

GCR Thematic Discussion 1: Gender Equality Reporting

Summary

- On participation, the ratio of female to male participation was closest to parity during State interventions and the side event panel, while the main panel during the thematic discussion had least parity with 17% female and 83% male participation.
- Gender equality related topics were raised, largely during State, UN agency and NGO interventions, including referencing vulnerable groups/specific protection needs; sexual and gender-based violence; sex and age-disaggregated data; participation; livelihoods; and age, gender and diversity.
- Gender equality related topics were largely mentioned in a few words, as a short add on, rather than more comprehensively addressed. The most common implied reference to gender equality was the inclusion of language on “vulnerable groups” or “specific protection needs”. Women’s, men’s, girls’ and boys’ right to participation and specific needs, risks and capacities was only raised by UN Women during the plenary and then affirmed in AHC-P Volker Türk’s closing remarks as well as by a panelist at the side event, Mr. José Riera-Cézanne.
- While child and youth protection, in particular unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), was raised in circa 20 interventions from the floor during the plenary – there was no mention of persons with disabilities or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons of concern.
- There was a clear gap in gender analysis of past and current burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements, which is needed to determine their diverse impact on women, men, girls and boys as well as to identify good practices and lessons learned.

Equal Participation

Despite the UNHCR HC’s adherence to the International Gender Champion’s panel parity pledge, the official panel during the thematic discussion included two male co-chairs, three male speakers and one female speaker – for a ratio of 17% female and 83% male participation.

The side event was closer to reaching parity with a male chair, two male speakers and two female speakers – for a ratio of 40% female and 60% male participation.

The State interventions were closest to parity during the thematic discussions, with 18 interventions by women and 24 by men – for a ratio of 43% female and 57% male participation.

During the side event, there were interventions from the floor by 5 women and 3 men, including States and one civil society organization – for a ratio of 60% female and 40% male participation.

There were no interventions from refugee women, nor from refugee women or refugee youth organizations.

There was only one intervention from a gender equality and/or women’s empowerment organization – UN Women.

Gender Equality and GCR

During the opening panel, gender equality related topics were mentioned once by the only female speaker – Ambassador Maria Azevedo – who underscored how the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action includes the protection of minorities and has a gender, age and diversity approach. None of the panelists used the word “women” in the opening panel, however all four panelists mentioned age, children or youth.

Out of the approximately 55 interventions from States, UN agencies, NGOs and persons from the floor during the thematic discussion, circa 17 referenced a gender equality related topic. Only an estimated 9 of these interventions from the floor specifically mentioned women. References to other age and diversity topics were more common, in particular protection of children, including UASC and access to education, with circa 19 interventions addressing children and/or youth.

During the side event, the panelist Mr. José Riera-Cézanne stated that affected populations and communities, especially women and adolescents, must be full partners in designing and delivering interventions aimed at durable solutions. He highlighted that bottom up initiatives relating to solutions are more likely to be embraced succeed and be sustainable and that women and the most affected must be at the centre of this reflection and not at the periphery. His remark on women and adolescents was consequently referenced and endorsed by one other panellist and two interventions from the floor during the side event.

During the plenary summary panel and conclusions, AHC-P Volker Türk made a clear statement on the importance of a participatory approach in the GCR and how it must be people-oriented – including women, girls, men and boys. He reaffirmed the UN Women intervention regarding the importance of gender equality – including responding to specific needs – and added that we must also be cognizant of child protection and age, gender and diversity in the GCR. He also highlighted the importance of collection and analysis of sex and age-disaggregated data.

The following gender equality related topics were mentioned during the thematic discussion in the context of three different areas of interventions: past and current burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements, process of developing the GCR, and general comments on refugee, IDP and statelessness situations.

Vulnerable groups/specific protection needs

The most common implied reference to gender equality was through mentioning the need to prioritize, protect and pay special attention to “vulnerable people” or “the most vulnerable refugees”, which some speakers went on to define as women, children and older persons. Other speakers, such as the Norwegian Representative, highlighted the distinct protection needs of women and children – clearly asking why we are not adequately responding to their needs. The Swedish Representative also mentioned how women and girls are marginalized.

Sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) was not mentioned by any panelists and only mentioned twice by State representatives, by the Swedish Representative and the EU Representative who both emphasized that it is critical to address SGBV against all persons of concern. UN Women and World Vision also addressed SGBV in their interventions. UN Women highlighted that there is a lack of SGBV prevention and response in forced displacement and humanitarian settings and World Vision mentioning that unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) can face SGBV, trauma and protection risks. The Representatives from Italy and Yemen also mentioned the risk of, and need to reduce, human trafficking – which is a form of SGBV.

Sex and age-disaggregated data

The Representative from Norway underscored that there is a need for good data, including sex and age-disaggregated data and that this is the basis of good policy, decisions and responses. The Representative

from Korea strongly echoed that gender and age-disaggregated data is critical. UN Women also stated that significant gaps include the lack of sex and age disaggregated data and gender analysis to understand gender dimensions of crisis faced by women, girls, boys and men. AHC-P Volker Türk picked up on this topic in his closing remarks, also highlighting the importance of collection and analysis of sex and age-disaggregated data.

Participation

UN Women was the only speaker who brought up the crucial issue of women's participation, stating that gender based inequalities and risk heighten vulnerabilities but also hinder women in fulfilling their actual and potential roles as contributors and leaders in building community resilience, social cohesion and durable solutions for refugees and that there is a lack of substantive participation and leadership of women and their organisations in refugee response. This point was underscored by AHC-P Volker Türk in his closing remarks where he stated the importance of a participatory approach which includes women, men, girls and boys. In addition, the Representative of the Netherlands and the Independent Diplomat Refugee both mentioned the importance of meaningful inclusion of refugees and civil society organizations in the development of the GCR – but without specifically mentioning women.

Livelihoods

The Representative from Jordan mentioned that unemployment is rising and used sex and age-disaggregated data to make her point: that unemployment is higher amongst women (33%) and youth (40%). UN Women also highlighted the insufficient livelihood options for displaced women.

Age, gender and diversity

During the opening panel Ambassador Maria Azevedo underscored how the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action includes the protection of minorities and has a gender, age and diversity approach. This was also mentioned by AHC-P Volker Türk in his summary, where he added that we must be cognizant of child protection and age, gender and diversity in the GCR.

Circa twenty panelists, State representatives and other speakers mentioned child protection, including the panelists Mr. Mouin Merhebi who highlighted how the Lebanese welcome refugee children in their schools and work hard to ensure that children have access to documentation and Dr. Imran Zeb who stressed Pakistan's work in ensuring Afghan refugee children have birth certificates. The Representative from Jordan mentioned how Syrian children study side by side with Jordanians. The Representative from Norway stated their concern with displaced children and youth missing out on education, stressing that it is a right and important for protection and that great results are being achieved in Lebanon and other countries. The Representative from Mexico called for five key actions, including alternatives to detention, in particular for children; and developing a new protocol for the rights of UASC. The Representative from Guatemala highlighted that UASC require special protection and the Representative from World Vision stated that UASC can face SGBV, trauma and protection risks and that Member States should commit to cross-border communication on child services for refugee and migrant children.

Youth was also referenced in three interventions from panelists and the floor. The panelists Mr. Mouin Merhebi stated that unemployment in Lebanon is at 25% but up to 36% amongst youth and Ambassador Mohamed Affey highlighted the importance of providing hope and skills to young Somali refugees in camps.

The Representative from Venezuela mentioned that specific vulnerable groups should be included, such as women, children and elderly persons. No mention of disability or LGBTI persons.

Other gender equality topics

- UN Women stated that it is widely recognized that women and girls are differently impacted by crisis and displacement, but that despite increased recognition and commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in displacement and humanitarian settings as well as efforts of a few champions, it continues to be a challenge to translate these into action.

- UN Women is also preparing a position paper to provide guidance to the development of the GCR on what is required to ensure that the voices and concerns of refugee women and girls as well as commitments to gender equality and the rights of women and girls, set out in the New York Declaration and elsewhere, are reflected and delivered upon.

Recommendations

- Adhere to the UNHCR HC's panel parity pledge.
- Include a female refugee speaker.
- Encourage the active participation of women-led refugee organizations and organizations working on gender equality and women's participation.
- Ensure UNHCR presentations and comments adequately reflect UNHCR's AGD Policy, Commitments to Refugee Women and our global strategic priority on equal and active participation of female persons of concern in leadership/management structures. In particular, highlight diverse women's agency and the importance of their full and active participation to ensure the GCR meets their needs and priorities as well as takes into account their capacities and the risks that they face.
- Encourage a comprehensive gender analysis of past examples of burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements, which is needed to determine their diverse impact on women, men, girls and boys as well as to identify good practices and lessons learned and ensure that this analysis is directly fed into the GCR development process.