. The importance of innovative, gender, age and diversity informed approaches to livelihoods programming and economic empowerment, including projects tailored to meet women and young women's specific needs was also discussed.

"We need to be addressing gender in economic and livelihood opportunities" (Australia, Panel 3)

Recommendations from States, UNHCR and NGOs included:

- i. That more and better resources including significantly increased funds for SGBV programming be provided in order to address Grand Bargain Commitments;
- ii. That the strengths and capacities of refugee women are recognised and resources provided to refugee women's organisations so they can contribute to building and implementing solutions;
- iii. That targeted support be provided to families to ensure that girls do not drop out of school;
- iv. That access be facilitated to refugee sensitive national health and other mental health services that address the specific health needs of women and girls, SGBV and other torture survivors and those with HIV;
- v. That comprehensive situation specific gender analyses of the causes and potential responses to SGBV be undertaken;
- vi. That clear references be included in the Programme of Action on the importance of access to livelihood opportunities for women to address the gender specific barriers they face; Including the importance of investing in tailored vocational, business training and mentoring for women, from the early stages of arrival;
- vii. Further evidence must be collected on the gender dimensions and gender impacts of cash assistance and the others supportive factors required to ensure positive a sustainable protection impacts for women, including through the proposed Data Evidence Alliance

Additional suggestions for the Programme of Action with an added gender equality lens

Mobilizing more resources -Utilising the Social Capital of Refugee women and communities

In addition to the central importance of mobilising additional financial and technical resources and in line with 'Grand Bargain' commitments, this must include resources to support the active involvement of refugee communities including, refugee women and refugee women's organisations.

Health, Education and Child protection

Refugee women must be fully included at the local level in the development of local solutions and systems including in the key areas of health involving maternal, reproductive health, education and child protection.

Livelihoods

Special measures must be put in place early, to ensure that refugee women have equal access to make the best use of their skills and capacities, including economic participation and access to labour markets. In particular, access for women and girls at heightened risk, including women who have been raped and have children from rape, so they are not forced to engage or re-engage in survival sex or unwanted marriages.

Enhancing the delivery of humanitarian gender equality and protection from SGBV must be clearly articulated in all innovative and efficient approaches recommended to improve humanitarian assistance outlined in the Programme of Action (with attention also paid to the needs of people with a disability.)

The Gender Audit was proposed as one strategy to support UNHCR in its efforts to ensure that the NYD commitments to gender equality are fully reflected across the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). This summary report of the October meeting and the full report from which it is drawn, build on several reports already produced by the UNSW ² and available on the Global Compact Website ³. Additional reports will be prepared following the November Thematic meetings and the High Commissioners Dialogue in December.

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² Pittaway, E., Bell, C., Bartolomei, L. (July 2017) *Strengthening the Response To Refugee Women And Girls In The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/events/conferences/595b7f344/strengthening-response-refugee-women-girls-comprehensive-refugee-response.html>; The Forced Migration Research Network, University of New South Wales (October 2017), *The World's Biggest Minority?: Refugee Women and Girls in the Global Compact on Refugees*. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/59e5bcb77.pdf>, Pittaway, E. and Bartolomei, L. (July 2017) *Gender Notes on the First Thematic Discussion on the Global compact on Refugees*, Available at https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/FASSFile/Thematic_Discusion_1_Gender_NotesPittaway_and_Bartolomei.pdf

³ Towards a global compact on refugees: written contributions.

<http://www.unhcr.org/search?cid=49aea93aa7&scid=49aea93a57&tags=women>