INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

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Item 4: Gender and Humanitarian Response

Paper prepared by OCHA   IASC-
WG/XXXIV/4

**Background paper on
Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response
to Complex Emergencies**

The attached draft background paper on Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response to Complex Emergencies sets out to outline a common understanding and conceptualization of the gender dimension of conflict and its implications for the implementation of humanitarian response.

IASC Working Group members are invited to review the paper. In particular, comments and additions to the text and updates on the current practices of humanitarian agencies are requested for section G. The IASC-WG is also asked to review the proposed workplan for OCHA in Section H and the draft Plan of Action in section I.

The IASC-WG is invited to establish a sub-working group on Gender to prepare an inter-agency policy statement on this issue.

Draft

Background Paper
MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE
TO COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

A.   Background

1.   During the recent Humanitarian segment meeting of the Economic and Social Council, the Agreed Conclusions requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator in co-operation with the Division for the Advancement of Women to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of humanitarian policy. This builds on the concerns and commitment expressed during the follow up to the Beijing Conference of 1995 when the Economic and Social Council adopted a series of conclusions and recommendations on the mainstreaming of gender concerns into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. In particular it has urged the combined system to adopt the conclusions and framework for action as proposed by the Commission on the Status of Women into all aspects of UN work and operational activities such as poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance and peace and security. In addition, the specialised agencies of the UN have been encouraged to monitor the ways in which funds and programmes are used to implement gender mainstreaming; establish accountability of senior managers for gender mainstreaming; appoint senior level focal points for gender mainstreaming and adopt, where necessary, additional protocols or MOUs with internal and external partners etc. to enhance further this process in all aspects of agency sectors and activities. At the same time the recent resolution (AI/RES/51/77) on Children in Armed Conflict following the Graça Machel report, contains a number of recommendations to the UN System and the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to ensure gender sensitive orientation in all aspects of protection and humanitarian activities involving children and conflict, recovery and rehabilitation.

B.   Purpose

2.   The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary overview of the policy issues and implications of a gender analysis and perspective on complex emergencies and crisis situations. It will point out some of the current thinking on this subject and discuss its implications for the application of humanitarian principles as well as the appropriate responses needed to address in a co-ordinated and complementary manner the specific needs of women and girls in pre-current and post-crisis settings. The principal object is to facilitate discussion within OCHA and the IASC and to identify a programme of action to enhance the qualities of gender based assessment, planning, programme implementation, training, monitoring and reporting at Headquarters and field level.

C.   The challenges of a gender analysis

3.   The changing environment of emergencies and the increasing number of armed conflicts are raising serious ethical, analytical and operational issues and challenges for donors, NGO and UN agency personnel.

4.   One of the most important challenges is having to deal with the implications of a gender analysis of emergency situations and developing and integrating the relevant strategies of response that this analysis suggests.

5.   The current context of dramatic social change and conflict in many parts of the world has profound effects on the specific social relations and situation of women and girls. 80% of the internally displaced or refugees around the world are women and children, who are the most affected by the violence of conflict and displacement through rape, torture, brutality and murder and fear of destruction of homes and livelihoods. Women are in flight, adapting to and coping with life in camps or are directly caught up in the midst of conflict. In many cases, women and teenage girls in conflict zones are the sole providers and protectors for their families as wives, mothers and sisters as their husbands, brothers and sons and fathers are themselves either exiled, killed or away on combat duty.

6.   Recognizing the key trends and characteristics of current conflicts and violence is a fundamental ingredient in understanding the issue of gender relations in emergencies and conflict situations. At the same time, gender analysis can serve as a basis for understanding the impact of conflict on different groups within society.

D.   What is a Gender Analysis?

7.   People are socialised from birth to hold certain attitudes and values about what is appropriate behaviour for men and women and how these various activities should be valued and rewarded. The term "gender" began to be used as a way of differentiating between the socially constructed roles, capacities and expectations of men and women as opposed to their specific biological characteristics based on sexual differences.

8.   At the same time there is increasing recognition that peoples' "empowerment" is an integral element of the development process. In order to both identify and enhance this potential it is also necessary to understand the structural constraints and factors which exist in defining existing social and power relations. This is equally important in conflict and crisis situations where conflict and militarisation leads to changing definitions of masculinity and femininity and differing responsibilities of men and women.

9.   Using a gender analysis can help illuminate the various ways in which men and women are caught up in the struggle for power and resources through their different identities, access and entitlements. In the context of emergency and crisis situations a

gender framework enables the examination of the differential impact of crisis on men and women and enables the examination of the impact of interventions themselves on gender relations.

10.   A gender perspective highlights womens' capacities and indicates where opportunities are missed by humanitarian agencies for targeting effective strategies and supporting and enhancing womens' skills and capacities.

11.   A gender analysis can identify the division of labour within the household and domestic economy as well as identify the burden of reproductive labour which women bear and highlight the way this intensifies during periods of rapid and violent social change.

12.   A gender analysis can also reveal the socio-cultural constraints facing women who as bearers of culture and the social reproduction of norms and values, become subject to new forms of control and victimization.

13.   A gender analysis also points out that men's experience and identity in times of war are also impacted and that the 'gender' question is not just a 'woman's issue. The ways in which violence has helped restructure male 'masculinity' in poverty affected and marginalised societies is an important factor to consider when approaching for example the whole area of boys and men's involvement in armed militias, and the ways in which men are forced to comply with certain acts of violence against women. This is particularly important when considering the post conflict phase as it is here where the whole issue of how men and boys are to be re-socialised into re-claiming and re-making positive gender roles and identities will pose a serious development challenge.

14.   This paper will focus primarily on the impact of conflict on women and girls and have that as the main perspective or lens through which to consider the gender issue.

E.   "Mainstreaming" as Policy

15.   Within the United Nations policy development units and in the discourse used by policy practitioners the term "mainstreaming" has evolved from the definition first institutionalised by an ECOSOC resolution passed in July 1997. The definition from the 1997 Resolution, for purposes of future reference, is quoted as follows:

"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 all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

16.   This process is thus all-encompassing, referring to both the programmatic relationship of all UN supported initiatives for beneficiary communities as well as to all internal programmes and policies involving UN personnel and activities. The Division for the Advancement of Women has been mandated to oversee the implementation and integration of these policies and to compile from the UN system updates on implementation in order to report to the Secretary General and ECOSOC on a regular basis.

F.   Gender Relations in the Contect of Violent Social Change

17.   Conflict and instability are for many part of daily reality. Livelihood and coping mechanisms have adapted to insecurity and protracted crises. The causes and characteristics of these emergencies are many, varied, and complex, combining structural systemic crises, unresolved tensions between state and minority groups, continual underdevelopment and combinations of environmental and economic crises. At the same time development processes and projects themselves have fuelled conflicts as new tensions over resource allocations and sharing are created. Conflict and violence have to be seen therefore as part of the nature of social change itself and as such have important effects on changes in social relations and gender relations in particular.

18.   Current research and analysis is identifying six major areas in which the issue of gender and crises situations is important. Each of these in turn has important consequences and implications for relief and development work.

19.   The first is the issue of <u>violence against women</u>. The deliberate use of rape and other forms of violence and brutality against women and girls have to be recognised as crimes of violence, and appropriate legislation enacted. The better definition of women's experience of gender crimes and persecution will for example, contribute towards a redefinition of determinations of refugee status for women.

20.   For young girls and youth, this research and advocacy to recognise gender based violence has more specific relevance. Teenage and young girls differently experience, and are subject to specific forms of violence. Their rights as a minority group and the specific kinds of strategies they need to reintegrate with society, are important for policy planners and programme implementers alike.

21.   Related with this is the whole issue of women's rights and human rights in general. Women's rights can be abused both in their own right and through the males they are involved with and related to. The state can target and abuse both individuals and their families. The relationship also reflects women's indirect relationship to the state itself. The ability of state structures to promote and enhance civil rights will vary. The way in which state institutions perpetuate men's control over women's time, leisure, sexuality, fertility, movement, inheritance and property are also of concern. These aspects are particularly relevant to societies emerging from conflict situations where not

only is the physical and economic infrastructure of the society in the process of being restructured, but also the legislative and political institutions.

22.   A second area of relevance is the <u>relationship between gender relations and the evolution of new forms of ethno-nationalism</u>. The ways in which new nationalist ideologies or religious based fundamentalist ideologies use and redefine women's role and status has important ramifications on their status, rights and access to services and definitions of citizenship in that society. The example of the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan is a case in point. It becomes very important in the above mentioned situations to ensure the protection of women's rights as well as of their person. The challenge lies in agencies being able to monitor the situation of women and girls and to act in a co-ordinated and coherent way to ensure the implementation and application of the various human rights legislation and humanitarian principles which apply to the specific context. This applies most particularly to the issue of internally displaced women. Here because there is no one agency that has the responsibility for providing protection and negotiating the implementation of applicable laws and principles, a special monitoring mechanism has to be put in place to address their specific needs and rights.

23.   A third area of concern is <u>health</u>. For women, good health is critical to their ability to meet obligations and carry out their responsibilities. Their psychological, reproductive, nutritional well being is essential and is often severely impacted during crises and conflict.

24.   The whole community and its resources are affected by war. Hospitals, clinics, schools and community structures and essential services are disrupted, supplies looted or withheld and outside help denied or slowed down. Women's physical vulnerability is higher than men because of their sexual and reproductive role. Complications of pregnancy and birth remain untreated in the absence of medical services. Rape and sexual harassment increase the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and unwanted pregnancies. The menstrual needs of women, particularly in shelters, go unaddressed and, due to discrimination in allocation of resources and food, become the first to suffer extensive anaemia and famine with implications for their babies and unborn children. In addition, injuries caused by landmines, cross fire, beatings, etc. cause disabilities, loss of limbs, eyesight, and associated illnesses, which further impair their ability to function.

25.   At the same time, conflict increases women's vulnerability to sexual violence and rape. Conflicts also exacerbate levels of domestic violence and other forms of sexual harassment consistently putting women in fear for their personal safety and integrity.

26.   This fear of harassment and rape in turn forces women into forming alliances with soldiers and other men in power as a means of safety and escape. This causes other problems such as exposure to HIV/AIDS, more abuse and eventual abandonment and potential expulsion from their own communities. Physical and sexual violence is

also instrumental in affecting the levels of psychological stress and trauma experienced by women.

27.   Linked to the issue of trauma is the effect of crises on women's personal identity and interpretation of self and worth. Women's identity is culturally defined and is affected by violence in complex ways. Changes in gender roles, family status and livelihood systems caused by conflicts and crises can affect women's identity in a number of ways. Rape as a personal and social attack results in loss of self-worth, but may lead to marginalization from the community. The loss of husband and children may also cause a loss of identity, if women's status is defined solely as mothers and wives.

28.   Loss of cultural adornments, clothes, head coverings and other forms of traditional dress during crises can in some societies also affect women's identity and restrict their mobility, and ability to take part in relief programmes, attend food distributions, etc.

29.   Livelihood and production strategies are a fourth element. Crisis creates changes and increases economic burdens of women. Conflict destroys the ability to earn an income, and grow food. Marketing and transportation systems are destroyed and often people are deliberately kept on the move in order to prevent resumption of economic activities. The increased burden on women for finding food, shelter, etc. is often matched by ever decreasing access to resources, be they credit, relief commodities, seeds, tools and access to productive land. The division of labour within households is also affected. In many cases formerly strict divisions break down and the household has to be flexible in order to adapt. Roles and duties change and in this case many women may find a forced changed in roles that are actually to their advantage. However, after conflict and return to previous existence these roles may not be always reserved and even stricter controls are put on women.

30.   A fifth area of importance concerns the participation of women in programme planning and the effectiveness of their own coping mechanisms and strategies for survival. Women are most often portrayed as helpless victims and emphasis is placed on their need for assistance. Too often in the rush to provide such assistance little or no account is taken of what they have already achieved for themselves and some forms of assistance can distort or disrupt the mechanisms of what they have already set up or are utilising.

31.   At the same time relief operations may overlook the importance of consulting with them and getting alternative perceptions and information on what their needs and strategies are. For example registering only male household heads in refugee or IDP camps or for food distribution can directly reduce women's influence over the production and provision of food within the family and undermine their position within the household. Similarly, the efforts of women as mediators, their role in trying to access communication between warring groups etc. are often neglected or not taken into account in official peace mediating initiatives. In the post conflict phase, the emphasis on the more formal levels of establishing systems of "governance", political parties etc.

leaves out the role and voices of women who at the "informal" and community level have much to contribute in helping define terms for peace and security.

32.   The last area of interest involves looking at the <u>opportunities for change created by crisis situations</u>, which may have led to the re-making of roles and opportunities for women. Women have served as soldiers in liberation armies and have taken on the many roles normally reserved for men. In an effort to survive they have engaged in trade and other economic activities which may have given them more control, autonomy and status at both household and community level. The issue here is how agencies can help enhance and protect these opportunities and gains particularly in the post conflict phase where there may be a tendency to revert to tradition and new constraints imposed.

G.   Operational Implications and Current Practice of Humanitarian Agencies:

33.   The operational implications of the issues outlined above can be summed up under the following broad areas of concern and activities:

Protection and Prevention of Violence

34.   Monitoring and reporting all forms of violence against women and girls and setting up mechanisms for addressing needs created by violence including counselling, legal, medical and other forms of material support. In setting up refugee and IDP camps and other settlements, safe havens etc. consultation is needed with women in planning camp layout, securing safe access to fuel and water supplies etc. Special monitoring systems need to be put in place in situations where there is a military peace-keeping operation. Special training is needed for the armed forces as well as mechanisms set up to deal with any violations committed by them. Advocacy at local and international levels is needed to raise awareness about issues of women's rights and ensuring training and sensitisation of local police, legal and other authorities to these rights. On issues of registration, separate registration of men and women is recommended to help refugees and displaced peoples deal with the specific problems they are facing in seeking protection, asylum, services etc.

35.   A number of agencies have and are developing special guidelines and policies on protection issues; UNHCR has special materials on protection of refugee and displaced women. UNICEF has guidelines on protection of children and displaced women and is also developing a training manual for Peacekeepers. Human Rights Watch has a manual on monitoring and reporting of violations

Targeting and Relief Distribution

36.   Attention needs to be paid to the ways in which aid is distributed and ensuring the appropriateness of what is being distributed. Special assessment techniques can be

used to identify needs amongst different populations to ensure their participation in planning and relief allocation.

37.   WFP has specific policies and gender guidelines on relief especially food distribution. OXFAM and CARE are among many NGOs who have developed guidelines for gender sensitive assessment and community participation. INTERACTION has produced a resource book identifying generic frameworks for gender sensitive planning approaches.

Health and Reproductive Health

38.   Ensuring adequate response to the physical, mental and reproductive needs of women. Provision of family planning and maternal and infant care services especially for pregnant and lactating women.

39.   WHO, UNICEF and UNHCR have developed guidelines and best practices on a number of themes related to health care issues. In addition they have come together with key partner NGOs to form a special interagency task force on health care needs in emergency situations.

Nutrition and Household Food Security

40.   Provision of appropriate and adequate food, seeds, tools and micro-nutrients. Ensuring access to markets and marketing strategies. Ensuring proper targeting and distribution. Analysis of household food economy models, understanding specific needs of pastoral communities and the role of gender within those. Provision of health and other inputs to protect and enhance livestock of pastoral communities. Special attention and analysis of urban populations affected and displaced by crisis.

41.   SCF/UK, OXFAM, CARE are among many NGOs who have a long developed tradition and guidelines on these issues. In addition research institutions such as IDS in Britain have extensive documentation, case studies and research analysis examining various aspects of nutrition and food security and conflict on a country by country basis. FAO, WFP and UNICEF have also specific policies and guidelines on this sector.

Income Generation and Skill Training

42.   Ensuring vocational training and access to educational institutions is important. Especially targeting girls and children of minorities. Providing opportunities in refugee camps and other emergency settlements for equitable access to training opportunities. Using the existing skills of women refugees and displaced populations themselves i.e. teachers, nurses, social workers etc. to set up training and skill enhancement opportunities.

43.   ILO and IMO have specific guidelines on gender and development of employment opportunities. ILO has also focused on gender and post conflict issues and

examined practice in a number of counties. UNIFEM and the AFRICAN WOMEN IN CRISIS PROGRAMME have guidelines, lessons learnt and case histories of successful strategies and initiatives in this sector.

Disaggregated Data, Information and Advocacy Materials

44.   All agencies should ensure the proper compilation of data in their respective fields and sectors broken down by gender, age etc. It is important to underscore the specific and differential impact of the particular crisis situation on the various parts of the community. At the same time in monitoring and evaluation it is important to highlight the impact of intervention strategies themselves at different levels. In budgeting, program planning and reporting it is also important to indicate the amount of expenditure, the type of relief commodities etc. that have been distributed/utilised by different sections of the community.

H.   Coordinating What Agencies are Doing in Mainstreaming Gender into the Humanitarian Response System: The Role and Functions of OCHA.

45.   The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is committed to integrating the activities agreed to in the Platform of Action developed during the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.   It sees its role in ensuring the implementing of those principles as well as adherence to the principles of protection and response as stated in the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other legislation pertaining to the rights, equality and empowerment of women. It will do this through:

> ensuring and enhancing the co-ordination and implementation of a gender perspective in all the activities of operational partners in a crisis situation;

> ensuring a gender analysis and perspective into all aspects of the Coordinated Appeals Process (CAP) and Planning Frameworks developed to respond to particular country crises;

> designating the appointment of a person or agency as focal point for gender issues for each appeal situation at country level, in order to ensure the implementation of the above;

> ensuring the integration of gender perspectives and specific risk analysis into all aspects of early warning and situation analysis of countries and communities in crisis;

> ensuring the integration of gender analysis and specific needs into the planning framework for countries in the post conflict phase;

ensuring the adherence to principles of protection of women and children in all aspects of UN peacekeeping operations and monitoring the activities of partner military institutions in ensuring the same;

46.   OCHA, in collaboration with IASC members, will undertake the implementation of the above through the following specific activities within its own policy formulation and staff development activities:

finalisation of a paper and preparation of a policy statement outlining a common agency wide understanding and conceptualisation of the gendered nature of conflict and its implications for the implementation of humanitarian response policy statement;

development and dissemination of a common framework and tools for assessment and strategic planning particularly within the CAP process;

development and dissemination of a common reporting and evaluation format for assessing programme targeting, design and effectiveness;

coordination and dissemination of common agency wide training, orientation and gender sensitisation mechanisms for staff at headquarters and field level;

development of common methodology and approach to post conflict/transition strategies;

development and institutionalisation of strategic liaisons alliances, working groups, etc. with partner agencies such as NGOs, DPA, DPKO, Bretton Woods, donors and national counterparts on gender issues.

ensuring of recruitment of senior women and experienced programme officers at local field and headquarters level;

ensuring the participation of relevant women' organisations and networks at local level in strategic planning for specific country situations.

I.   Plan of Action - 1998/99

Finalisation of a Background Paper. *December 1998*

Preparation of Policy Statement. *February, 1999*

Establishment of an inter-agency sub-Working Group to coordinate and oversee production of guidelines: DAW/ UNIFEM/UNICEF/UNHCR/ WFP/OCHA - *November, 1999*

Dissemination of common guidelines on reporting, assessment, programme implementation, etc. based on above. *April, 1999*

Gender sensitisation and training events for OCHA New York, Geneva, Nairobi plus IRIN staff. *February - May 1999*

6 points for integrating Gender into the CAP

Situation analysis: what are the characteristics of the current crisis and in what ways is it having an impact on the situation of women

What specific data exists on the numbers, etc, of women, children, elderly affected?

How have the individual agencies reflected the specific concerns of women in their own mandate and responsibilities?

What specific division of labour and responsibilities have the agencies planned in order to target the specific issues identified above in a mutually supportive and complementary manner?

What specific benchmarks or indicators have the agencies identified in order to assess impact of intervention on this particular section of the population?

In what ways can the budget of specific programmes show separate allocation for gender based programmes?

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