



## Chapter 5: Partnerships with uprooted women, men, girls and boys

### This Chapter

- emphasises the importance of **partnership with and participation by** all refugees and others of concern to UNHCR to ensure their protection.



## 5.1 Introduction

Forced displacement affects women, men, girls and boys differently. It often leads to drastic changes in their roles within the family and within the community. For instance, the responsibility of caring for children, working outside the home, going to school, attending meetings and representing the community may change within uprooted families and communities.

Protection requires an understanding of how roles have changed and who in the family and community controls resources and makes decisions. It means understanding the protection risks people are facing and their proposed solutions.



## 5.2 Understanding and reducing protection risks

### 5.2.1 Identifying and reducing protection risks

Decisions that are made by humanitarian workers without meaningful participation of the community often do not address the root causes of the problem or take into account cultural and other issues of importance. As a result, such decisions may increase the risks that individuals and the community face.

Women, men, girls and boys of concern to UNHCR are best placed to know what risks they face and how they can be properly addressed. It is essential that they are continuously involved in identifying their protection risks, jointly finding solutions, taking decisions and evaluating the results of any action. They are key partners in UNHCR's work and their participation is the first step towards real partnership.



### 5.2.2 Empowering women and men of all ages

Participation enables individual community members to use their skills and knowledge and builds a shared sense of responsibility. In most societies women and girls have traditionally been discriminated against. Therefore, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies need to take appropriate actions to support refugee women and girls to promote their participation and enjoyment of rights to achieve gender equality. The experience and knowledge of older persons, as well as the vision and expectations of the youth — both girls and boys — must also be recognised.

Participation in decision making enables women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds to regain their dignity and self-esteem. It facilitates a community-based approach to building solutions. It also reduces dependency on humanitarian aid and the authority that aid-workers may exercise over them. This helps to prevent exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse.

### 5.2.3 Mainstreaming age, gender and diversity

Participation by women and men of all ages from different ethnic groups, religions, and backgrounds, including persons with disabilities, is the first step towards ensuring quality protection — that is the equal access to and the enjoyment of human rights in accordance with international law.



## Box G










### Mainstreaming age, gender and diversity

Mainstreaming age, gender and diversity means that the meaningful participation of refugee girls, boys, women and men of all ages and backgrounds is integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all UNHCR policies and operations so that these impact equitably on people of concern. The overall goals are gender equality and the enjoyment of the rights of all refugees of all ages and backgrounds. Their attainment is the responsibility of all staff.

## Further Reading



*Electronic copies of these documents in English have been provided in the accompanying **Protection Induction Programme CD-ROM**. Click on the 'Library' button to access them.*

-  *Community Development Policy*, UNHCR, 1999.
-  *Reinforcing a Community Development Approach*, Division of Operations, EC/51/SC/CRP.6 of February 2001.
-  *Community Development Manual*, UNHCR (forthcoming).
-  *A Practical Guide to Empowerment*, UNHCR, 2001.
-  *Building Partnership Through Equality*, UNHCR, 2000.
-  *A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations: Taking Account of Women, Men and Children*, UNHCR, 1994.
-  *UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, UNHCR, 2005.