

# Promoting Gender Equality: An Equity-Focused Approach to Programming

## Operational Guidance Overview



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# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is the introduction to the series, *Operational Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality through UNICEF-Supported Programming*. It provides a conceptual overview of the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of promoting gender equality, as well as guidance on concrete steps to be undertaken across all Medium-Term Strategic Plan Focus Areas and throughout the programme cycle to promote equality between girls and boys, as well as between women and men.

Along with this document are five companion texts, which provide specific, tailored guidance for each Medium-Term Strategic Plan Focus Area:

- Young child survival and development (health, nutrition, water supply and sanitation, and early childhood development)
- Education, including early childhood learning
- HIV and AIDS
- Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse
- Policy advocacy and partnerships for children’s rights

The operational guidance documents on focus areas are meant to be read in conjunction with this document.

## GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNICEF EQUITY APPROACH

Although the past two decades have seen aggregate progress towards the achievement of several Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets, heartening global and national averages have hidden growing disparities in the lives of children across a range of indicators. In many key areas, the gaps between different groups of children have actually grown significantly in the shadow of overall progress, with deprivations in children’s rights concentrated in the poorest and most marginalized communities.

Evidence shows that these disparities in children’s chances to grow up healthy, educated and safe stem chiefly from three factors: **poverty**, with children in the poorest quintile faring significantly worse than others; **geographic residence**, with children who reside in the poorest regions and countries, as well as in remote rural areas and urban slums within countries, facing significant disadvantages; and **gender**, with girls facing disproportionate threats to their well-being and to the realization of their human rights.

UNICEF’s long-standing commitment to and obligations regarding the full realization of girls’ rights – and, more broadly, gender equality – thus find expression in the organization’s renewed focus on equity. This document and its companion texts provide concrete operational guidance on how UNICEF staff and partners can better meet the needs of the world’s most disadvantaged children through UNICEF-supported gender-equality programming and policy advocacy.

# UNICEF IS COMMITTED TO AN EQUAL FUTURE FOR GIRLS AND BOYS



UNICEF/NYHO2005-2204/Giacomo Pirozzi

UNICEF is committed to the protection, survival and development of girls and boys on an equal basis and, more broadly, to the equal rights of girls and boys, and women and men. To that end, the organization's Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls and Women mandates that all UNICEF-assisted regular programmes, as well as humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery efforts, be designed to contribute to gender equality in clearly defined, measurable ways. Simply put, **promoting gender equality is the job of all UNICEF staff.**

Promoting gender equality is crucial to the fulfilment of UNICEF's core mandate – to advocate for the protection and fulfilment of children's rights – for the following reasons:

1. **Girls and boys face different obstacles to the full realization of their human rights.** Girls and boys are treated differently in societies the world over. Typically, girls face various forms of discrimination that limit their ability to develop capabilities, access resources, enjoy freedom from violence, direct their life course and enjoy equal social status. Protecting children's rights and expanding the opportunities of children often requires interventions that are specifically targeted towards girls – and sometimes boys – and which level the playing field. Creating both equality of opportunity and genuine equality of outcomes also often requires affirmative-action measures.

2. **Women's equality and empowerment benefit children.** Women's equality is a valuable end in itself; UNICEF regards women first and foremost as human beings entitled to the full exercise of their human rights and freedoms, rather than as instruments, in their roles as mothers, for service delivery to children. Nonetheless, the evidence is overwhelming that women's empowerment contributes significantly to the well-being of children. For instance, better-educated mothers are more likely to space the births of their children; have more knowledge about health and nutrition; adopt improved sanitation practices; be confident in explaining problems to health providers; and bring in sick children for treatment early on.<sup>1</sup> These practices have been shown to lower infant and child mortality rates.
3. **Gender equality contributes to the achievement of the MDGs.** UNICEF supports the global commitments outlined in the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Evidence shows that promoting equality will speed progress towards MDG attainment, as well as make the gains more sustainable. Gender equality is also a core human rights principle and a valuable end in itself. For example, gender parity in secondary education – an MDG target – also significantly affects a nation's efforts to reduce poverty, malnutrition and child mortality, as well as to achieve universal

primary education. The accompanying papers on each Medium-Term Strategic Plan Focus Area explore in greater depth how gender equality contributes to the relevant goals.

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Promoting equality between girls and boys, and women and men, is central to UNICEF's mandate and the job of all UNICEF staff.

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4. **UN commitments and mandates require that UNICEF staff actively promote gender equality.** As a UN organization, UNICEF is committed to upholding the principle of non-discrimination, whether on the basis of sex, age, religion, race, ethnicity, economic status, caste, citizenship, sexual identity, ability/disability or urban/rural locality. UNICEF is also committed to creating "a world fit for children"<sup>2</sup> in a gender-equal manner, and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, all UN entities are required to use gender mainstreaming methodologies, as mandated by the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>3</sup> defined by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)<sup>4</sup> and reinforced by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination<sup>5</sup> and the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Watkins, Kevin, *Oxfam Education Report*, Oxfam Publications, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Special Session on Children adopted an outcome document, 'A World Fit for Children', in 2002.

<sup>3</sup> See the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, which were adopted in Beijing on 15 September 1995 by the 'Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for equality, development and peace', especially the sections on the girl child and strategic objectives, L1–L9. All participating governments subscribed to these commitments.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Economic and Security Council, 'Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System', Chapter IV section in the Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (A/52/3), United Nations, New York, 18 September 1997.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, United Nations System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Focusing on results and impact (CEB/2006/2), United Nations, New York, 15 December 2006.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Economic and Security Council, Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities of the United Nations Development System: Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/73–E/2007/52), United Nations, New York, 11 May 2007, para. 72–84.

5. **UNICEF staff are required to take a human rights-based approach to development, which obligates the organization to work to realize the rights of girls and women, as well as those of boys and men.** The commitment to achieve gender equality on the basis of human rights shapes all UNICEF-supported programmes and activities. UNICEF cannot meet its obligations to follow a human rights-based approach without placing gender equality at the heart of its work. The organization plays a normative role with regard to girls' rights and gender equality, supporting

the development of policies, legislative frameworks and institutional structures that fully reflect global human rights standards, including those relating to gender equality. UNICEF-supported programmes of cooperation also develop the capacity of duty bearers to implement and operate these structures and systems, and the capacity of women and girls, as well as men and boys, to understand their status as rights holders and to claim their rights.



UNICEF/NYHQ2006-1481/Giacomo Pirozzi

## ENGAGING BOYS AND MEN TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Engaging boys and men in gender-equality efforts is critical to lasting social change for several reasons:

- Men wield disproportionate political, religious, economic and social power, and convincing them to use this power to advance rather than obstruct gender-equality objectives is vital.
- Gender is about the relationships between and among women and men, and girls and boys; transforming these relationships requires the involvement of all of these groups of people, not just half of them.
- Despite the privileged position that gender norms accord males in most respects, these norms nonetheless create distinct vulnerabilities and negative outcomes for boys and men. In addition, not all boys and men enjoy a privileged position based on their gender, particularly those who do not conform to gender norms about masculinity.
- Because gender norms are created and perpetuated from birth onward by families, communities, schools and other social institutions, it is key to work with men (e.g., fathers and teachers) in order to change the way in which girls and boys experience childhood and grow to adulthood.
- The more men see gender issues as ‘their’ issues, the less such issues will be marginalized.

Evidence shows that in order to have successful programmes aimed at boys and men, the following requirements are necessary:

- **Create positive learning environments in which boys and men can change.** Using male role models and positive messages about responsibility – as opposed to collective guilt or blame – creates the emotional safety net that is necessary for growth and change, as does treating boys and men with compassion and respect, even while challenging negative behaviour and holding men responsible for their actions and choices. It is also important to use language that is accessible to men and to introduce contentious issues after comfort and trust have been established.
- **Appeal to enlightened self-interest.** Encourage men to explore how gender equality will benefit their families and communities, as well as the ways in which current definitions of masculinity are detrimental to boys and men.
- **Go mainstream.** Work with men in positions of leadership and social authority, as well as with fathers. Assume that all men have the potential to be women’s allies.
- **Transform the ways in which we raise boys to be men.** Work with parents, teachers, coaches and religious leaders to change their assumptions about boys and their child-rearing practices. Teach boys nurturing, caregiving and communication skills.
- **Ensure accountability regarding the needs and interests of women.** Partner with women’s rights organizations, which helps to maintain a focus on gender equality.
- **Partner with men’s pro-equality non-governmental organizations and networks.** This should be done to draw on their experience.
- **Build capacity within UNICEF and its partners.** This can be done through internal training.
- **Monitor and evaluate initiatives.** This is necessary to build the evidence base about what works.

# GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING: A PRIMER ON KEY ISSUES



UNICEF/NYHQ2011-0124/Shehzad Noorani

This section provides information on concepts that are fundamental to promoting equality between girls and boys, and between women and men. It includes the concepts of gender, gender norms, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, the role of culture and the role of violence.

## GENDER: WHAT IT IS (AND WHAT IT IS NOT)

Gender refers to the social roles of men and women, and boys and girls, as well as the relationships among them, in a given society at a specific time and place. Biological differences can create different needs and capacities for women and men, but these differences do not 'naturally' lead to or justify unequal social status or rights.<sup>7</sup>

**In broad terms, gender defines and differentiates what women and men, and girls and boys, are expected to be and do** (their roles, responsibilities, rights and obligations). To differing degrees depending on the cultural context, gender can condition what these different groups are expected to think and feel (e.g., their preferences, hopes and the nature

<sup>7</sup> Sen, Gita, Asha George and Pirooska Östlin, *Engendering Health Equity: A review of research and policy*, Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies Working Paper Series, vol. 12, no. 2, February 2002.

and extent of their aspirations). Gender also governs how girls, boys, men and women are expected to relate to one another. It is a key determinant of who does what, who has what, who decides and, importantly, who has power. (See the Box on page 7.) The issue of power is critically important in understanding gender relations, as discrimination and subordination persist because powerful groups in society benefit from it and act to maintain their privileged position vis-à-vis others.

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Gender is a key determinant of who does what, who has what, who decides and who has power.

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**Our gender identities – how we see ourselves and behave as boys and girls, as well as men and women – are socially constructed** and depend greatly on popular ways of classifying and treating these groups. The perception of what it means to be male or female is not the same in all communities and cultures. Such associations are learned, and boys, girls, men and women are encouraged to identify with what are considered to be masculine and feminine characteristics and forms of behaviour. These characteristics, however, may be contested and resisted, as when girls resist boys' depictions of them as weak, unfree, domestic and passive. Gender identities are negotiated identities: People derive a sense of who they are from the ways in which they are treated and classified by others, but they are also active in the process of constructing their own identities. Moreover, gender identities are fluid, varying according to social contexts. For instance, we may think of ourselves and behave differently when we are among a group of people of the same sex than when we are with a group of people of the opposite sex.

**In most societies around the world, gender norms favour men and boys.** Boys and men, particularly those who conform to the masculine norm, typically benefit from gender inequality because it gives them more power and status, a stronger voice in decision-making, greater access to resources, greater personal freedom, more agency and more robust rights than girls and women. In addition, most societies divide responsibilities for keeping households and

communities functioning in some similar ways; the 'gender division of labour' typically assigns women and girls the lion's share of largely invisible, unpaid caregiving and household tasks, for instance. The work that men typically do has greater prestige and perceived economic value than work typically done by women. These issues are common in rich and low-income countries alike.

**The expectations attached to gender norms interact with those derived from other socially salient categories, such as age, class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.** Thus, girls of different social classes or men of different ages may be expected or permitted to do different things and behave in different ways. For example, it might be socially acceptable for an elderly man to act in a nurturing manner, whereas a young man exhibiting the same caretaking behaviour might be criticized as unmanly. Also, a woman from a socially elite group may very well have more power and access to resources than a man from a marginalized group, even though the society in which they both live generally discriminates against girls and women.

In another example, a girl from an ethnic minority group living in poverty may find her life chances dramatically curtailed as each form of discrimination – based on gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status – shuts the door on a distinct set of choices and opportunities. Women may at times act to uphold conservative gender norms, such as in their roles as mothers-in-law. Those who do not adhere to their society's prevailing masculine or feminine norms frequently face discrimination, stigma and even abuse, although class or socio-economic status can sometimes mitigate the effects.

**Gender roles and relationships are not fixed.** Such roles and relationships can and do change in response to evolving circumstances, needs and opportunities. Technological change, economic shifts, new information, government policy, development projects, social and political movements, migration, environmental pressures and crises often spur changes in gender norms. Most people need look no further than their own families for evidence that gender norms change; many expectations related to gender today are different than those from the time of our parents and grandparents.

How discrimination is discussed and the way in which it is understood in a society is a good indicator of the degree to which social change is under way.

**The word 'gender' is often used imprecisely as a catch-all term.** Gender does not mean 'women' or 'girls' – although the word is frequently used as shorthand for women, women's empowerment, women's human rights, or, more broadly, for any initiative that is geared towards girls or women. In some ways, this imprecision is understandable, stemming as it does from the simple fact that girls and women suffer more varied and intense forms of discrimination than boys and men. As a result, taking a gender perspective often does require targeted interventions to

promote women's empowerment, protect girls' rights and the like, in order to level the playing field. Nonetheless, promoting equality for girls and women is difficult if the boys and men they live with at home and in the larger society are left out of the equation. Without male allies, change will come still more slowly. There are also situations in which the well-being or freedoms of boys and men are harmed by virtue of their gender. For example, boys are sometimes subject to harsher physical punishments or exposed to more dangerous child labour conditions than girls.

**Merely working with girls and women does not necessarily advance gender equality or the empowerment of girls and women.** Many think that because their programme caters

## GENDER NORMS SHAPE DAILY LIFE

In combination with other social categories such as class and ethnicity, social norms about women and men, and girls and boys – as well as the relationships among them – serve to enhance or constrain everyone's well-being, capabilities, security, opportunities, empowerment and freedom. They also shape routine aspects of daily living.

At the **individual level**, internalized social norms are centred on gender condition preferences and ambitions. Social norms are why girls 'like' to play house and boys 'prefer' to play soldiers, why a boy may be praised for aspiring to be a scientist and scolded for wanting to be a dancer, or why a girl who dreams of being an engineer may in time adapt her preference to a more socially realistic and modest goal. The power of such social norms on individual aspirations varies across time and place, sometimes predisposing an individual to a certain course, and other times completely determining the range of what is possible.

At the **household level**, social norms and status differentials relating to gender provide answers to questions such as: Who prepares meals? Who leaves the house to work for pay? Who stays home from work when a child is sick? Who tends the animals? Who decides how money is spent? Who sits at the head of the table? Who speaks for the family? Who gets leisure time? Who decides when to have sex? When food is scarce, who gets the larger share? When resources are stretched thin, which child is sent to school? Parents and other immediate family members play a significant role in creating and maintaining gender roles.

At the **societal level**, social norms concerning gender define how girls and boys, and women and men, are expected to dress, walk and talk; how they are able to use public space, access public resources and seize opportunities in the marketplace; the degree to which they feel safe or unsafe at night or while riding public transportation; and how they can reasonably expect strangers to treat them. Social norms related to gender are often key determinants of who holds powerful positions, be they in business, social movements, government or religious organizations.

These norms also shape **workplace expectations at UNICEF**. What are the norms for hiring support staff? How often are women hired as drivers and men as assistants? Who tends to represent staff, and once the representatives are elected, who ends up being appointed to the various executive committee positions? Who organizes staff get-togethers and arranges logistics related to travel and food? Who takes the minutes in a meeting among professional staff?

to girls or women, they are taking a gender perspective and/or promoting equality. In fact, an effort can be gender-blind even when women are the target group if it fails to account for questions related to the gender division of labour (Who does what?), access to and control over resources (Who has what?), and power imbalances between women and men (Who decides?). Depending on its design and implementation, a programme that focuses on women could just as easily support an unequal status quo as it could promote social justice. For instance, if a nutrition effort approaches women only as mothers and views them in an instrumental way as a conduit for service

delivery to children, the project may reinforce social norms that confine women to the domestic sphere and that let men off the hook when it comes to caring for children.

In addition, it is important to keep in mind that girls and women are meant to benefit from the development process – they are not free labour to be deployed in support of the process. When structural adjustment was in ascendance, many projects added to rather than alleviated women’s burdens because programme planners viewed women’s labour as an endlessly elastic substitute for slashed social services.

## GENDER EQUALITY

**Gender equality means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections.** It also means that girls and women have “... agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions” about the course of their lives “without the fear of coercion and violence.”<sup>8</sup> Gender equality does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike, but rather implies an absence of bias or discrimination. Equality between women and men is both a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development.<sup>9</sup>

Working towards equality between women and men is vital if girls are to look ahead to an equal future. Equality between adult men and women provides children a model for mutually respectful relationships, as well as the full realization of everyone’s human rights. If children cannot witness and internalize social norms, attitudes and behaviours that support gender equality, equality between girls and boys will be difficult for them even to imagine, much less achieve.

**For the most part, equality between girls and boys cannot be achieved by providing them the same set of services, opportunities and protections, delivered in the same ways.** Equality of opportunity often will not create equality of outcomes given the significant disadvantages and status differentials that girls face. Targeted interventions that promote the empowerment of girls and women are often a precondition for true equality. For example, quotas have served as effective affirmative action for promoting the participation of girls and women in public forums. In some instances, such as in the Caribbean education area, it is boys who need targeted interventions to close a gap. Generally, however, when gender gaps in basic capabilities exist, it is girls and women who lag behind. In short, furthering equality frequently requires providing disproportionate – or unequal – resources and services to the group facing discrimination.

Related to this question of targeted interventions is the need to identify the vulnerabilities and opportunities for investing in children at various points in the life course – e.g., taking a life cycle approach. Critical periods exist during the life cycle; harm that

<sup>8</sup> Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, *Taking Action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women*, UN Millennium Project, New York, January 2005, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for promoting gender equality*, United Nations, New York, August 2001.



UNICEF/BANA2010-00945/Naser Siddique

occurs during these critical periods is likely to produce severe effects that are often irreversible and intergenerational, whereas appropriate care during these periods has cumulative positive effects and can bring benefits to the next generation. (For instance, the prenatal and neonatal periods are critical periods for adequate nutrition of the mother and baby, while the early childhood years are critical for appropriate cognitive and psychosocial stimulation.) Girls and boys may face different vulnerabilities and enjoy different access to key resources and opportunities during these critical periods, setting them on different life trajectories.

**Gender equality is not a ‘women’s issue’.**

The issue of men in development is critical because ending women’s subordination involves more than simply reallocating economic resources – it also involves

redistributing power. There is a strong case to be made that transformed gender relations will benefit men as well as women – in terms of overall family income, for instance, or men’s emancipation from imprisoning expectations and stereotypes concerning masculinity. It is important, however, to emphasize that men will have to relinquish some economic, political and social power if women are to have their fair share of it.<sup>10</sup> And this reality can lead to resistance.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Taking Gender Equality Seriously: Making progress, meeting new challenges*, UNDP, New York, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian International Development Agency, *Questions about Culture, Gender Equality and Development Cooperation*, CIDA, Quebec, February 2001.

## THE ROLE OF CULTURE

Culture shapes *how* things are done in a society and provides explanations as to *why* they are done that way.<sup>11</sup> Culture can *seem* natural and immutable because it conditions not just what people do, but also how they think about and understand what they do.

At the same time, a culture is not fixed. They are continually changing; what is culturally acceptable or even desirable today may be unacceptable tomorrow. A culture is also not monolithic; many of its aspects are highly contested within the culture itself. For example, some segments of society may be keen to change a cultural practice, while others – particularly those who benefit from it – may fight hard to maintain it. It is, therefore, unwise to assume the existence of a true cultural consensus. Men traditionally enjoy a privileged position vis-à-vis women, with greater power and voice. As a result, they are frequently able to ensure that their preferences and values with regard to culture prevail. Similarly, socially elite groups have more power to define and maintain prevailing cultural values than marginalized groups.

Development practitioners are sometimes reluctant to take actions that they fear may be perceived as interfering with another culture. For ethical reasons, they may feel reluctant to impose ideas about women's rights that may be perceived as 'Western', or they might wish to avoid being accused of cultural insensitivity. But assessing social norms and practices with regard to universal human rights is appropriate and, indeed, imperative for UNICEF staff.

It is critical for development practitioners to approach the practices and beliefs of others in a spirit of openness and respect, with a view to understanding the fundamental, underlying values that motivate such practices and beliefs. This is not the same thing, however, as uncritically accepting the beliefs and practices. For instance, understanding that parents who supported female genital cutting/mutilation were concerned that, without such actions, their daughters would be unmarriageable and thus face a lifetime of severe economic insecurity was vital to the development of an effective approach to ending the practice. That approach consisted of a community-wide mass abandonment of the practice that led to all girls (and thus all potential wives) being uncut, putting them on equal footing in the marriage market. Understanding that parents were motivated by concern for their daughters' long-term futures rather than by an irrational adherence to a harmful practice was the first step in finding a lasting solution.

When it comes to culture, it is important to:

- Listen to how people understand and talk about discrimination in the society: Is it a taboo topic or something that is readily discussed? This gives a sense of the degree to which social change is taking place.
- Keep in mind that the dominant group does not speak for everyone. If men are speaking for women, or elites for the marginalized, it is necessary to help create forums in which people can speak for themselves.
- Point to national commitments to gender equality (such as having endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action, ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or established a national commission for women) and to organizations and individuals within a country who are working for a gender-equal society.
- Seek out the ways in which girls, women and socially marginalized or minority groups understand and work to shape and change their culture.
- Understand the values that underlie harmful practices rooted in cultural tradition in order to better support alternative practices.
- Use science and evidence to convey the benefits gender equality brings to health and development outcomes.
- When a gender-discriminatory action is supported by an explanation rooted in culture, ask if this justification for discrimination would be accepted if it were applied to a member of a racial or ethnic minority group.

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING

ECOSOC defined gender mainstreaming in 1997 as: “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. **The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.**” Gender mainstreaming was mandated for all UN entities in 2004 as part of the recommendations following the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the UN system.

**In practice, gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps in gender equality through the use of sex-disaggregated data; analysing the underlying causes; developing strategies to close those gaps; putting resources and expertise into implementing strategies for gender equality; monitoring implementation; and holding individuals and institutions accountable for results.**<sup>12</sup> Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself; it is, as stated in the ECOSOC definition,<sup>13</sup> a process whose ultimate goal is **to achieve gender equality**. The 2007 evaluation argued that UNICEF’s shortfalls in performance on gender-equality results did not stem from inherent problems with the mainstreaming approach, but rather with the way in which it was implemented.

At the same time, gender mainstreaming is not without its critics. A common criticism is that gender mainstreaming, in replacing ‘women in development’ projects, made the concerns of girls and women disappear altogether. Mentions of gender sprinkled through documents replaced real projects and programmes that directed resources to girls and women. Mainstreaming only

in a rhetorical sense – with no actual mainstreaming of funds, human resources or objectives – not surprisingly does not yield any gender-equality results. Another criticism is that the term ‘mainstreaming’ is a euphemism that signals an inadequate understanding of the problem and provides an easy escape route for avoiding unpleasant political or ideological issues.

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UNICEF’s Gender Policy calls for both gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of girls and women.

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Levelling the playing field within a meaningful time frame requires working directly with girls and women to address historical and present inequalities (affirmative action), as well as efforts to ensure that women define and benefit from mainstream development efforts. The 2010 UNICEF Gender Policy recognizes this, and calls for both mainstreaming and the empowerment of women and girls.

Mainstreaming per se, not just of gender but also of other issues, such as the environment and HIV and AIDS, is difficult because of the compartmentalized way in which development organizations – whether ministries or agencies, national or international – are structured, as well as because of the way in which development professionals work. A related problem is that gender is addressed in many organizations as a cross-cutting issue. From an operational standpoint, making gender a cross-cutting issue can render it institutionally homeless. By making gender mainstreaming everybody’s job, it can easily become nobody’s job. The robust accountability mechanisms called for in UNICEF’s 2010 Gender Policy, if fully implemented, will go a long way to addressing this problem.

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<sup>12</sup>Ideally, all of these steps are followed in roughly this order; however, life is imperfect and doing so is not always possible. Staff should take the mainstreaming opportunities that present themselves, instead of conducting mainstreaming efforts only when the entire start-to-finish process can take place.

<sup>13</sup>United Nations Economic and Social Council, <[www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/](http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/)>.



UNICEF/NYHQ2006-2918/Giacomo Pirozzi

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a worldwide phenomenon – one that transcends the bounds of geography, race, culture, class and religion and affects virtually every community in every corner of the globe. GBV takes many forms, including sexual violence, domestic violence, sex trafficking, child marriage and ‘honour’ crimes. GBV disproportionately harms women and girls because of their subordinate status. Both tacit and explicit acceptance of violence against women within laws, institutions, families and communities reflects and perpetuates gender inequality.<sup>14</sup> Inequalities of power between women and men “contribute to an environment that accepts, excuses, and even expects violence against women.”<sup>15</sup>

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Ending gender-based violence is fundamental to the creation of an equal future.

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GBV is defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance as a “...term for any harmful act that is perpetuated against a person’s will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females.”<sup>16</sup>

GBV is both an expression of and a reinforcement of the often subordinate status of females with respect to males.<sup>17</sup> Patriarchy – a system under which the family and state are governed by hierarchical relationships established and led by men – is an essential factor in the perpetuation of GBV.<sup>18</sup> In many settings, for example, men use violence as a way to exert control over women whom they regard as property or to show other men their relative strength.<sup>19</sup>

While men and boys may be subject to certain forms of GBV, the term is typically used to refer to violence against women and girls, its primary victims. While men and boys are

<sup>14</sup> Heise, Lori, Mary Ellsberg and Megan Gottemoeller, ‘Ending Violence against Women’, *Population Reports*, vol. XXVII, no. 4, series L, no. 11, December 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Heise, Lori, ‘Violence against Women: An integrated, ecological framework’, *Violence against Women*, vol. 4, no. 3, June 1998, pp. 262–290.

<sup>16</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on prevention of and response to sexual violence in emergencies*, IASC, New York, September 2005, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Hayward, Ruth Finney, *Breaking the Earthenware Jar: Lessons from South Asia to end violence against women and girls*, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, 2000, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

sometimes targeted for violence on the basis of sex or gender (particularly boys or men who do not conform to traditional notions of masculinity), the violence does not contribute to the subordination and inequality of all men and boys.

GBV, moreover, has high costs. Survivors of GBV often face acute and chronic physical and mental health problems. GBV has the potential to drain a country's existing resources and handicaps the ability of women and girls to contribute to social and economic progress. In the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, any society that fails to take measures to protect the safety and well-being of half of its members "cannot claim to be making real progress."<sup>20</sup> Preventing GBV, punishing perpetrators and providing support and access to redress for victims are necessary steps to creating societies in which girls and women are truly free and equal.

GBV is not just a gross violation of human rights, but also an impediment to the achievement of the MDGs and the promotion of children's rights. Violence is clearly a central issue in terms of UNICEF's work related to **child protection**, but it also affects other Medium-Term Strategic Plan Focus Areas.

- GBV affects **child survival**; for instance, research in Nicaragua found an under-five mortality rate that was six times higher among children whose mothers were physically and sexually abused by their partners than among other children.<sup>21</sup>
- GBV affects **education** because girls who are victims (or perceive a threat) of violence are less likely to attend or

complete school, and the long-term educational achievement of children who witness violence is lower than that of other children.<sup>22</sup> Sexual harassment of primary schoolgirls by teachers, peers and others in school, and on the way to and from school, is common.<sup>23</sup>

- GBV also fuels the **HIV** epidemic. Studies in several countries have shown that women who have experienced violence are up to three times more likely to contract HIV than women who have not experienced violence. In sub-Saharan Africa, young women 15–24 years old account for 75 per cent of new HIV infections, a phenomenon that stems in part from sexual violence against adolescent girls, intergenerational sex and early marriage.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the universality of GBV, there is considerable variation in its nature and severity across societies, as well as within societies at different times, for different groups of women, and even for the same woman at different points in her life. Risk factors that make violence more likely for an individual include being young; a large age discrepancy in marriage or early age at marriage; high fertility; being displaced; or being a member of a low-status social or ethnic group. Having low levels of education, having witnessed abuse in the home or having been abused as a child are also risk factors. Forms of violence also differ across the life cycle. Among children, for instance, violence can take the form of female infanticide in infancy, whereas in adolescence, it can take the form of dating or courtship violence and so-called 'honour' killings.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Not a Minute More: Ending violence against women*, UNIFEM, New York, 2003, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup>Bott, Sarah, Andrew Morrison and Mary Ellsberg, 'Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence in Middle and Low-Income Countries: A global review and analysis,' World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3618, June 2005, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup>United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, *Good Practices in Combating and Eliminating Violence against Women: Report of the expert group meeting*, United Nations, New York, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>Amnesty International, 'Safe Schools: Every girl's right', Amnesty International Publications, London, 6 March 2008.

<sup>24</sup>United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, *Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS: Critical intersections – Intimate partner violence and HIV/AIDS*, UNAIDS/World Health Organization, Information Bulletin Series, no. 1, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Heise, Lori, Adrienne Germain and Jacqueline Pitanguy, 'Violence against Women: The hidden health burden,' World Bank Discussion Paper 255, July 1994.

# ENTRY POINTS FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH UNICEF-SUPPORTED PROGRAMMES



UNICEF/NYHQ2007-1045/Olivier Asselin

This section provides very general information on entry points for promoting gender equality in and through UNICEF-supported programmes and through the use of the UNICEF advocacy voice. How these entry points are tied to specific steps in UNICEF's programme cycle is represented in *Figure 1*. Concrete, sector-specific guidance can be found in the accompanying documents, which are organized by focus area.

## THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

- At each programming stage, as well as more broadly during all UNICEF-supported work at the country level, bring to bear UNICEF's **powerful advocacy voice** in support of gender-equality objectives (see *Box below*).
- **Frame gender equality as a core development objective** – not an add-on – central to UNICEF's ability to operationalize its commitments to the protection, survival and development of children and to the achievement of the MDGs with equity.
- **Make the human rights case.** Bring the international human rights framework, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as international agreements such as the

Beijing Platform for Action, to bear on discussions with government partners of equality between girls and boys. Nearly all countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and about three fourths have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Full attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women are central to a full-fledged human rights-based approach to development, as defined in the UN Common Understanding on a Human Rights-Based Approach.

- **Make the scientific, evidence-based case.** Know the facts, and commit key sex-disaggregated statistics and empirical evidence on coverage, access and quality of services to memory (or have them at your fingertips) so that you can ground your advocacy and policy dialogue in real, demonstrable equality gaps in the sector or place in question.
- **Make the case at home.** Look around the room during discussions that focus on gender equality: Is it filled with women? Make sure that men are part of efforts to promote girls' empowerment and equality. Both women and men must enjoy meaningful (rather than cosmetic) participation in the process, especially in

priority-setting and decision-making. This is true no matter what the topic, but the near-absence of men in too many meetings and processes concerning gender requires particular attention.

- **Allocate sufficient time and resources to promoting gender equality.** Promoting gender equality – as is true with all UNICEF objectives – requires core staff time, budgetary resources and accountability mechanisms to keep gender from 'evaporating' during implementation.
- **Identify 'gender allies'** from within UNICEF and also among other UN agencies and national ministries, and strategize with them prior to important meetings. A lone voice raised in support of equality goals is easy to ignore, but several voices make themselves heard.
- **Use the organization's honest-broker reputation and convening power** to ensure that gender-equality advocates, gender experts from academia and women's groups are at the decision-making table, as well as to facilitate interaction with a wide range of stakeholders.
- **Reach out to groups or associations of men** to bring them into the dialogue about equality.

## UNICEF'S POWERFUL ADVOCACY VOICE IS AN ASSET IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AT ALL LEVELS

The advocacy role of some UNICEF staff is clear. Through speeches and other representational duties, the head of office has a unique opportunity to bring some of the organization's greatest assets – including its moral authority, programmatic experience and credibility – to bear in supporting gender-equality goals. Communications officers, through advocacy campaigns, public information materials and their work with the media, play a vital role in raising awareness and generating action related to the promotion of gender equality.

But advocacy is not the job of the head of office and the communications officer alone. Advocating for gender equality is central to the role of programme staff in their dealings with partners. Evidence shows that national development plans, poverty reduction strategies and other nationally owned planning documents often do not incorporate gender-equality goals except in a cosmetic way, or only reflect gender considerations in such areas as health and education. UNICEF staff have many opportunities to advocate with their national counterparts to ensure that national programmes advance gender-equality goals. The same can be said of the UN system and bilateral counterparts. Moreover, donor capacity for and commitment to gender mainstreaming is uneven, creating the possibility for marginalization of gender concerns, and UNICEF can play an important role in keeping gender concerns front and centre. Gender considerations may be sidelined in the interest of creating donor consensus, and UNICEF can advocate in donor forums for gender equality as a key development objective.

## PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGHOUT THE UNICEF PROGRAMME CYCLE: KEY OPPORTUNITIES



USE REVIEWS (E.G., MID-TERM REVIEW, UNDAF REVIEW) TO CORRECT COURSE AND COMBAT 'GENDER EVAPORATION'.

## WHAT THE HEAD OF OFFICE CAN DO: A TOP 10 LIST

For gender equality to be taken seriously, UNICEF leaders must take the lead. The single-most important way for the head of office to further gender equality through UNICEF-supported programmes and advocacy efforts is to clearly and consistently flag the centrality and non-negotiable nature of promoting gender equality in UNICEF's work. Following are 10 concrete ways to do so:

1. Clearly articulate to your staff and partners that you view gender equality as a central development objective and as being fundamental to UNICEF's obligations according to the UN Common Understanding.
2. Make reporting on gender-equality results a standing agenda item in regular meetings of senior management, including Country Management Teams; prioritize the reporting of age- and sex-disaggregated data on programme implementation and impact.
3. Remember that what gets measured gets done: Ensure that staff have concrete, measurable objectives in their performance evaluation reports and that programmes set clear targets.
4. Recognize staff and partners in a public forum for innovative efforts and good results in promoting equality between girls and boys, and women and men; hold contests and give awards; use annual 'days', such as the International Women's Day (8 March), as opportunities to advocate for gender equality.
5. Assign responsibility for gender mainstreaming to the deputy – not to a comparatively junior, possibly temporary staff member. It is critical that those charged with spearheading gender mainstreaming who should be both male and female have sufficient power in the office, time in their schedules and funds in their budgets, as well as appropriate interpersonal and advocacy skills.
6. Bring in gender expertise when necessary, but also seek to build broad-based capacity for promoting gender equality among staff, and ensure that time and resources are allocated to this end.
7. Make visible and attach prestige and privilege to the gender portfolio and to those pursuing gender-equality results.
8. Attend gender-training sessions yourself – and stay for the whole time. Ensure that country-programme process training does not skip the gender-equality module.
9. Instruct your staff to include sex-disaggregated data, observations about the different needs and priorities of girls and boys, gender-equality goals and results, etc., in the talking points and speeches they prepare for you, as well as in programming documents. Send back 'gender-free' texts for revision.
10. 'Walk the talk' in your office by modelling and supporting social norms related to gender equality: Review hiring and promotion decisions through a gender lens; respect the efforts of male and female staff to balance their work and domestic responsibilities; and encourage men to take paternity leave.



UNICEF/INDA2011-00107/Graham Crouch

## DURING PROGRAMME PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- During the **assessment phase**, identify gender gaps through the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender-responsive data collection methods. Sources of global, regional and national sex-disaggregated data include <[www.childinfo.org](http://www.childinfo.org)>, where statistics from multiple indicator cluster surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other sources are compiled (not all are sex-disaggregated, however) and <<http://genderinfo.org/>>, which provides sex-disaggregated statistics on education, families, health and nutrition, population, protection, public life and decision-making, and work. National statistical ministries, national universities and non-governmental organizations can also be good sources of data, although using these sources can mean losing comparability or the ability to track change over time. They are often the only source of sex-disaggregated data at the sub-national level, which can reveal patterns of inequality that national aggregates mask.

The UN Common Understanding's definition of a human rights-based situation analysis is particularly important for the development of programmes that further gender equality. It calls for "assessment and analysis [to] identify the human rights claims of rights holders and the corresponding human rights obligations of duty bearers, as well as the immediate, underlying, and structural causes when rights are not realized." It also calls for step to "assess the capacity of rights holders to claim their rights, and of duty bearers to fulfil their obligations," as well as for corresponding strategies to build these capacities.<sup>26</sup>

- During the **analysis phase**, perform a gender analysis, an in-depth evidence-based examination of the ways in which gender inequality is reproduced, including the influence of gender relations, roles, status, inequalities and discrimination in legislation and policies, as well as access to and control of resources (*see Box below*).

<sup>26</sup> 'The Human Rights-Based Approach: Statement of common understanding', <[www.unicef.org/sowc04/files/AnnexB.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc04/files/AnnexB.pdf)>, accessed 26 March 2011.

## GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis is the cornerstone of gender mainstreaming and arguably the most useful tool available to organizations seeking to promote equality between girls and boys, and men and women, through their regular programmes. It helps to ensure that programme design is informed by facts and analysis rather than by untested assumptions. A sound gender analysis and systematic use of its findings throughout the programme cycle make initiatives more effective and more likely to advance equality.

Gender analysis tells us, in essence, who does what, who has what and who decides. Basically, gender analysis provides answers to the following questions:<sup>27</sup>

- What is the distribution of basic capabilities<sup>28</sup> – such as nutritional status, educational levels, literacy, mortality rates, etc. – and what gaps exist among different population groups? This information is gleaned from sex- and age-disaggregated data.
- What roles do girls, boys, women and men play in their households and communities, and in society at large? This information can be gleaned from sex- and age-disaggregated data, qualitative surveys and studies, and time-use surveys.
- To what extent are the human rights of different groups realized, and what is the capacity of both rights holders to claim their rights and duty bearers to further realize those rights?
- What is the nature and extent of their access to and control over resources, such as land, income and assets, employment, nutrition, health and education services, means of and inputs to production, etc.?
- How do they participate in decision-making at the household, community and national levels? How does this participation relate to larger questions of agency, autonomy and freedom for each group?
- What legal and institutional frameworks exist to promote, protect and defend the human rights of different societal groups, and how effective are they?
- What are the different perspectives, roles, needs and interests of girls and boys, and women and men, in the intervention area (either substantive focus area or geographical area), including their practical needs and strategic interests? (*See below for more on practical needs and strategic interests.*)
- What key differences within these groups (such as class, race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation and age) affect their respective circumstances, status, opportunities and resources with regard to this programme area?

<sup>27</sup> List drawn in part from Canadian International Development Agency, 'Gender Equality Policy and Tools: CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality', CIDA, Quebec, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> In Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, capabilities are defined as the effective, or real, freedoms that people are able to enjoy – e.g., to live a long and healthy life, to have access to knowledge and to have a decent standard of living. The word is used here in that sense, to encompass a host of indicators of well-being, opportunity, freedom and agency.

## GENDER ANALYSIS... CONTINUED

- How might the programme interventions affect women and men, and girls and boys, both positively and negatively? In particular, who stands to gain and who stands to lose from the initiative? How might the programme mitigate potential negative effects and lessen potential backlash?
- What social, cultural, logistical and legal constraints, as well as opportunities and entry points, exist for reducing gender inequalities and promoting more equal relations between girls and boys, and women and men in this programme area?
- What is the current capacity of partner institutions to programme for gender equality? What capacity development needs exist and how might they be addressed (e.g., through training, hiring expertise, partnering with women's organizations, etc.)?

Gender analysis differentiates between practical needs and strategic interests. Meeting girls' and women's practical needs means meeting basic needs (e.g., water, food, shelter, income, health care, etc.) or helping them fulfil their current roles and responsibilities as defined by prevailing gender norms. For example, water pumps that reduce the water-hauling burden or more efficient stoves that improve indoor air quality and use less fuel allow women to more easily (and in ways that are less harmful to their health) attend to their domestic responsibilities. Meeting the practical needs of girls and women is necessary, especially if their living conditions are poor or they have been displaced by a crisis. It is not sufficient, however, to promote equality.

Strategic interests refer to what is required to address unequal relationships or allocation of resources and opportunities between girls and boys, and women and men. Strategic interests include changing laws so that women can own or inherit land, ending impunity for domestic violence, ending early or forced marriage, or initiating a quota system for parliamentary elections.

Initiatives can meet both practical needs and strategic interests. Having separate sanitary facilities for girls in schools, for instance, meets their immediate needs for a safe and clean place to use the toilet and also furthers their strategic interests by removing an impediment to girls' secondary education. (As an example, girls often stop attending school or periodically miss school once they start to menstruate if there are no separate facilities for them to use during the school day.) Family planning services meet women's practical needs to control their fertility and maintain their reproductive health, while also furthering their strategic interests by allowing them greater control over their lives.

## DURING THE ACTION OR PROGRAMME DESIGN PHASE

National development plans, poverty reduction strategies and other nationally owned planning documents often do not incorporate gender-equality goals, except in a cosmetic way, or only reflect gender considerations in areas such as health and education. The following areas are critical:

- **Evidence and analysis.** Integrate the findings of your gender analysis into the programme design. Marshalling sex- and age-disaggregated data, as well as global experience and scientific analysis, related to promoting gender equality will make the programme more effective.
- **Coalitions and participation.** Build coalitions to advocate for gender equality in the planning stages. Bring local organizations and those with expertise on gender equality into the planning process. Ensure that women and men and, if feasible, girls and boys, are part of or inform the decision-making process.
- **Accountability.** Build in concrete accountability mechanisms. Very few countries have sound, results-based frameworks for monitoring gender-equality results. Help establish clear benchmarks and sex-disaggregated indicators for success, and establish reporting mechanisms with measurable indicators. In addition, establish incentives (e.g.,

awards) and disincentives (e.g., lowered performance evaluations) for achieving or failing to achieve gender-equality objectives or, at a minimum, to carry out planned activities in support of equality.

- **Capacity.** The capacity for and commitment to gender mainstreaming is uneven among UNICEF partners (as well as among UNICEF sections and offices), creating the possibility that gender considerations may be sidelined in the interest of creating consensus. Specify and plan to meet the capacity development needs of implementation partners in promoting gender equality, and conduct a stakeholder analysis. Help partners improve their institutional capacity to support gender equality.
- **Programme budget and administration.** Ensure sufficient budget for implementation of activities related to gender equality. These are valid programme expenditures that are tracked through the Programme Manager System (ProMS) and VISION (when implemented). Develop a selection process for executing agencies and consultants that gives adequate weight to expertise and experience in promoting gender equality. Draft contracts and terms of reference such that they clearly define roles, responsibilities and expected results in the area of gender equality.

## DURING PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- **Action plan:** Develop an action plan for promoting gender equality through the implementation phase, with clearly identified areas of responsibility, and ensure that gender-equality promotion cuts across all programme areas. Establish staff incentives for work on gender-equality activities and results.
- **Gender evaporation:** Guard against gender evaporation. Ensure that gender-equality specialists are part of the implementation team throughout. Keep women's groups involved during the implementation phase.
- **Monitoring:** Collect baseline sex-disaggregated data to track change over

time. Track outcomes against gender-equality indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, established during planning stages. Regularly monitor the ongoing impact of the programme on gender-equality objectives. Assess emerging issues related to the programme in terms of how they affect women and men, as well as girls and boys.

- **Budgeting:** Track budgets and disbursements (gender budgeting).
- **Participation:** Ensure the meaningful participation of both women and men throughout the process.

## DURING PROGRAMME EVALUATION

- **Gender expertise:** Include gender-equality experts on evaluation and assessment teams.
- **Participatory process:** Design a participatory process that includes women and men, and girls and boys involved in the country programme in the evaluation itself, as well as in the review of findings.
- **Gender budgeting:** Use gender budgeting to assess resource allocation.
- **Accountability:** Hold individuals and institutions accountable for results.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING EMERGENCIES

UNICEF's Gender Policy recognizes the centrality of gender in emergency situations and calls on the organization to promote gender equality in the context of its humanitarian work, just as it does in its regular programmes. UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action include explicit commitments to advance gender equality through the humanitarian preparedness, response and early recovery programmes it supports.

Humanitarian crises have different impacts on the vulnerabilities of girls, boys, women and men, as well as on their ability to respond. Emergencies can exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities, leading to increased discrimination, greater exclusion and disproportionate risks. For example, during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, mortality rates of women were up to four times higher than those of men in some areas.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, humanitarian crises may lead to shifts in traditional gender roles and can, in

certain situations, create openings for greater gender equality. For instance, women may take on new roles or step into the decision-making or income-generating vacuums left by men, who may not be able to play their traditional roles as wage earners or providers.

Yet in the rush to provide humanitarian assistance, gender inequalities and the different needs of girls, boys, women and men are often not taken into account. As a result, humanitarian assistance may fail to reach the most vulnerable and, in some cases, may actually lead to further harm. For example, if sanitation facilities or water points are poorly lit or situated in an out-of-the-way location, the vulnerability of girls and women to sexual violence could increase, and if food distribution systems do not have a provision for unaccompanied adolescent boys, who may not have cooking skills, these boys could suffer.

## OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The principles and methods of gender-equality programming outlined in this guide apply to both development and humanitarian contexts. Promoting gender equality in the operational environment of humanitarian crises, however, can pose particular challenges. These challenges include overall instability and insecurity; an increase in the range and extent of human rights abuses, including gender-based violence and sexual violence; forced displacement;

restricted access to populations; diminished national capacity; an increase in the number of operational actors (including non-state actors who are not bound by human rights frameworks); and short time frames for action and a related sense of urgency and pressure to respond. Such operational challenges do not absolve UNICEF of its responsibility to address gender equality in its humanitarian action; rather, the case for doing so is even stronger,

<sup>29</sup> See Oxfam Briefing Note: 'Gender and the Tsunami', Oxfam International, Oxford, United Kingdom, 30 March 2005. Higher mortality rates were due to a combination of variables, including the gender division of labour (men were away working, and women were at home by the sea when the tsunami struck) and different socially assigned roles (i.e., women taking care of children or the elderly may have not as easily been able to escape danger; women's clothing may have limited their mobility; and many women did not know how to swim or climb trees).

and programmers must take the challenges into account and adapt gender-equality programme approaches accordingly.

Humanitarian action, including preparedness and early recovery, may present opportunities to advance gender equality and promote women's empowerment. Humanitarian actors typically work to rebuild infrastructure, social services and livelihood programmes. Addressing gender-equality considerations in such initiatives can ensure that the practical needs as well as the strategic interests of girls, boys, women and men are met.

For example, in Afghanistan, where gender disparities in education are among the worst in the world, humanitarian responses created a more enabling environment for girls' education by increasing protection mechanisms in schools, constructing community-based and outreach schools, and providing incentives for female teachers. In Mozambique, humanitarian recovery efforts following severe flooding included investment in diversifying livelihood opportunities targeted at single female-headed households, increasing their economic security and building their resilience to withstand future natural disasters.

Gender-equality programming can bridge humanitarian and development responses in ways that strengthen both. For example, investing in girls' education and women's economic independence and political participation before a crisis strikes may serve

to increase the resilience of all members of a community to respond in the context of an emergency. Investing in early recovery education and livelihood programmes that target women and girls, or including young people and women in decision-making and peace-building forums, can lay a foundation for greater gender equality in the post-crisis development context.

As in non-emergencies, during emergencies gender interacts with other variables, such as ethnicity, race, location, geopolitics, history, social class and culture to create distinct vulnerabilities. For example, not all internally displaced persons are affected in the same way – an educated woman displaced from one urban city to another who finds a job at an international non-governmental organization may need little assistance as compared with a displaced rural farmer whose livelihood vanished when an armed group took over her land. Both are displaced, but they have differential access and resources to draw upon.<sup>30</sup>

Addressing GBV, which is key to gender-equality programming generally, becomes particularly vital during emergencies, when formal and informal protection mechanisms tend to break down and human rights abuses tend to increase. All sectors should take specific actions to prevent and respond to GBV in conflict and during natural disasters, and comprehensive systems must be put in place to address sexual exploitation and abuse.

## ENTRY POINTS FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Gender-equality programming must be integrated across the spectrum of UNICEF-supported humanitarian action, including emergency preparedness, response and early recovery. This includes addressing gender equality within UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies and within each programme sector, as well as through key inter-agency mechanisms, including humanitarian clusters. Doing so:

- ensures a more accurate understanding of a humanitarian situation;

- facilitates the design of more appropriate responses;
- highlights opportunities and resources within the affected community; and
- provides a link between humanitarian assistance and long-term development.

Specific opportunities to further gender-equality objectives within the humanitarian context include:

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<sup>30</sup>United Nations Children's Fund, 'Expert Meeting on Gender Dimensions of Internal Displacement', UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, New York, 14–15 June 1999.

- **Gender-sensitive humanitarian assessments.** Ensure that emergency assessment tools are gender-sensitive. These tools include emergency preparedness and response plans, emergency rapid assessments, post-conflict early recovery rapid needs assessments, post-conflict needs assessments and post-disaster needs assessments.
- **Gender-responsive strategic planning.** Ensure that the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAPS) consider and respond to the different vulnerabilities and capacities of girls, boys, women and men in the common analysis, needs assessment and monitoring framework. In addition, apply gender markers to track budget allocations to gender-equality interventions.
- **Gender-responsive programme design.** Ensure that humanitarian action is designed to meet the different needs of girls, boys, women and men, and also ensure their equal access to relevant services. Develop targeted assistance to be carried out in a way that does not stigmatize or isolate particular groups.
- **Gender-sensitive analysis and monitoring.** Analyse gender differences when designing and monitoring the impact of programmes, including a focus on vulnerabilities and capacities; develop gender-sensitive indicators; systematically collect, analyse and report on sex- and age-disaggregated data; ensure that both women and men are equally represented on needs assessment and evaluation teams; and develop a gender results framework and related gender indicators to help monitor the impact of programmes and adapt accordingly.

During emergencies, participatory processes are vital. Humanitarian actors should encourage equal participation by girls, boys, women and men at all stages of programming. It is also necessary to ensure that women and men –

and, where relevant, adolescent girls and boys – benefit equally from training opportunities, and to promote the role of adolescent girls in decision-making positions. Given the increased instability characterizing emergency contexts, however, programmers should make sure that increased participation does not expose individuals to undue risks. Opportunities to facilitate the participation of women and adolescent girls in peace negotiations and peace-building should also be promoted, in line with key international commitments.<sup>31</sup>

Coordinating with key actors is a key element of gender-equality programming. This includes ensuring that inter-agency mechanisms, such as humanitarian clusters, effectively address and respond to the different vulnerabilities and capacities of girls, boys, women and men, as well as supporting gender coordination networks and mechanisms and linking them to sectoral responses. Building partnerships with key gender-equality allies in emergency contexts is another important strategy. Partners may include women’s organizations; youth organizations; minority groups; international agencies with a strong gender focus (i.e., UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund); GENCAPS (gender experts deployed to work with humanitarian clusters to strengthen their gender responsiveness); and key government actors, such as ministries for women and equality.

The IASC’s *Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action* offers a framework for action in humanitarian situations, and is a valuable resource that offers specific, concrete guidance for UNICEF focus areas, as well as numerous other areas in which UNICEF is involved in emergency contexts. The handbook provides detailed sector-specific guidance, including a gender checklist, to guide programme action. The IASC’s *Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on prevention of and response to sexual violence in emergencies* details minimum interventions for prevention and response to sexual violence to be undertaken in the early stages of an emergency in different function and sectoral areas.

<sup>31</sup> See Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1889 on women, peace and security.

# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This list is not exhaustive; hundreds of papers and toolkits on gender mainstreaming are available online from a host of organizations. This is a selection of well-written, user-friendly materials.

- United Nations Children’s Fund, *Working for an Equal Future: UNICEF policy on gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women*, UNICEF, New York, May 2010.
- UNICEF Community of Practice on Gender Equality, for UNICEF staff only: <<http://intranet.unicef.org/CoP/DPPGender/CommunityContent.nsf>>
- UNICEF Gender Equality Intranet website, for UNICEF staff only: <<http://intranet.unicef.org/pd/genderequality.nsf>>
- Evaluation of Gender Policy Implementation in UNICEF, <[www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/2008\\_Gender\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/2008_Gender_Evaluation_Report.pdf)>.
- Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, *Masculinities: Male roles and male involvement in the promotion of gender equality – A resource packet*, Women’s Commission, New York, September 2005.
- Quinn, Sheila, *Gender Budgeting: Practical implementation handbook*, United Nations Development Fund for Women, New York, April 2009.
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action*, IASC, Geneva, December 2006.
- Williams, Suzanne, Adelina Mwau and Janet Seed, ‘The Oxfam Gender Training Manual’, Oxfam Publishing, London, 1 December 1995. (This is an extensive tool with many exercises, including gender assessments and tools for analysis.)
- Common Gender Analysis Frameworks: New Zealand AID Programme. (This provides an overview of limitations and advantages for the Harvard Analytical Framework; Gender Planning Framework (Caroline Moser); Social Relations Framework (Naila Kabeer IDS); and Women’s Empowerment Framework.)
- BRIDGE, available at <[www.bridge.ids.ac.uk](http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk)>, is a site of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex that contains a host of gender guidance materials; the “cutting edge packs” are very useful, as are the bibliographies in specific areas.



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