

**REVIEW OF IASC 2008 POLICY STATEMENT ON
GENDER EQUALITY
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

Detailed Analysis

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¹ Listed in alphabetical order

ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
AMA	Australian Multilateral Assessment
ASG	Assistant Secretary General
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CAAP	Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations
CAR	Central African Republic
CBPF	Country-based Pooling Fund
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CCPM	Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring
CDA	Collaborative for Development Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHAP	Common Humanitarian Action Plan
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DERC	Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
DFID	Department of International Development
DGWH	Department of Gender and Women's Health
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EDG	Emergency Directors Group
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
ERP	Emergency Response Preparedness
ESC	Economic and Social Council
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FTS	Financial Tracking System
GA	General Assembly
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBV/AoR	Gender-Based Violence/Area of Responsibility
GCCCMC	Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster
GEC	Global Education Cluster
GEEW	Gender Equality & Empowerment of Women
GenCap	Gender Standby Capacity
GEP	Gender Equality :Programming
GERC	Global Early Recovery Cluster
GFSC	Global Food Security Cluster
GHC	Global Health Cluster
GLC	Global Logistics Cluster
GM	Gender Marker
GNC	Global Nutrition Cluster
GNWP	Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
GPC	Global Protection Cluster
GPPI	Global Public Policy Institute
GRG	Gender Reference Group
GSC	Global Shelter Cluster
GTG	Gender Theme Group

GURD	Groupe Urgence Rehabilitation Developpement
GWC	Global WASH Cluster
HAS	Humanitarian Affairs Segment
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDI	Human Development Index
HEM	Humanitarian Exchange Magazine
HFTT	Humanitarian Finance Task Team
HLCSWG	Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination Sub-Working Group
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HPCSG	Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
HRC	Human Rights Council
HREA	Global Human Rights Education and Training Centre
IA	InterAction
IAHESG	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations Steering Group
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMC	International Medical Corps
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRA	Initial Rapid Assessment
LGBT	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MHCUA	Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas
MHPSES	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings
MIRA	Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment
MOS	Minimum Operating Standards
MPA	Minimum Preparedness Action
NATF	Needs Assessment Task Force
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OASG	Office of the Assistant Secretary General
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPR	Operational Peer Review
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PHATT	Principled Humanitarian Action Task Team
PHT	Pacific Humanitarian Team
PIRES	Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support
ProCap	Protection Standby Capacity
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PVS	Private Voluntary Standards
RC	Resident Coordinator

RG	Reference Group
RGMHCUA	Reference Group for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas
RRP	Rapid Response Team
SADD	Sex and Age Disaggregated Data
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant ,Time-bound
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SR	Special Rapporteur
SRP	Strategic Response Plan
STAIT	Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team
SWAP	System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
SWG	Sub-Working Group
TA	Transformative Agenda
TOR	Terms of Reference
TT	Task Team
TTPR	Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WG	Working Group
WHO	United Nations World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
WRC	Women’s Refugee Commission

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Objective of the Review

The *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy Statement on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action* was issued in June 2008. Its purpose is to 'set out actions to be taken by the IASC to ensure gender equality, including through women's empowerment, is fully incorporated in all IASC work towards more effective and coherent humanitarian action', including setting out specific actions that IASC bodies should undertake to achieve this goal.²

The IASC 2008 Gender Policy builds on the *IASC 1999 Policy Statement for the Integration of a Gender Perspective in Humanitarian Assistance*,³ as well as individual IASC members' gender equality policies, strategies and/or action plans. A key finding of the Review of the IASC 1999 Gender Policy (in 2004) concluded that 'enforcing accountability - supported by pertinent formal regulations - largely remains unresolved'. Moreover, 'there are as yet no mandatory procedures in place to ensure that accountability for gender mainstreaming is formally included in individual work plans and job performance appraisals for pertinent agency staff regardless of seniority and gender; although there appears to be increasing expectations that pertinent staff have some 'gender competency'. In fact, 'in general senior management accountability for gender mainstreaming is not sufficiently institutionalized, and in practice much depends on individual attitudes of senior staff, be they male or female'.⁴

One of the tasks set by the IASC 2008 Gender Policy is for the IASC Working Group to guide the (former) Gender Sub-Working Group (GSWG)⁵ to develop an accountability framework to monitor its implementation. The framework – which was to be reviewed after five years to track progress towards the Gender Policy's realization - was not developed and put in place. To date, no monitoring exercise on progress towards the IASC 2008 Gender Policy's realization has been undertaken.⁶

2. Scope

The current Review investigates the measures taken to date by the IASC Leadership and the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels to equally promote and protect the human rights of women, girls, boys and men in humanitarian action. It also aims to identify gaps and challenges affecting implementation of the Gender Policy in addressing the following components of gender equality programming required for effective humanitarian response and sustainable humanitarian outcomes, and as defined by the Gender Policy itself:

- gender mainstreaming across all sectors;
- empowerment of women and girls;
- a human rights-based approach to programming;
- prevention and response to gender-based violence;
- targeted actions based on gender analysis;

² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. June.

³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 1999/b. 'Policy Statement for the Integration of a Gender Perspective in Humanitarian Assistance'.

⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2004. 'Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Integration of a Gender Perspective in Humanitarian Assistance'. By Camillia Fawzi El-Solh, Commissioned by UNOCHA, p. 8.

⁵ Replaced by the IASC Gender Reference Group in 2013.

⁶ The Consultant could not pinpoint any institutional memory within the IASC stakeholder community as to why the IASC 2008 Gender Policy accountability framework was not developed and put in place.

- mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel;
- promoting gender balance in the workplace.⁷

3. Methodological Approach

The methodological approach to implementing the current Review is based on the premise that the IASC 2008 Gender Policy understandably does not cover developments which have since taken place within the IASC Architecture, policy, strategy and operational guidelines, as well as in the wider humanitarian landscape. The focus of the current Review is therefore to investigate and analyze how the *spirit of the strategic objectives of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy* has since 2008 been translated into policy directives and operational guidance on the ground; and to identify progress, as well as gaps and challenges affecting its implementation to date.

Questionnaires were developed for the different IASC global and field level stakeholder groups. Key issues included IASC stakeholders' professional background with specific focus on gender-relevant training and experience; their views on achievements to date regarding gender mainstreaming in the work of the IASC, including relevant mechanisms and tools, needs assessment and programming; and their views on accountability for gender mainstreaming within the IASC global and field levels.⁸

The methodological approach and analysis of the current Review is in the first instance informed by the following inter-linked premises underlying the established *normative framework* for promoting and supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian and development interventions, and integral to the gender policies, strategies and/or action plan of IASC member organizations and agencies:⁹

- **First**, key UN Security Council Resolutions on women, security, conflict, peace and humanitarian crisis are indicative of continuing strategic and operational challenges affecting gender mainstreaming in humanitarian interventions.¹⁰
- **Second**, the fact that IASC members have their own gender policies, strategies and/or action plans, as well as relevant accountability mechanisms, including (where pertinent) reporting on SWAP,¹¹ signals that institutionalizing gender mainstreaming is an on-going process that has yet to be fully achieved in development and humanitarian interventions.
- **Third**, the need to take into account during the in-depth analysis of key IASC documents relevant to the current Review, as well as in guidance for interviews with IASC stakeholders, the statement by the IASC Working Group, to the effect that 'given that populations are not homogeneous, gender and other differentiations should be reflected in the one-pager',¹² thus implicitly confirming the relevance of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy Statement for

⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 2. See Annex 1: Review Terms of Reference

⁸ For further details on the list of issues compiled for discussion with global and field level IASC stakeholders see the 'Review Inception Report', Final Draft/17 November 2014, by Camillia Fawzi El-Solh. It should be noted that given that around one hour was allocated for the interview it was not expected that the discussion would cover each and every issue listed; rather the aim was to indicate the breath of topics relevant to reviewing the IASC Gender Policy.

⁹ For further details of the Review methodology see 'Review Inception Report', Final Draft/17 November 2014. By Camillia Fawzi El-Solh/Independent Consultant

¹⁰ Key Security Council Resolutions include: SCR 1325/*Women, Peace and Security* (2000); SCR 1820/*Combating Sexual Violence in War and Conflict* (2008); SCR 2122/*Measures to Include Women in Peace Processes* (2013); Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Resolutions 56/2 and 58/ 2 on *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Natural Disasters* (2014). See also Commission on Status of Women (CSW) website.

¹¹ It is mandatory for all UN agencies to report annually to UNWOMEN on how they are performing on the System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP) indicators.

¹² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/s. 'IASC 85th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record. 28-29 October, p. 10. Though this statement is in connection with discussion of AAP/PSEA, it is taken to apply to other IASC bodies.

- Humanitarian Action
- **Fourth**, as stated by the IASC Working Group, there is a need to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development interventions;¹³ this requires supporting gender equality programming conducive to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, and moving beyond the focus on gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian crisis.
 - **Fifth**, the need to ensure that the objective of, and requirements for, implementing gender mainstreaming - i.e. the 'why' and the 'how' – are perceived as integral to the human rights-based approach underpinning humanitarian action, and as cited in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy.
 - **Sixth**, understanding how, and to what extent, the concept of gender equality may be influenced by cultural – and therefore subjective - attitudes towards gender roles and the empowerment of women to achieve gender equality and gender equity.
 - **Seventh**, the above stated premises support the requirement that the term gender be explicitly referred to in strategic objectives, programming and operational guidelines relevant to humanitarian action; this implies avoiding the use of gender neutral terms such as 'people', 'population', 'children', 'youth', 'the elderly' where addressing the gender-based needs of women, men, boys and girls has implications for achieving expected humanitarian outcomes.¹⁴
 - **Eighth**, taking into account the growing recognition that both gender and age are key social determinants with far-reaching implications for effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and outcomes.
 - **Ninth**, recognition that gender analysis requires sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) conducive to effective programming and project implementation, and for strengthening impact and sustainability of humanitarian outcomes.

3.1 In-depth Desk Review:

As a first step in implementing the current Review, an in-depth desk analysis of available/accessible IASC sources of information and other relevant documentation was undertaken. This included a word search for the three key terms in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy, namely *gender, age and diversity*. The word search also investigated whether there is explicit reference in IASC documentation of the following key terms:

✓ accountability	✓ gender responsive budgeting
✓ community participation	✓ human rights
✓ cross-cutting	✓ human rights instruments (e.g. CEDAW)
✓ gender analysis	✓ minimum standards or commitments
✓ gender-based violence (GBV)	✓ sex and age disaggregated data (SADD)
✓ gender balance (workplace)	✓ relevant Security Council Resolutions
✓ gender competency	✓ violence against women (VAW)
✓ gender equality programming	✓ women's empowerment
✓ gender equality/gender equity	✓ women, men, girls, boys (and variants thereof)
✓ gender integration/mainstreaming	

Annex 2 presents available/accessible IASC and other documentation consulted for the current Review, and is also meant to be a knowledge source covering IASC products.¹⁵

¹³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/i. 'IASC 87th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record'. 29-30 October, p. 2.

¹⁴ In the context of the current Review 'gender neutral' is defined as omitting to draw a distinction between male and female. However use of this term may in fact mask gender blind language that overlooks and neglects to analyze gender-based differences in respect of needs and opportunities of, and possible constraints faced by, women, men, girls and boys; with implications for promoting a human rights-based approach to tackling gender-based inequalities in society, the economy and the political arena.

¹⁵ For ease of reference, Annex 2 is divided as follows: Annex 2/A: IASC documents; Annex 2/B: UN documents; Annex 2/C: non-UN documents; Annex 2/D: other, authors.

3.2 Interviews with Global Level IASC Stakeholders

Interviews with global-level IASC stakeholders in Geneva and New York were carried out either face-to-face or via Skype/telephone.¹⁶ This included leadership of the IASC Working Group and Emergency Directors Group, IASC Full Members¹⁷ and Standing Invitees,¹⁸ Chairs of IASC Task Teams¹⁹ and Reference Groups,²⁰ selected representatives of agencies who are members of the IASC Gender Reference Group (GRG), and Global Cluster Coordinators.²¹

3.3 Interviews with Field Level IASC Stakeholders.

Interviews via Skype/telephone were carried out with Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, Cluster Leads and Cluster Coordinators in selected field countries representing the following types of crisis: conflict, natural disaster, refugees, sudden onset disaster and protracted crisis.²²

3.4 Online Survey

An Online Survey targeting Cluster Leads and Cluster Coordinators was carried out during March 2015 in the selected field countries.²³ In spite of extending the deadline, the response was disappointingly low, i.e. around 17% (25 responses out of 150 email requests to participate in the online survey).²⁴ Around 14% of respondents are Cluster Leads, the rest are Cluster Coordinators, representing all clusters in the cluster system (except for Emergency Telecommunications) and including the GBV and Child Protection Sub-Clusters. Keeping in mind that respondents may be engaged in/responsible for more than one cluster and/or sub-cluster, the highest percentage of responses was received from WASH (28%), followed by Food Security, Health and Shelter Clusters (20% respectively), Education Cluster and GBV Sub-Cluster (16% respectively).²⁵

4. Limitations

Since no country field missions were undertaken during implementation of the current Review, analyses of the results – i.e. the in-depth desk review, interviews and the online survey - were inevitably constrained by limitations of gauging outcome and sustainability of humanitarian interventions on the ground; including to what extent have the objectives of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy have been translated into effective humanitarian action at the field level. Furthermore, there is the challenge of balancing personal views and opinions of interviewees with information solicited from the contents analysis of key documentation relevant to the current Review.

¹⁶ See Annex 3/A: Total of 71 global level IASC stakeholders were interviewed.

¹⁷ FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA, WFP, WHO,

¹⁸ ICRC, IFRC, InterAction, IOM, ICVA, OHCHR, OXFAM GB, SR on HR of IDPs, World Bank

¹⁹ Resilience & Preparedness; Accountability to Affected Populations/PSEA; Revitalizing Humanitarian Principles; Humanitarian Financing;

²⁰ Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, Gender Reference Group.

²¹ Interviews with the following Global Cluster Coordinators: Education, Health, Protection, Shelter, WASH.

²² Specifically, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mali, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Yemen and the Pacific Region. In the event IASC field level stakeholders were not reached in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan and Sudan.

A total of 33 interviews were carried out with field level stakeholders via Skype/telephone during February-March 2015. See Annex 3/B.

²³ With the exception of OPT which did not participate in the current Review, the online survey covered 12 of the selected countries and the Pacific Region. No response was received from Cluster Leads or Cluster Coordinators in Chad, Mali, Pakistan and Somalia. Response was received from two countries not included in the selected sample - Ethiopia and Sierra Leone.

²⁴ The online survey was sent to 196 IASC field level stakeholders; 46 were either out of office, or the email address was no longer active.

²⁵ See Annex 10: Summary of Responses to the Online Survey.

Overall IASC stakeholders at the global level were forthcoming in responding to requests for interviews, though in some cases the Consultant was referred to the ‘gender experts’ rather than senior management. Similarly, at the field level IASC stakeholders were generally cooperative in responding to requests for interviews. In some cases, arranging interviews was understandably affected by arising security and emergency challenges in some of the selected field countries; in other cases it appeared that IASC field level stakeholders did not accord priority to responding to interview requests. This is also noted in respect of the response to the online survey.

B. KEY FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was established in June 1992 in response to UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 to ‘serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination relating to humanitarian assistance’, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).²⁶ Over the past 23 years of its existence the IASC has been subject to restructuring, culminating in the current IASC Architecture.²⁷

1. IASC Leadership and Integrating Gender in Humanitarian Action

1.1 IASC Principals

IASC Principals are heads of IASC member organizations and agencies, divided into IASC Full Members – representing UN organizations – and IASC Standing Invitees, representing UN and non-UN agencies. The Principals’ responsibilities include ‘making strategic and policy decisions which have system-wide implications’; and ‘endorsing major operational decisions, particularly with respect to implementation of the Transformative Agenda (TA) (discussed in the following Section B/2.1).²⁸ Overall the desk review of reports of the Principals’ regular and *ad hoc* meetings over the past few years reveals some inconsistency in the way gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues are addressed. Moreover, where data is mentioned, there is no consistent reference to sex and age disaggregated data (SADD).

For example, the *April 2012 Principals Meeting Report* covering sustainable international response refers to ‘gender diversification initiatives for humanitarian leadership’, but elsewhere the document is couched in gender neutral language by referring to ‘people’.²⁹ Though reference to gender may be noted in some Principals’ Meeting Reports, for example when pointing out that women, men, girls and boys may experience specific vulnerabilities,³⁰ other documents reflect some inconsistencies. Thus various *Principals Meetings Reports in 2013 and 2014* either focus more narrowly on GBV;³¹ or

²⁶ <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pagelocator.aspx?page=content>

²⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/c. ‘IASC Architecture 2014’ (organogram).

²⁸ Other areas of responsibilities cover arbitration where no consensus can be reached at the Working Group (WG) or Emergency Directors Group (EDG) levels; advocating common humanitarian principles, collectively or individually, on behalf of the IASC; approving the general work programme of the IASC, the WG, and the EDG; bringing issues to the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, through the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC); and designating Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and selecting coordination arrangements. See Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/h. ‘IASC Principals’; see also IASC. 2014/t. ‘Concise Terms of Reference and Action Procedures’. February.

²⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/q. ‘IASC Principals Meeting: Towards Building a More Inclusive and Sustainable International Response System’. 24 April, p. 4. See also IASC. 2013/k. ‘Principals Ad Hoc Meeting on the Syria Crisis. Final Action Point’. 30 April where the stress is on the gender neutral term ‘people in need’.

³⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/m. ‘The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action. Statement by the IASC Principals’. 17 December.

³¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/l. ‘Principals Ad Hoc Meeting on Typhoon Haiyan/The Philippines. Final Summary and Action Points’. 19 November, p. 1; IASC. 2014/e. ‘IASC Principals Ad Hoc Meeting. Central African Republic’. 15 January; IASC. 2014/f. ‘IASC Principals Ad Hoc Meeting. Sudan’. 10 April.

use gender neutral terms such as ‘people’ or ‘population’;³² or may omit explicit reference to gender altogether.³³ Moreover, even where there is reference to data, this may not include explicit mention of SADD.

1.2 IASC Working Group

Directors of Emergency Programmes of IASC member agencies are members of the IASC Working Group (WG), chaired by the Assistant Secretary General (ASG) for Humanitarian Affairs who is also the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC). Responsibilities of the WG include ‘developing policies and guidance in line with strategic decisions made by the IASC’; establishing and overseeing/monitoring the work of the current Task Teams and Reference Groups; and ‘collaborating with the EDG in identifying and elaborating policy matters with direct bearing on humanitarian operations’.³⁴

Similar to the overall pattern noted in respect of the Principals’ Meeting Reports, here too there are some inconsistencies regarding how gender is addressed in WG Meeting Reports. For example, the *83rd Working Group Meeting Report* (November 2012) omits explicit reference to gender mainstreaming or to cross-cutting issues, even though the focus is on implementation of the Transformative Agenda (TA).³⁵ The *84th Working Group Meeting Report* (March 2013), which also discusses the TA, mentions ‘gender diversity’ (without defining the term or including reference to the IASC 2008 Gender Policy), while the rest of the document is couched in gender neutral language, such as ‘people in need’ or ‘affected people’.³⁶ Other reports of Working Group meetings in 2013 also reveal use of gender neutral language; for example when discussing protection;³⁷ or system-wide protection in humanitarian crises;³⁸ or IASC Priorities.³⁹

The review of accessible *2014 Working Group reports* reveals more or less a similar pattern; i.e. overall use of gender neutral language rather than explicit reference to gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues, or to gender equality programming and the link with women’s empowerment. In general, reference to data does not explicitly mention SADD.⁴⁰ For example, discussion of *the UN Rights Up Front Initiative*⁴¹ in the March 2014 WG Meeting misses the opportunity to integrate a gender perspective in the summary points.⁴² Similarly an opportunity appears to have been missed to couch the observation that there is a ‘need to understand cultural and language differences in the humanitarian and development worlds’ in gender sensitive language that also takes account of thematic and sector-specific cross-cutting issues.⁴³

³² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/n. ‘IASC Principals. The Protection of Human Rights in Humanitarian Crises’. Joint Paper by OHCHR and UNHCR. May; IASC. 2013/o. ‘IASC Principals Ad Hoc Meeting on Central African Republic. Final Action Points’. December; IASC. 2014/g. ‘IASC Principals Ad Hoc Meeting. Philippines/South Sudan’. February.

³³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/p. ‘IASC Principals Ad Hoc Meeting. Level 3 Emergencies: Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)/ Philippines and Syria’. December.

³⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/i. ‘IASC Working Group’; see also IASC. no date/n. ‘IASC Working Group: Modalities for Ad Hoc Meetings’. April.

³⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/u. ‘IASC 83rd Working Group Meeting. IASC Transformative Agenda Field Testing and Operationalization’. 14-15 November.

³⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/q. ‘IASC 84th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record and Action Point’. 18-19 March.

³⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/r. ‘IASC Ad Hoc Working Group Meeting. The Protection of Human Rights in Humanitarian Crises’. 18 July.

³⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/t. ‘IASC 85th Working Group Meeting. Strengthening System-wide Policy and Practice on Protection in Humanitarian Crises’. 28-9 October.

³⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/s. ‘IASC 85th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record. 28-29 October.

⁴⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/h. ‘IASC 86th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record’. 11-12 March 2014; IASC. 2014/j. ‘IASC Ad Hoc Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record’.

⁴¹ Annex 2/B: United Nations (UN). 2014/a. ‘Human Rights Up Front Initiative’.

⁴² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/h. ‘IASC 86th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record’. 11-12 March 2014, pp. 8-9.

⁴³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/i. ‘IASC 87th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record’. 29-30 October, p. 2.

1.3 IASC Emergency Directors Group

The IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG), headed by the Director of the UNOCHA Operational Division, advises and prepares options and recommendations for the IASC on operational issues of strategic concern, including mobilizing the RC/HC, the HCT and the cluster system to address operational challenges.⁴⁴ The EDG supports the IASC Principals in activating priorities of the Transformative Agenda (TA).⁴⁵ The EDG established the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) which has the responsibility for the roll-out of the TA at field level.⁴⁶ The EDG itself may undertake field missions to investigate humanitarian crises, to mobilize shared understanding of the increasingly complex operational challenges that need to be addressed; and where required, to critically review the decision-making processes during humanitarian action.

The EDG also focuses on supporting Good Humanitarian Donorship, where the added value of the IASC is perceived to be in terms of reviewing existing funding mechanisms, and engaging with donors on policy change and innovation, with positive implications for greater efficiency in implementing the TA.⁴⁷

There is no apparent consistency in the way gender is integrated in available/accessible EDG meeting and other reports. For example, guidance for implementing the Operational Peer Reviews initiated by the HC/HCT and the EDG (or the IASC Principals) does not elaborate on mainstreaming gender or other key cross-cutting variables.⁴⁸ The EDG August 2014 Final Summary Note on various countries experiencing humanitarian crisis refers to GBV, but not to gender equality, age, diversity, gender equality programming or SADD.⁴⁹ Though there is no explicit reference to these variables in the March 2015 EDG call for urgent action to assist people affected by conflict in Nigeria and Ukraine, the document does single out 'women and children', and 'older women and men', as particularly vulnerable groups.⁵⁰

1.4 IASC Members and Gender Mainstreaming

The IASC 2008 Gender Policy states that IASC Full Members, Standing Invitees and other IASC working mechanisms (in the current IASC Architecture this refers to Task Teams, Reference Groups and Global Clusters) ensure that:⁵¹

- gender equality is systematically incorporated into IASC policy development and operational guidance;
- IASC policy and guidance concerning gender quality programming is effectively communicated to the field level and field operations held accountable for their implementation

The IASC 2008 Gender Policy 'calls on members of the IASC to work in an inter-agency fashion towards the goal of gender equality in all aspects of humanitarian response', which also implies

⁴⁴ Discussed further in Section B/2.2 on operational guidance.

⁴⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/t. 'Concise Terms of Reference and Action Procedures'. February; see also IASC. 2014/c. 'IASC Architecture 2014' (organogram).

⁴⁶ Discussed in Section B/2.1 covering the TA.

⁴⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC/HFTT. 2013. 'IASC Priority: Humanitarian Financing'. December, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Discussed further in Section B/2.2 covering operational guidance.

⁴⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/aa. 'Emergency Directors meeting on the Central African Republic and coordination in Syria, Iraq and the region'. Final Summary Note, August, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2015/d. 'IASC Emergency Directors Call for Urgent Action to Assist People Affected by Conflict in Nigeria and Ukraine Following Week-Long Visit'. March.

⁵¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'Gender Equality Policy Statement in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 3.

strengthening their own actions and gender equality policies.⁵² In accordance with their respective mandate, IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies have over the years developed their own gender policy, strategy and/or action plans. These may not only pre-date the IASC 2008 Gender Policy, but in many cases have since 2008 been updated. Either way, given these post-2008 developments within the IASC stakeholder community, the relevant point here is investigating to what extent *the spirit of the objectives of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy* is reflected in humanitarian strategic approaches and programming developed and implemented by the relevant IASC stakeholder bodies, taking into account the analytical framework/premises underlying the methodological approach to implementing the current Review (see Section A/3.1).

1.4.1 IASC Full Members

Analysis of selected documents of IASC Full Member organizations reveals that over the past two decades there has been discernible progress in respect of integrating gender in policies, strategic objectives, operational guidelines and programmes; though keeping in mind variability in the mandates of the agencies concerned. Operationalization of the pertinent organizations' mandates also provides insight into how gender and age are addressed, and how diversity and cross-cutting issues are defined.

As the brief overview of selected gender relevant documents of IASC Full Member organizations (accessible via their respective websites, see Annex 4) reveals,⁵³ overall more attention is being accorded to gender in conflict-related emergencies, disaster risk management and mitigation and early recovery in the respective UN organizations' strategic plans and programmes. In some cases attention to gender in humanitarian action is part of the pertinent agencies' corporate gender strategic plans;⁵⁴ in other cases gender is integrated in specific humanitarian action-related documents.⁵⁵ Overall, more attention is also being accorded to collection and analysis of SADD, though in some cases there tends to be general reference to 'data', or to 'gender and age', or to sex but not to age, in sections covering data collection and monitoring.⁵⁶

1.4.2 IASC Standing Invitees

The mandate of the majority of the IASC Standing Invitee agencies focuses mainly - and in some cases exclusively - on humanitarian action.⁵⁷ Some of these organizations have specific gender policies, strategies and/or action plans;⁵⁸ for example, InterAction, IFRC, IOM, OHCHR, OXFAM and Save the Children. In the case of the ICRC, the focus is specifically on women rather than on gender *per se*.⁵⁹ In the case of the ICVA, while there is no corporate gender policy in place, its documents

⁵² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'Gender Equality Policy Statement in Humanitarian Action'. June, p

⁵³ Annex 4: IASC Full Members & Standing Invitees: Mainstreaming Gender in Humanitarian Action.

⁵⁴ Annex 2/B: UNDP. 2013. 'UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017'; UNFAO. 2007. 'Gender and Development Action Plan (2008-2013)'; UNFPA. 2013. 'Gender at the Heart of ICPD: UNFPA Strategic Framework on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment'; UN-HABITAT. 2012/a. 'Implementation of the UN-HABITAT Gender Equality Action Plan 2008-2013'. Progress Report.

⁵⁵ Annex 2/B: UNDP/BCPR. 2008. The Eight Point Agenda: Practical, positive outcomes for girls and women in crisis'; UNICEF. 2009/b. 'A Commitment to Gender Equality in Humanitarian Situations. A Handbook for Mainstreaming Gender into Planning, Preparedness, Response and Early Recovery'; UNFAO. 2013/b. 'FAO In Emergencies Guidance Note. Striving for Gender Equality in Emergencies'; UNFPA. no date/a. 'Humanitarian Response Strategy "Second Generation"'; UN-HABITAT. 2013. 'Women in Post-Conflict Settlement Planning'; UNHCR. 2011. 'Age, Gender and Diversity Policy'; UNWFP. 2011. 'WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction'; WHO. 2007/a. 'Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness. WHO six-year strategy for the health sector and community capacity development'.

⁵⁶ Annex 2/B: UNFPA. 2010. 'Guidelines on Data Issues in Humanitarian Crisis Situations'. Other UN agencies include specific reference to data collection in their various documents (see Annex 4),

⁵⁷ See Annex 4: IASC Full Members & Standing Invitees: Mainstreaming Gender in Humanitarian Action.

⁵⁸ Annex 2/C: InterAction. 2008. 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy Brief'; IFRC. 2013. 'IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013-2020'; IOM. 1998. 'Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy in IOM'. Five Year Action Plan; Annex 2/B: OHCHR. 2012/a. 'Gender Equality Strategic Plan' 2012-2013'.

⁵⁹ Annex 2/C: ICRC. 2014/b. 'Advancement of Women: ICRC Statement to the United Nations'. October.

generally reflect the need to address gender inequality and to incorporate a gender perspective in humanitarian action.⁶⁰

While the *Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response* (SCHR) - a voluntary alliance of humanitarian organizations - does not have a common gender strategy *per se*, its members have their own gender policy, strategy and/or gender action plan linked to their respective mandates. For example, ACT Alliance, CARE International, Lutheran World Federation and World Vision, while in the case of CARITAS International gender is mainstreamed in its strategic framework focusing on poverty eradication.

The mandate of the *Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons* (SR on HR of IDPs) includes explicit reference to 'the specific needs of internally displaced women and girls', providing the framework for a gender sensitive approach that also covers gender balance in recruitment of enforcement mechanisms such as military personnel and police.⁶¹ The IASC document on durable solutions for IDPs explicitly refers to gender as an integral part of non-discrimination and as a cross-cutting principle, in conjunction with age, disability, nationality, race, religion, national or social origin, family status and political opinion.⁶²

As for the World Bank, its programme focus on disaster mitigation and building resilience generally includes reference to gender as well as SADD, linked in turn to its corporate gender strategic objectives.⁶³ However, in some cases, the reference tends to be to 'women' and 'vulnerable' groups.⁶⁴

1.5 Role of the IASC Secretariat

The IASC Secretariat monitors implementation of decisions (taken by consensus) and reports annually to the IASC Working Group (WG). Its responsibilities include circulating background papers; preparing minutes of all formal IASC meetings; and disseminating summary records of action points agreed upon by the IASC WG.⁶⁵

The above discussion of IASC Principals and Working Group meetings, as well as other relevant documentation, raises a question as to whether or not the IASC Secretariat staff is enabled to be pro-active in following up on how gender, age and diversity – the three key variables in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy - are mainstreamed in the content and terminology of documentation prepared on behalf of the IASC Leadership. It would appear that this is not the case.

1.6 Views of IASC Stakeholders

The IASC Leadership is generally aware of key UN Security Council Resolutions (SCRs) on women in humanitarian crises, conflict resolution and peace-building, though acknowledge that the latter may not necessarily be explicitly referred to in directives and position papers issued by the IASC Principals and Working Group. However, respondents generally believe that the work of the IASC at the field

⁶⁰ Annex 2/C: ICVA. no date. 'Focus Areas. Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender'.

⁶¹ Annex 2/B: GA/HRC. 2013. 'Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons', p. 3.

⁶² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/d. 'IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons'. April, p. 13.

⁶³ Annex 2/C: WB. 2013/a. 'Update on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Agenda at the World Bank Group'. Development Committee/International Monetary Fund & World Bank Group; see also WB. no date/b. 'Integrating Gender Issues in Disaster Risk Management Policy Development and in Projects'..

⁶⁴ Annex 2/C: WB. 2013/b. 'Building Resilience: Integrating Climate and Disaster Risk into Development'.

⁶⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/t. 'Concise Terms of Reference and Action Procedures'. February (Action Points need to be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound), pp. 1, 2.

level contributes in many ways to implementing the pertinent SCRs, though this may not be explicitly spelt out in IASC documentation.⁶⁶

As far as could be ascertained from discussions with senior level IASC stakeholders, overall the fact appears to be overlooked that though their respective organizations and agencies have developed and are continuing to update their gender policies, strategic objectives and/or action plans – in effect signalling that gender mainstreaming continues to require attention – the same cannot be said, as the desk review reveals, of some of the key documentation issued by or on behalf of the IASC Principals and by the Working Group.

Conclusive discussions on achievements of, and challenges facing, gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action within the IASC structure with representatives of UN organizations and non-UN agencies that are part of the IASC Principals group tend to be linked to the respondents' understanding of their own role within the IASC Architecture; as well as the extent of their familiarity with key requirements for effectively integrating gender in humanitarian action. The discussion in some cases digressed to defining the difference between, on the one hand, 'gender awareness' – i.e. all humanitarian staff should have basic knowledge of gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action – and, on the other hand, 'gender expertise', held to imply humanitarian staff with the knowledge and experience of applying mechanisms and tools to effectively integrate gender in programming and project implementation, and supporting the 'non-gender experts' in this regard.⁶⁷ However, as some senior level respondents conceded, 'making it the business' of gender experts to implement gender mainstreaming undermines its institutionalization among the IASC stakeholder community; to which may be added the more or less continuing trend that 'gender experts' within the IASC stakeholder community tend to be predominantly female.

2. Strengthening Humanitarian Response and Gender Mainstreaming

2.1 IASC Transformative Agenda

The IASC Transformative Agenda (TA) launched in 2012 identified leadership, coordination, accountability, capacity building for preparedness and advocacy/communications as key areas for humanitarian action.⁶⁸ The TA reflects recognition by the IASC Leadership of the need for 'substantive improvement to the current humanitarian response model', to ensure 'the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership'. Specifically this covers:⁶⁹

- mechanism to deploy strong, experienced senior humanitarian leadership;
- strengthening of leadership capacities and rapid deployment of humanitarian leaders;
- improved strategic planning;
- enhanced accountability;
- streamlined coordination mechanisms.

⁶⁶ As communicated to the Consultant by the IASC Secretariat, while there may not be specific presentations by the IASC Principals on SCRs pertinent to women in conflict resolution and peace-building, the position of the IASC senior leadership on these SCRs as well as gender in humanitarian action may be included in various documentation issued by the UN Security Council.

⁶⁷ As flagged earlier in the current Review (Section A/3) such differentiation was in some cases used to explain why the Consultant was referred to 'the gender experts' in the pertinent UN organization or non-UN agency, rather than interviewing senior management.

⁶⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2011/d. 'IASC Working Group Operationalizing the IASC Principals Transformative Agenda'.

⁶⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/h. 'IASC Transformative Agenda – 2012: Chapeau and Compendium', p. 1.

The *Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT)* established by the IASC Working Group is tasked to support the roll-out of the TA and its application at the field level through field support missions to priority countries; remote support to HCTs; webinars addressing the broader humanitarian community; and issuing communications material on the TA.⁷⁰

Review of various documents issued as part of operationalizing the TA reveals that - though the IASC Gender Policy explicitly sets out actions 'each body or effort of the IASC should take to ensure gender equality is fully mainstreamed into humanitarian programmes', overall the TA – perceived to be the IASC's most important strategic step since it was developed – has taken limited account of gender considerations in its development and implementation. Explicit reference to key terms such as gender, age, diversity and/or cross cutting issues is generally inconsistent in TA directives and other documentation.⁷¹

Nor does the *Transformative Agenda Action Plan* explicitly include such reference, while the term 'cross-cutting' is not explicitly defined.⁷² The *TA Revised Action Points*, issued in 2011 by the IASC Principals, also omits explicit mention of gender, age, diversity or cross-cutting issues, and does not include reference to the Gender Sub-Working Group (Gender SWG) which had been in place since 1998, or to the IASC 2008 Gender Policy.⁷³

In fact the *2012 IASC Gender SWG Progress Report* indicates that the Gender SWG is facing the 'challenge that gender is perceived as a low profile issue, one that is marginal to the Transformative Agenda'. It requested 'the IASC Working Group's support in raising the profile of the issue of gender in evolving Transformative Agenda discussions, as well as identifying and accessing more strategic entry points to help inform and shape tools and outcomes'.⁷⁴ Overall it appears that this was not accorded due attention, further reflected in the discussions between the IASC Working Group and the Gender SWG regarding the latter's status in the new IASC Architecture.⁷⁵ The *2013 UN Secretary General Report on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters*, which includes a brief overview of the IASC Gender SWG's lead role in contributing to mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action, does not appear to have been accorded much attention by the IASC Leadership.⁷⁶

Indeed, it appears that the *Background Paper on Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response to Emergencies* - prepared by the Gender SWG and endorsed by the IASC Working Group – which aimed to facilitate discussion on effective gender mainstreaming within the IASC and flags that 'one of the most important challenges is responding in a gender-sensitive manner (given) the changing nature of emergencies and the

Aim of the Background Paper 'is to identify a coordinated programme of action to enhance the qualities of gender-based assessments, planning, programme implementation, training, monitoring, evaluation and reporting at headquarters and field levels'.

⁷⁰ Annex 2/C: HR. 2011. 'Transformative Agenda'. The current STAIT core group is composed of representatives of InterAction, NRC, UNDP, UNICEF and UNDP with the UNHCR representative as Team Leader.

⁷¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/h. 'IASC Transformative Agenda – 2012: Chapeau and Compendium'; IASC. no date/f. 'Key Messages: The IASC Transformative Agenda'.

⁷² Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/g. 'ANNEX – Transformative Agenda Global Implementation Plan', p. 2.

⁷³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2011/e. 'IASC Principals Meeting: Revised Action Points'. December.

⁷⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2012/b. 'IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action. Annual Report 2012, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2013/a. 'IASC Gender SWG Monthly Meetings (January, February, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November).

⁷⁶ Annex 2/B: ECOSOC. 2013/b. 'Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters', p. 10.

increasing number of conflicts' (see Box) - was incorporated in a rather *ad hoc* manner in the Transformative Agenda Protocols and Priorities.⁷⁷

The *IASC Working Group Protocols* issued in November 2012 underpin the Transformative Agenda. Only one of the five documents - *Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level* – explicitly mentions and defines cross-cutting issues as covering age, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS, mental health and social wellbeing, and also refers to GBV, though there is no mention of SADD where monitoring is discussed.⁷⁸ The other four IASC Protocols documents – concept paper on empowered leadership; humanitarian system-wide emergency activation; responding to Level 3 emergencies/what empowered leadership looks like; and responding to Level 3 emergencies/n humanitarian programme cycle – do not include explicit reference to gender, age, diversity or cross-cutting issues.⁷⁹

Though the *revised 2014 Reference Module on Cluster Coordination* includes multiple references to gender, there is no explicit mention of cross-cutting issues. Reference is to survey data in general rather than spelling out the need for SADD,⁸⁰ even though the findings of the IASC commissioned Report on *Sex & Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies* was issued in 2011,⁸¹ and limitation of data was noted in the UNOCHA World Humanitarian Data and Trends.⁸²

The IASC Working Group in 2013 issued the *IASC Priorities* on behalf of the IASC Principals, covering resilience and preparedness; accountability to affected populations including protection from sexual abuse and exploitation (AAP/PSEA); revitalizing principled humanitarian action; humanitarian financing; and protection in humanitarian crisis. Though some of these documents flag the value added of IASC support to implementing the stated priorities, and all present an overview of designated tasks during the following two years (i.e. 2012-2013), reference to 'different humanitarian needs, vulnerabilities and capacities and is inclusive of gender and age' is only explicitly mentioned in the document covering AAP/PSEA.⁸³ The omission of gender in the IASC Priority document on humanitarian financing is surprising given the stated objective of improving the current funding architecture (see Box) and the link with ensuring effective and efficient gender equality programming.⁸⁴

'Review the potential of the current funding architecture to respond to the evolving nature of humanitarian action in an effort to improve our ability to provide aid to this who most need it'.

⁷⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 1999/a. 'Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response to Emergencies'. Background Paper prepared by the Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance, endorsed by the IASC Working Group, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/i. 'IASC Transformative Agenda Reference Document: 4. Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level'.

⁷⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/j. '1. Concept Paper on 'Empowered Leadership' (revised March 2014); IASC. 2012/k. '2. Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Activation: definition and procedures'. April; IASC. 2012/l. '3. Responding to Level 3 Emergencies: What 'Empowered Leadership' looks like in practice'. November; IASC. 2012/n. '5. Responding to Level 3 Emergencies: The Humanitarian Programme Cycle'. November.

⁸⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/r. 'Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level'. Revised July.

⁸¹ Mazurana, Dyan, Prisca Benelli, Huma Gupta and Peter Walker. 2011. 'Sex & Age Matter. Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies'. By Feinstein International Centre/Tufts University. Commissioned by OCHA and CARE.

⁸² Annex 2/B: ECOSOC. 2013/b. 'Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters'. Report by the Secretary General/December, submitted to CSW 58th session March 2014, p. 11; see UNOCHA. 2013/j. 'World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2013; UNOCHA. 2014/n. 'World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2014.

⁸³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/c. 'IASC Priority: Resilience and Preparedness'. October; IASC. 2013/d. 'IASC Priority: Accountability to Affected Populations, Including Exploitation from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (AAP/PSEA)' December, p. 1; IASC. 2013/e. 'IASC Priority: Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action'. December; IASC. 2013/f. 'IASC Priority: Humanitarian Financing'. December; IASC. 2013/g. 'IASC Priority: Protection in Humanitarian Crisis'. December.

⁸⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/f. 'IASC Priority: Humanitarian Financing'. December; p. 1.

The 2012 *Operational Implications of the Transformative Agenda for NGOs* – supported by the IASC NGO consortia (ICVA, InterAction and the SCHR) omits explicit mention of gender, age or cross-cutting issues, while the term diversity is used in connection with the community of NGOs.⁸⁵ Another example is the 2013 *IASC Common Framework for Preparedness* requested by the Principals in conjunction with the TA, where reference to international humanitarian and human rights law in support of local capacities and affected populations is couched in gender neutral language.⁸⁶ Though the 2014 *Joint Progress Report on TA Implementation* explicitly refers to gender balance in recruitment of HCs, as well as gender, age and diversity as integral to the needs assessment process,⁸⁷ the related implementation plan refers to gender in respect of staffing but not in the section covering the normative framework; nor is there reference to SADD in the monitoring section.⁸⁸

The *IASC Joint Progress Reports on TA Implementation during 2013* includes reference to gender, age and diversity, as well as to the aim of achieving gender balance in humanitarian staffing in the field.⁸⁹ Yet this is not explicitly incorporated in the TORs of TA Field Mission Reports. Thus, inter-agency field mission reports by the TA Team – comprised of senior operations managers representing IASC Full Members and Standing Invitees - are generally couched in gender neutral language and do not include explicit reference to gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action.⁹⁰

For example, *the South Sudan 2012 TA Mission Report* covers leadership, cluster coordination, strategic systems and accountability but does not refer to good practices in mainstreaming gender, age and other cross-cutting issues in the strategic system put in place by the HC/HCT;⁹¹ nor is there explicit reference to SADD in the mission's recommendation to strengthen capacity on needs assessment and development of the monitoring framework.⁹² Similarly the *2012 Chad TA Mission Report* omits explicit reference to challenges of mainstreaming gender in the areas covered by the analysis; even where the mission concludes that good programming is aligned with good practices, and 'application of the Transformative Agenda is a result of good practices'.⁹³

On a practical level, to ensure that the technical expertise of the Gender RG informs the work of the other subsidiary bodies and, where appropriate, the

⁸⁵Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/o. 'The IASC Transformative Agenda: Operational Implications for NGOs'. October.

⁸⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/h. 'Common Framework for Preparedness', p. 2.

⁸⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/d. 'Joint Progress Report on TA Implementation'.

⁸⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/j. 'Progress on the Transformative Agenda Global Implementation Plan: Update November 2013', pp. 5, 6.

⁸⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/u. 'Joint Progress Report on TA Implementation'.

⁹⁰ As per the TA Global Implementation Plan, priority countries for testing the TA are Afghanistan, CAR, DRC, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. With the exception of South Sudan and Chad (latter was apparently later added to the list) IASC TA mission reports on the afore mentioned countries are not accessible via the website. See Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/i. 'Progress on the Transformative Agenda Global Implementation Plan: Update November 2013', p. 3.

⁹¹ Areas for analysis to be covered by the TA mission are set out in the guidelines issued in 2012, but do not include explicit reference to mainstreaming gender and other cross-cutting issues, nor to SADD. See Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/t. 'IASC Transformative Agenda – 2012'.

⁹² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/r. 'IASC Transformative Agenda: South Sudan Mission. Final Report'. May, p. 4.

⁹³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/s. 'IASC Transformative Agenda Mission to Chad'. October.

The points presented above would appear to indicate that the *2013 IASC Briefing Note on IASC Restructuring*, which also clarified the status of the current Gender Reference Group/GRG (replacing the Gender SWG) within the IASC Architecture, was not much taken into consideration.⁹⁴ Specifically that the Gender SWG is to provide guidance and support to all bodies and structures to ensure that they integrate gender in all aspects of their work. The Briefing Note also asserts that it is important that the GRG ‘has systematic access and input into the on-going work of the IASC Working Group (WG), as well as the Task Teams and other Reference Groups’, as part of maintaining ‘gender’s status as an essential cross-cutting issue’. In turn this implies that the GRG ‘must have direct entry points to influence the technical and policy matters at hand’ (see Box).⁹⁵

WG, the TORs of these groups should include the mandatory requirement to utilize the Gender RG as an in-house resource and systematically consult with the Gender RG for technical support on any draft products, policies etc.’

It may also be noted that the *2013 Report of the UN Secretary General (SG)*, distributed at the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), explicitly refers to the contribution of the Gender SWG to mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action. The Report also points out that the function of the Gender SWG as a voluntary body limits its role to recommendations and advice, and calls on the IASC to address this limitation (see Box).⁹⁶

‘Having a formal mechanism within the Standing Committee with appropriate monitoring resources and capacity will enable it to deliver on fully integrating gender equality considerations within the humanitarian assistance agenda’.

session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), explicitly refers to the contribution of the Gender SWG to mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action. The Report also points out that the function of the Gender SWG as a voluntary body limits its role to recommendations and advice, and calls on the IASC to

2.2 Operational Guidance

As indicated earlier, the *IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG)* is responsible for operational issues of strategic concern to humanitarian action. IASC operational guidance documents issued over the past few years (and generally accessible via the humanitarian response website) differ in the way they address cross-cutting issues in general, and gender, age and diversity, GBV and SADD in particular. Overall there is limited if any explicit reference in operational guidance to contribution of humanitarian action to promoting and supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Moreover, as noted in the examples discussed below, reference to gender mainstreaming and SADD may be more explicit in earlier rather than in some of the more recently issued guidance documents, though in some cases the opposite appears to be the case.

For example, the *2008 Guidance and Indicator Package for Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response*, based on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, refers to gender as ‘a core factor in disaster risk and in the reduction of risk’, as well as ‘a central organizing principle in all societies’. The document also flags the need for SADD, and defines cross-cutting themes as encompassing ‘gender, environment, culture and working with communities’.⁹⁷

By contrast, guidance notes for the cluster system are less consistent in respect of addressing gender and other cross-cutting issues, as well as in reference to SADD. For example, the *Operational Guidance for Cluster Leads* omits explicit reference to gender, or to women and men, and refers to

⁹⁴ The Briefing Note refers to procedures for the IASC Reference Group Sponsors to facilitate the link with the IASC Working Group, given that the current IASC Architecture does not call for a direct line of reporting between these two entities. See Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/u. ‘Briefing Note: IASC Restructuring’. 4 September

⁹⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/u. ‘Briefing Note: IASC Restructuring’. 4 September, p.2; see also IASC. 2014/c. ‘IASC Architecture 2014’ (organogram).

⁹⁶ Annex 2/B: UNESC/CSW. 2013. ‘Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters’. Report by the Secretary General/December, submitted to CSW 58th session March 2014.

⁹⁷ Annex 2/B: UN. 2008. ‘Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response. Guidance and Indicator Package for Implementing Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework’, pp. 5, 8, 25.

diversity without defining the term, though it spells out the need for SADD.⁹⁸ The *Operational Guidance for Cluster Coordinators* explicitly refers to gender and other cross-cutting issues (defined as age, environment, HIV/AIDS and human rights) but refers to data in general terms.⁹⁹ The *Cluster Performance Monitoring Guidelines* explicitly refer to gender and age as cross-cutting issues in needs assessment and strategic planning.¹⁰⁰

The *2010 IASC Guidelines for Addressing HIV in Humanitarian Settings* refers to the universal agreement ‘that any response to HIV in humanitarian crises must take human rights and gender into account’; that ‘existing gender inequalities may be further exacerbated’; and data needs to be disaggregated by sex and age.¹⁰¹ The *2011 Operational Guidance on Protection in Natural Disasters* focuses mainly on GBV, and refers to gender sensitive services and data, though the latter is defined as gender and age.¹⁰²

The *2012 IASC Response Monitoring and Reporting Framework* omit mention of gender or SADD, while reference to accountability is couched in gender neutral language.¹⁰³ However, by 2014 efforts are discernible to mainstream gender, age and diversity in humanitarian response monitoring guidance notes.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, the *IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle Revised Guidance Tools for 2015*¹⁰⁵ does not include explicit reference to mainstreaming gender, age and other cross-cutting issues, or to women and men. There is general reference to data but without specifying the requirement for SADD.¹⁰⁶

The *2014 IASC Guidance for Operational Peer Review* refers to ‘appropriate gender and geographical representation’ in respect of team composition, but otherwise omits explicit reference to mainstreaming gender and other cross-cutting issues or to SADD.¹⁰⁷ Analyses of three accessible OPRs – CAR, Philippines and South Sudan¹⁰⁸ – reveal some differences in the way gender is integrated in humanitarian action. The OPRs voice concern over the lack of or limited sex and age disaggregated data, and the way this has affected mainstreaming of gender in the collective humanitarian response. Moreover, impact of the deployment of the GenCap Adviser appears to have been less than expected, deemed to be largely due to arbitrary reporting lines and missed opportunities of integrating their inputs in the inter-cluster coordination system.¹⁰⁹

The umbrella term “gender mainstreaming”

⁹⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/a. ‘Operational Guidance. Generic Terms of Reference for Cluster Coordinators at the Country Level’, p 3.

⁹⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/j. ‘Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management’, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/k. ‘Cluster Performance Monitoring: Preliminary Coordination Performance Report’.

¹⁰¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/e. ‘Guidelines for Addressing HIV in Humanitarian Settings’.

¹⁰² Annex 2/A: IASC 2011/f. ‘IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters’, pp. 1, 7, 12, 22.

¹⁰³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/p. ‘IASC Response Monitoring and Reporting Framework’.

¹⁰⁴ Annex 2/A: (IASC). 2014/w. ‘Periodic Monitoring Report: Guidance’. September; IASC. 2014/x. ‘2015 Humanitarian Response Monitoring. Guidance’. September.

¹⁰⁵ See diagram presenting inter-linked areas of the humanitarian programme cycle: needs assessment & analysis; strategic planning; resource mobilization; implementation & monitoring; operational review & evaluation.

<http://www.humanitarianresponse.onfo/programme=cycle/space/documentation...>

¹⁰⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/m. IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle Revised Guidance Tools for 2015’. Inter-Agency HPC Facilitator Training, Chamonix.

¹⁰⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/l. ‘Operational Peer Review. Guidance Terms of Reference Report Template’.

¹⁰⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/o. ‘Operational Peer Review. Internal Report: Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines’. February; IASC. 2014/p. ‘Operational Peer Review. Internal Report: Response to the Crises in the Central African Republic’. March.; IASC. 2014/q. ‘Operational Peer Review. Internal Report: Response to the Crisis in South Sudan’. July.

¹⁰⁹ See Section B/7.1 for discussion of the Gender Standby Capacity Project.

The *UNOCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2015* mentions gender mainstreaming (see Box), GBV, the Gender Marker and the Humanitarian Response Monitoring Guidance. However, the latter does not include explicit reference to SADD, and some sections use the gender neutral terms ‘people’ or ‘population’.¹¹⁰

refers to initiatives aimed at increasing gender awareness and improving the quality of humanitarian assistance provided to women and men.

2.3 Views of IASC Stakeholders

IASC Transformative Agenda

Discussions on the Transformative Agenda (TA) with the IASC Leadership included mention of its value added in terms of strengthening humanitarian action and outcomes. The IASC TA is believed to be contributing to a more coherent and effective approach to developing humanitarian policies, defining strategic objectives and ensuring that programmes and projects are to the benefit of populations affected by crises. Various respondents would point out that this ‘transformation was long overdue’. The key strategic objectives of the TA are perceived as imperatives that also guide humanitarian policies and programming approach of IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies, with positive implications for humanitarian outcomes on the ground.

Overall there were no conclusive responses regarding the findings of the desk review which reveal inconsistencies in the way gender, GBV, age, diversity, cross-cutting issues and SADD are addressed in key TA documents. The assumption among some senior IASC stakeholders appears to be that use of gender neutral language, such as ‘people’ and ‘populations’, should not hinder ensuring gender equality programming since this is inherent in the IASC’s strategic approach to humanitarian action. Overall there does not appear to be much awareness that at the time the TA was being developed in 2012, the Gender SWG was flagging that ‘gender is perceived as a low profile issue, one that is marginal to the Transformative Agenda’.¹¹¹ It tended to be members of the current Gender Reference Group (GRG), as well as Gen Cap Advisers, who would point out that the opportunity was missed to ensure that gender is effectively integrated in the process of developing the TA, perceived by the IASC Leadership to be an important milestone to achieve sustainable humanitarian outcomes.

Some ‘gender experts’ in IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies were generally more inclined to concede that – given the reality that overall effective gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action tends to be hampered by inadequate financial and human resources, and monitoring and evaluation results generally point to weak implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies and action plans - gender neutral terminology cannot be expected to contribute to raising awareness on the link between effective gender mainstreaming and sustainable humanitarian outcomes. However, other respondents with similar gender programming experience did not perceive using gender neutral terminology in key TA and other IASC documentation as being particularly problematic. In effect, these responses reflect variability in stakeholders’ views on how gender mainstreaming should be addressed in humanitarian action at the IASC global and field levels.

Some respondents point out that essentially it is the task of the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) to ensure that key strategic messages of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy Statement are integrated in the process of implementing the TA. Pertinent discussions indicate that there appears to be lack of clarity and consensus within the IASC stakeholder community regarding

¹¹⁰ Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2015/b. ‘Global Humanitarian Overview 2015’, p. 25.

¹¹¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2012/b. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action. Annual Report 2012.

the normative framework that should inform the process of gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action; and how this is linked not only to pertinent Security Council Resolutions, but also to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, not to mention the IASC 2008 Gender Policy.

Few respondents from among the IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies could off-hand list the various IASC TA documents issued since 2012; or could pinpoint which documents explicitly integrate gender and which do not. Either way various global level respondents believe that it is at the field level that ensuring gender sensitive terminology is important. Indeed, it was pointed out that this would be expected from the leadership of the RC/HC and the HCT. However, few respondents in this stakeholder group appeared to be aware that the IASC TA field mission reports are generally couched in gender neutral language; that some may not include reference to gender mainstreaming when listing good practice in humanitarian programming or referring to the normative framework underlying humanitarian action; and that they generally omit explicit mention of SADD.

For their part, stakeholders in the global cluster system also credit the IASC TA with strengthening humanitarian action 'since it aims to ensure that humanitarian actors are on the same page', as one respondent put it. Respondents generally believe that the IASC TA has also contributed to improving the functioning of the cluster system at the global level, with positive ripple effects discernible on the ground. Though some respondents would also point out that the challenge of implementing the TA is to move beyond the focus on process and strengthen systemic and other factors that contribute to the cluster system achieving the desired impact and sustainability of its activities at the field level.

As for the field level leadership (RC/HC and HCT), similar messages regarding the value added of the TA were discernible during the interviews. Here again, and as appears to be generally the case among the global IASC stakeholder community discussed above, respondents could list some but not all relevant TA documentation issued by and on behalf of the IASC Principals. But – as various field level respondents, including Cluster Coordinators, point out – the strategic direction inherent in the TA is in the process of being translated into humanitarian action on the ground, to which humanitarian agencies and stakeholders are committed. As one respondent put it, 'whatever the crisis context may be, it takes some time – some would say too long – for TA guidelines to cascade down to the field level'. To which may be added the challenge of staff turnover which particularly affects humanitarian action, and – as another field level respondent explained – 'this is where progress on gender mainstreaming may get lost along the way'.

Operational Guidance

As indicated above in the discussion of IASC operational guidance documents issued by the IASC Leadership (Section B/2.2), the in-depth desk review reveals variations in how gender, GBV, age, diversity, cross-cutting issues and SADD are addressed. Understandably, few respondents within the global level IASC community could off-hand list the various IASC operational guidelines, or indicate how gender, age and diversity are addressed in the pertinent document. Where specific operational guidelines are mentioned then this would generally be in relation to the respondent's area of work; for example health and the link with HIV/AIDS operational guidelines. Various global level respondents would point out that implementing operational guidelines issued by the IASC Leadership needs in any case to be linked to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.¹¹²

Discussion with field level humanitarian leadership in the selected field countries, specifically RCs/HCs and cluster leads/members of the HCT, regarding operational guidance received from the

¹¹² Discussed in the following Section B/3 of the current Review.

IASC global level, elicited different responses. Some would reiterate that essentially the usefulness of an IASC operational guideline is its contribution to effectively implementing the Humanitarian Programme Cycle at the field level. For others ‘what counts is humanitarian experience in the field’. . In the view of some respondents operational guidance from the global IASC level does not sufficiently include good practice examples, and in particular on gender mainstreaming. While gender mainstreaming is deemed to be important – and here respondents would mention the RC/HC Handbook and in some cases also the IASC Gender Handbook – senior level field respondents would also point out that addressing gender at the field level needs to take into account how crisis situations impact on gender dynamics.

Both global and field level IASC stakeholders would point out that IASC operational guidance generally overlooks - or does not accord sufficient attention to - supporting the transition from humanitarian action to recovery to development. Various respondents with whom this particular point was discussed believe that the humanitarian sector tends to ‘almost work in a vacuum’, rather than ‘tapping into what is happening in the development sector’. But as one respondent explained, there is also the reality that donors focusing on funding humanitarian interventions do not necessarily continue by supporting this transition. The opportunity of linking positive gender mainstreaming outputs and outcomes with gender mainstreaming activities during the recovery and development phases may well be dissipated. It may also inadvertently exacerbate the way the humanitarian and development sectors tend to operate in ‘parallel streams’.

Responses to the online survey questions regarding how helpful are IASC operational guidelines covering Level 3 emergencies, protracted crisis, conflict, refugees, and sudden onset/natural disaster emergencies reveal difference of opinion by role (i.e. cluster lead or cluster coordinator), as well as by UN agency affiliation (see *Graphs 1 and 2/Annex 9*).¹¹³

Graphs 3-7 (Annex 9) reveal respondents views by humanitarian context, role and UN agency affiliation. For example, as revealed in *Graph 3*, respondents affiliated with UNICEF, UNFAO, UNWHO, UNWFP and UNWOMEN find IASC operational guidelines on L3 emergencies helpful, while cluster coordinators affiliated with IOM and UNHCR do not. The majority of respondents to whom this applies find the IASC guidelines on protracted crisis useful, the exception being cluster coordinators in UNHCR and UNICEF (*Graph 4*), which is also the response in respect of conflict (*Graph 5*). As regards IASC operational guidelines covering refugees and IDPs, with the exception of cluster coordinators in UNFAO, UNICEF and IOM, respondents find these helpful (*Graph 6*). The majority of respondents to whom this applies also find IASC operational guidelines on sudden onset emergencies/natural disasters helpful, with the few exceptions being UNICEF and IOM cluster coordinators (*Graph 7*). A key reason cited for not finding various operational guidelines very helpful is that they are perceived to be ‘too dense’ and require to be developed into more user-friendly versions, ‘especially for humanitarian staff with limited gender training’.

3. Integrating Gender in Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The IASC Gender Policy is explicit in calling for gender equality programming at the country level, to include gender analysis and SADD in humanitarian planning, intra- and inter-cluster coordination on gender equality issues, addressing GBV, participation of women, men, girls and boys, and systematic monitoring and evaluation.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Note: Not applicable (N/A) responses indicate that the respondent is not familiar with the pertinent type of humanitarian context; see Annex 10: Summary Results of the Online Survey March-April 2015.

¹¹⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. ‘IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action’. June, pp. 4-5.

The *Humanitarian Programme Cycle* (HPC) is integral to the IASC Transformative Agenda. It aims to improve coordination, leadership and accountability through a single approach and response framework covering preparedness, needs assessment, strategic planning, monitoring, operational peer reviews and evaluations.¹¹⁵ Though the *IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group (HPCSG) Report on Activities 2013-2014* does not explicitly refer to gender, the *2013 Reference Module for Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle* covers cross-cutting issues and gender equality, and includes reference to the Gender Marker, though there is no explicit reference to SADD.¹¹⁶ Though there are efforts to increase geographical representation and gender balance in the *IASC Humanitarian Coordination Pool*, by mid-2014 only 24% of HCs were female and 25% of HCs were from non-Western countries.¹¹⁷

3.1 Humanitarian Needs Assessment

The IASC Gender Policy also calls for ensuring that ‘multi-sectoral needs assessments and the identification of humanitarian priorities are based on sex and age-disaggregated data and gender analysis of these data’.¹¹⁸

The impetus for the IASC Working Group to establish the time bound IASC Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF) in 2009 (later extended to end of 2012) was recognition that weaknesses in humanitarian needs assessment practices have implications for effective programming and evidence-based humanitarian response. The NATF Terms of Reference (TOR) covers five areas: strengthening cross-sector needs assessment; improving technical support for inter-cluster needs assessment; advocacy and awareness-raising; capacity-building; and enhancing information management mechanisms.

The *NATF Strategy*, deemed to be integrated in the IASC Transformative Agenda, explicitly refers to the importance of addressing ‘the needs of vulnerable groups, including children the elderly and the disabled, and address cross-cutting issues such as gender, HIV and age’,¹¹⁹ which are also included in the *NATF Work Plan*.¹²⁰ Yet, for example, the *NATF Mid-Year Update* (August 2012) omits explicit mention of gender and cross-cutting issues in the presentation of activities and field missions in 12 countries and the Pacific Region.¹²¹

The NATF developed three products, namely Operational Guidelines for Coordinated Assessments; the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) and the Humanitarian Dashboard. The *2012 Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments* identifies roles and responsibilities of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), the Cluster Coordinator, and cluster/sector members for inter- and intra- cluster assessments. The document explicitly refers to gender and cross-cutting issues (defined as HIV, age and disability), as well as gender balance in needs assessment teams.¹²² The importance of collecting SADD is particularly highlighted (see Box),¹²³ and the *2009 IASC Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) Project* is included as a reference.¹²⁴

‘One of the most effective ways to understand different needs within a population is to collect data by sex and age (SADD) and to analyse that data ...using a gender and generational analysis’.

¹¹⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/j. ‘Reference Module for Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle’. December, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/j. ‘Reference Module for Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle’. December.

¹¹⁷ Annex 2/A: (IASC). 2014/y. ‘The IASC Humanitarian Coordination Pool’. Information Sheet.

¹¹⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. ‘IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action’. June, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/NATF. 2009/a. ‘IASC Task Force on Needs Assessment. Terms of Reference. Updated 2011, p. 5.

¹²⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/NATF. 2009/b. ‘NATF Work Plan September 2009-August 2010’. Version October 2009; IASC/NATF. 2011. ‘IASC Needs Assessment Task Force Work Plan for 2011’; IASC/NATF. 2012/a. ‘IASC Needs Assessment Task Force Work Plan for 2012’.

¹²¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/NATF. 2012/b. ‘IASC NATF Mid-Year Update August 2012’.

¹²² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/v. ‘Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises’, pp. 9, 15, 41.

The *Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)* was initially developed in 2008 as ‘an action-oriented tool for assessing needs as soon as possible after the onset of a crisis’ and involving the IASC and government counterparts. MIRA aims to generate more comprehensive and accurate information through cost-effective use of assessment resources and application of core indicators across clusters/sectors. The *2012 MIRA Approach* covering process, methodology and tools includes explicit reference to gender, age, GBV, and gender balance in needs assessment teams and targeting key informants.¹²⁵ Though the *2012 MIRA Framework* uses gender neutral terms such as ‘people’ and ‘populations’, it also explicitly refers to women, men, boys and girls in sections covering scope of the crisis, and status of populations affected by the crisis.¹²⁶ Yet the *2012 MIRA Summary* issued as a TA Reference Document omits explicit mention of gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues in discussion of the MIRA process, approach and outputs.¹²⁷

3.2 Humanitarian Needs Overview

The IASC Gender Policy explicitly calls for ensuring ‘that a gender analysis informs the planning processes, including Humanitarian Action Plans and CAPs’.¹²⁸

The *Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)* is initiated by the HC and the HCT. It identifies needs and pinpoints priorities six months after the onset of a crisis in the pertinent country, and also takes available assessment results into consideration. The *2015 IASC Guidance for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)* explicitly refers to gender sensitive analysis and SADD, while diversity is defined as covering LGBT, disability and ethnic/religious minorities. Gender analysis covers access to/control over resources; constraints in accessing assistance; effect of the crisis; as well as roles, responsibilities, needs and capacities. The HNO template focuses on presenting key humanitarian issues; impact of the crises and information gaps, and includes an annex covering the operational environment (international/national/local capacity and response and humanitarian access).

Analysis of accessible HNOs of the field countries covered by the current Review reveals variations in how these documents address gender mainstreaming. Though HNO documents reviewed refer to gender and/or GBV, none make any explicit reference to other cross-cutting issues. Moreover, reference to data more often than not omits spelling out the need for SADD, and generally does not include explanation for why compiling SADD has not been achieved.¹²⁹

3.3. Strategic Response Plan

The HNO provides the required evidence base for the HC and HCT to assess if the *Strategic Response Plan (SRP)* is effectively addressing the needs of the population affected by crisis and emergency.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 37.

¹²⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2009/b. ‘Sex and Age Disaggregated Data Project (SADD) – Summary of Findings and Recommendations’.

¹²⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/NATF. 2009/c. ‘The Multi-Sectoral Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Approach. Process, Methodologies and Tools’. Provisional Version/ January.

¹²⁶ Annex 2/A: (IASC/NATF). 2012/f. ‘MIRA Framework’. September.

¹²⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/a. ‘Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Summary’. Transformative Agenda Reference Document’. April.

¹²⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. ‘IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action’. June, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2013/a. ‘2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Central African Republic**’; UNOCHA. 2013/ d. ‘2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Republic of Chad**’; UNOCHA. 2013/f. ‘2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Occupied Palestinian Territories**’; UNOCHA. ‘2013/h. ‘2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview **South Sudan**’; UNOCHA. 2014/b. ‘2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Central African Republic**’ (French); UNOCHA. 2014/d . ‘2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Colombia**’; UNOCHA. 2014/f. ‘2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Democratic Republic of Congo**’; UNOCHA. ‘2014/g . ‘2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Haiti** (July update); UNOCHA. 2014/h . ‘2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Sahel Region (includes **Mali**); UNOCHA. 2014/j. ‘2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Somalia**’; UNOCHA. 2014/m. ‘2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview **Yemen**’.

The 2014 IASC *Guidance for Strategic Response Planning* aims to assist the HCT to develop the SRP consisting of two parts: country strategy and cluster plans. The Guidance includes explicit reference to the Gender Marker and its application; gender aware planning; mainstreaming gender and other cross cutting issues (defined as environment, age, disability, HIV/AIDS and mental health, ‘among other issues relevant to the specific context’), as well as SADD, though does not refer to diversity.¹³⁰

SADD is also highlighted in the 2015 *Guidance for Strategic Response Planning* but there is also reference to ‘gender and age data’; cross-cutting issues are not explicitly defined; diversity is addressed in terms of ‘needs and concerns of the affected population across age groups, gender and other aspect of diversity’ and the ‘diversity approach’, but without explicitly defining the term diversity.¹³¹

Analysis of accessible *Strategic Response Plans (SRPs)* of the field countries covered by the current Review reveals more or less the same pattern indicated above in respect of the country HNOs. SRPs of these countries refer to gender and/or GBV (as part of protection), or to women and men, but generally omit explicit mention of gender mainstreaming when discussing key constraints, or the link with contributing to gender equality and women’s empowerment. In some sections of the SRPs there is general reference to ‘people affected by emergencies’ or ‘displaced populations’ without explicit reference to gender, age and diversity. Most of the SRPs reviewed explicitly mention SADD, though in a few cases the reference is to gender disaggregated data or simply to disaggregated data. Few SRPs refer to cross-cutting issues, and where there is mention of diversity, the term tends not to be explicitly defined.¹³²

3.4 Humanitarian Dashboard

The *IASC Humanitarian Dashboard* is a tool designed for use by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to ‘facilitate dialogue, analysis and strategic programming throughout the programme cycle’ (see Box). The Dashboard also serves to highlight information gaps that may require further assessments. Instructions on how to set up and maintain the Dashboard refer to ‘affected people,

people in need, people targeted/reached/covered and omit explicit reference to gender, age, diversity and SADD.¹³³

3.5 Views of IASC Stakeholders

Global level IASC stakeholders would point out that introduction of the HPC and its components – specifically HNO and SRP – are instrumental in addressing identified weaknesses of humanitarian action on the ground. Some respondents would concede that the process of translating pertinent HPC guidelines on gender mainstreaming into effective action in the field ‘has not been smooth’, as also recent Operational Peer Reviews reveal.

*facilitate a process for consolidation of needs assessment and response information;
 *provide structured format for data collection;
 *present a shared analysis of the humanitarian situation.

¹³⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/k. ‘2014 Strategic Response Planning’, pp.7, 9, 19.

¹³¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/n. ‘IASC Guidance. 2015 or Multi-Year Strategic Response Planning’, pp. 2, 3, 11, 14.

¹³² Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2013/b. ‘2014 Strategic Response Plan **Central African Republic**’; UNOCHA. 2013/c. 2014 Strategic Response Plan **Democratic Republic of Congo**’ (French); UNOCHA. 2013/e. ‘**Haiti** Humanitarian Action Plan 2014’; UN. 2013/b. ‘Pakistan Humanitarian Operational Plan’; Annex 2/C: PHT. 2013. ‘Emergency Preparedness & Response Plan’; Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2013/g. ‘Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Strategic Response Plan **Philippines**’; UNOCHA. 2013/i. ‘2014 Strategic Response Plan **Sudan**’; UNOCHA. 2014/c. ‘2014-2016 Strategic Response Plan Republic of Chad’; UNOCHA. 2014/e. ‘2015 Strategic Response Plan **Colombia**’; UNOCHA. 2014/i. ‘2014-2016 Strategic Response Plan Sahel (includes **Mali**)’; UNOCHA. 2014/k. ‘2015 Humanitarian Response Plan **Somalia**’; UNOCHA. 2014/l. ‘**South Sudan** Humanitarian Response Plan 2015’; UNOCHA. 2015/a. ‘2014-2015 **Yemen** Humanitarian Response Plan’.

¹³³ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/c. ‘Humanitarian Dashboard. Product Description and Process’.

Some global level IASC stakeholders would also point out that effective implementation of HNO and SRP guidelines is linked to the performance of senior leadership in the field – specifically the RC/HC and the HCT. It is assumed – as one respondent put it – that the field level leadership is aware of ‘what gender mainstreaming requires’. It was also pointed out that the IASC expends much effort in widening the pool of HCs, including striving to achieve gender balance in recruitment and deployment. However, it is also conceded that progress is not only linked to improving recruitment procedures, but also to strengthening the support and accountability systems on the ground,¹³⁴ including support for gender mainstreaming which tends to depend on the relatively short-term deployment of Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Advisers.¹³⁵ As the online survey reveals, in 64% of the countries in which respondents are located, no Gender Theme Group (GTG) has been established. In countries where this may be the case, the GTG is less likely to be part of the humanitarian coordination structure.¹³⁶

There is awareness among some global level IASC stakeholders that combining the role of RC and HC may not be optimal, since RCs may not necessarily have the required humanitarian experience, including addressing gender inequalities in humanitarian crisis; but ‘this has nothing to do with the gender of RCs’, as one respondent put it.

As various field level respondents point out, community participation as decreed in IASC operational guidance – and linked to accountability to affected populations - is an abstract term that requires ‘unpacking on the ground’, but in ways that do not add to the vulnerability of women and girls, as one respondent explained. While the focus on GBV may serve to flag such vulnerability – and various respondents concede that focusing on GBV tends to be donor driven – there is awareness among some respondents that such focus does not in itself resolve the often glaring gender gaps affecting the well-being of women and girls, economically, socially, legally and also in respect of their health and reproductive health.

Though the views of field level respondents generally reveal awareness of changing gender dynamics – and how gender inequalities tend to be exacerbated in times of crisis and emergencies - they would tend to point out that humanitarian interventions are in the first instance about ‘saving lives regardless of people’s gender’, and also dealing with GBV cases where possible. As one respondent put it, ‘there is no time in emergency situations to address gender inequalities however glaring these may be’. Overall the focus of respondents would tend to be on the vulnerability of women and girls – requiring, for example, sensitivity in the placement of camp latrines – but less on tackling socio-cultural factors that perpetuate and exacerbate gender-based inequalities and increase the risk of GBV. Discussions with various field level stakeholders reveal a tendency to perceive supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment as ‘something that concerns the development practitioners who have the time’, as one respondent put it.

Either way, field-level respondents would point out that involving women and girls in needs assessment - as part of fulfilling the requirement of community participation - is an ideal that ‘tends to flounder when we try to put it into practice’. Intra-community dynamics and leadership may not only prevent soliciting the views of women and girls, but also of boys and young men. While taking account of the needs of the elderly in humanitarian crisis is perceived to be laudable, reality on the ground may well be that it is the older male generation ‘who is in control’; though experience also

¹³⁴ Discussion of accountability is covered in Section B/4 in the current Review.

¹³⁵ Discussion of GenCap deployment is covered in Section B/7.1 of the current Review.

¹³⁶ Annex 10: Summary of Online Survey Responses; question 26.

suggests that older women in the community may also ‘have some influence behind the scene’, a reality also flagged by some GenCap Advisers.¹³⁷

Various respondents also raised the point that it may be a fallacy to assume that SADD are not available when developing the HNO and SRP. This may well be the case in some countries affected by emergencies, and especially countries that rank relatively low on the Human Development Index (HDI) or in cases defined as ‘failed states’. But it may also be the case that the humanitarian and development sectors ‘do not much touch base’, as one respondent put it, with unnecessary cost implications for efforts to compile SADD information in needs assessments and humanitarian programming.

Some field level respondents perceive a link with hitherto limited attention to preparedness, pointing out this phase should allow for the time required to locate and if necessary update the required SADD information. Granted that IASC is now focusing more attention on preparedness and resilience - with some respondents explicitly referring to the Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience (TPPR) – but the process of pertinent operational guidelines cascading down to the field level tends to take longer than expected, ‘or even necessary’, as some respondents would point out.

Around 81% of field level stakeholders who responded to the online survey believe that requirements for mainstreaming gender in needs assessment have been met. Respondents who believe that this has only been partly achieved point to security challenges that may hinder effective implementation of needs assessment. But there is also the perception this may depend ‘on how much the cluster coordinators push for gender integration’; though this particular response does not flag the responsibility of cluster leads who are part of the HCT. Reference to restrictions imposed by community leaders and state/non-state actors on accessing communities and households may be linked to responses regarding the level of participation of women, men, girls and boys. Factors impeding the latter are linked to the challenge of the practical implementation of ‘AAP principles’, the reality that ‘most of the projects are designed at top levels’, and that ‘it isn’t always apparent to actors what the real practical value added of participation – particularly boys and girls – would be in terms of modifying the assistance provided’.¹³⁸

Some 86% of field level respondents to the online survey indicate that gender is integrated in strategic planning; 76% believe this applies to programme implementation, around 85% believe gender is integrated in monitoring & evaluation, and 80% believe that gender is integrated in evaluation and learning. However around one in four respondents point out that generally there is no ‘strong evidence that gender is integrated’ in the implementation process, and one in five respondents indicate that gender is only partly integrated in monitoring, reporting, evaluation and learning.¹³⁹

4. Accountability and Minimum Standards for Gender Mainstreaming in Humanitarian Action

4.1 IASC Members and Accountability

Membership of various humanitarian networks focusing on accountability includes IASC organizations and agencies. For example: *The Sphere Project* Board membership includes IASC Standing Invitee agencies.¹⁴⁰ *The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance*

¹³⁷ See Section B/7.1 in the current Review.

¹³⁸ Annex 10: Summary of Online Survey Results; questions 8 and 9.

¹³⁹ Annex 10: Summary of Online Survey Results; questions 12, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Notably CARE, ICVA, IFRC, InterAction, Lutheran World Federation, OXFAM, Save the Children. The Sphere Project was established in 1997. <http://www.sphereproject.org>Home>AboutSphere>Governance>

(ALNAP) full membership includes IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies.¹⁴¹ The *Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International* has 97 member organizations which also includes IASC Standing Invitee agencies.¹⁴²

Accountability of staff for mainstreaming gender in their organizations' programmes and project activities is taken on board by IASC Full Member organizations. Indeed, generally there is discernible progress in this area compared with the findings of the *2004 Review of the IASC 1999 Gender Policy*, which – as mentioned earlier - concluded that overall senior management and staff accountability for gender mainstreaming was not institutionalized and – some exceptions apart - gender relevant training was generally not mandatory.¹⁴³

As the overview in Annex 5 reveals,¹⁴⁴ overall IASC Full Member organizations include reference to accountability for gender mainstreaming in their strategic objectives. They may also have internal regulations in place specifying staff accountability for mainstreaming gender. These regulations may be reflected, for example, in Senior Manager's Compact (UNDP);¹⁴⁵ Oversight Policy (UNFPA);¹⁴⁶ Accountability Framework (UNHCR);¹⁴⁷ Accountability System (UNICEF);¹⁴⁸ Organizational Learning Strategy (UNOCHA);¹⁴⁹ Accountability Framework (UNWFP);¹⁵⁰ and Manuals (UNWHO).¹⁵¹

Indeed, accountability for gender mainstreaming in the UN system is linked to the *United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP)*, requiring mandatory reporting on the part of UN agencies to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UNWOMEN),¹⁵² the designated custodian of SWAP. The in-depth desk review indicates that recognition that UN-SWAP may apply to both development and humanitarian interventions does not appear to be of paramount consideration within the IASC stakeholder community.

Indeed, the importance of SWAP is reflected in, for example, in the *2014 Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) of Large-Scale System-Wide Emergencies Guidelines*. The guidelines specify that in line with UN-SWAP on gender equality, and the IASC 2008 Gender Policy Statement, 'the evaluation will apply gender analysis in all phases of the evaluation', and will 'adequately engage women, men, boys and girls of different ages' in targeted consultations.¹⁵³ Moreover, the *2014 Joint Meeting of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and UNWFP Executive Boards* on gender

¹⁴¹ Notably IASC Full Members UNDP, UNFAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNWFP, UNWHO) and IASC Standing Invitees (CARE, ICRC, OXFAM). ALNAP was established in 1997. <http://www.alnap.org/who-we-are/our-role>

¹⁴² Notably CARE International, Lutheran World Federation, OXFAM, Save the Children. HAP was established in 2003. <http://www.hapinternational.org/membership/members.aspx>

¹⁴³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2004. 'Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 1999 Policy on Integration of a Gender Perspective in Humanitarian Assistance'. By Camillia Fawzi El-Solh. Commissioned by UNOCHA.

¹⁴⁴ See Annex 5: IASC Full Members & Standing Invitees: Addressing Accountability for a summary overview.

¹⁴⁵ Annex 2/B: UNWOMEN. 2014/b. 'UN System-wide Action Plan for the Implementation of the CEB Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Performance Indicators Technical Notes'. Version3/December, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Annex 2/B: UNFPA. 2008/b. 'UNFPA Oversight Policy. Report to the Executive Director' (updated 2014).

¹⁴⁷ Annex 2/B: UNHCR. 2014. 'UNHCR Accountability Report 2013', pp. 7, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Annex 2/B: UNICEF. 2009/a. 'Report on the Accountability System of UNICEF'. UNICEF Executive Board/Annual Session June 2009.

¹⁴⁹ Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2012/b. 'OCHA Organizational Learning Strategy'.

¹⁵⁰ Annex 2/B: UNWFP. 2014. 'Update on the Implementation of the WFP Gender Mainstreaming Accountability Framework'.

¹⁵¹ Annex 2/B: UNWHO. 2011/a. 'Gender Mainstreaming for Health Managers: a practical approach. Facilitator's Guide'.

¹⁵² Annex 2/B: UN. 2012. 'System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women'. Facilitated by UN Women, April, p. 7.

¹⁵³ Annex 2/A: IASC/IAHESG. 2014. 'Inter-Agency Evaluations of Large-Scale System-Wide Emergencies (IAG/HEs) Guidelines'. Final Version/April.

mainstreaming performance standards reaffirmed the importance of gender equality programming in these organizations' strategic plans.¹⁵⁴ As indicated previously, this is not explicitly incorporated in the Transformative Agenda documentation, and also keeping in mind that to date UNWOMEN is neither an IASC Full Member nor a Standing Invitee.

Similarly various *IASC Standing Invitee* agencies subscribe to accountability of their staff for mainstreaming gender in their programmes and operations, though this may not necessarily explicitly refer to gender mainstreaming.¹⁵⁵ For example, in the case of ICRC, ICVA and IFRC and their respective national member organizations, accountability for gender mainstreaming is not explicitly flagged, but rather supported through strategic objectives, or code of conduct (ICRC);¹⁵⁶ or accountability and transparency plan of action (IFRC);¹⁵⁷ or job competency included in the gender policy (OHCHR);¹⁵⁸ or as part of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming (OXFAM);¹⁵⁹ or as part of the corporate score card (World Bank).¹⁶⁰

4.2 IASC Leadership and Accountability

The IASC Gender Policy states that the 'IASC Working Group is, through the co-chairs of the IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action, responsible for developing an accountability framework for monitoring the implementation of this policy and review its content every 5 years'.¹⁶¹ The Gender Policy indicates that the Gender SWG is to 'develop an accountability framework for monitoring the implementation of this statement'.¹⁶²

Review of Gender SWG work plans, annual reports and minutes of monthly meetings reveals that in fact accountability has been addressed as part of the strategic objective of ensuring that gender dimensions are 'mainstreamed in emerging accountability frameworks', specifically in needs assessment tools (MIRA) and real time evaluations, and implemented through the IASC Gender Marker,¹⁶³ though as mentioned earlier, there is no accountability framework *per se* for the IASC Gender Policy.

The *2011 IASC Principals' Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAP)* endorse five commitments: leadership/governance; transparency; feedback and complaints; participation; design, monitoring and evaluation. The document explicitly refers to gender, age and diversity, and to the participation of women, men, boys and girls, but reference to data does not specify SADD. Moreover, reference is to gender equity rather than gender equality.¹⁶⁴ There is no mention of the *2006 IASC Gender Handbook* which refers to international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁴ Annex 2/B: UN. 2014/b. 'Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/ UNICEF/ UNWOMEN, UNWFP': Performance standards on gender mainstreaming across the Strategic Plans 2014-2017'.

¹⁵⁵ See Annex 5: IASC Full Members & Standing Invitees: Addressing Accountability for a summary overview.

¹⁵⁶ Annex 2/C: ICRC. 1998. 'The Code of Conduct, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ Annex 2/C: IFRC. 2014. 'Accountability and Transparency Plan of Action. Implementation Report Q3 2014'.

¹⁵⁸ Annex 2/B: OHCHR. 2011. 'Gender Equality Policy', p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ Annex 2/C: OXFAM. 2013/b. 'OXFAM Minimum Standards for Gender in Emergencies'.

¹⁶⁰ Annex 2/C: WB. 2014/b. 'World Bank Corporate Scorecard', p. 3.

¹⁶¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 5.

¹⁶² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'Gender Equality Policy Statement in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 4.

¹⁶³ IASC/GSWG. 2012/c. 'Annual Strategic Planning Meeting'. 11-12 October. PowerPoint Presentation (slide 17).

¹⁶⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2011/i. 'The IASC Principals' Commitments to Affected Populations (CAAP). Tools to assist in meeting the commitments'. December. Note: CEDAW defines *gender equality* as 'the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment'. Gender equity pertains to the fair treatment of women and men, according to their needs. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>

¹⁶⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2006/d. 'Women, Girls, Boys and Men. Different Needs, Equal Opportunities. IASC Handbook for Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. December.

The *2012 IASC Transformative Agenda* identifies accountability as a key cornerstone. The aim is to enhance mutual accountability ‘within and between the HC, HCT members, Cluster Coordinators and other cluster partners, based on a clear, concise, time-bound and results-oriented strategy to deliver’.¹⁶⁶ However, there is no explicit reference to the IASC Gender Policy which - as mentioned earlier - explicitly refers to the responsibility of the IASC Working Group for developing an accountability framework and for monitoring and reviewing its contents every 5 years.

Moreover, as mentioned previously the IASC TA does not include reference to a key accountability tool, namely the UN-SWAP,¹⁶⁷ keeping in mind that SWAP is intended to also cover humanitarian action and the link with establishing and strengthening the relief, rehabilitation and development continuum (see Box).¹⁶⁸ Though it should also be noted that *ECOSOC Resolutions on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective* do not draw a distinction between humanitarian and development interventions, but refer generally to ‘effective and coherent gender mainstreaming across the United Nations’.¹⁶⁹

‘Establish strong links between humanitarian and development coordination bodies to ensure that recovery approaches are aligned with national development objectives and strengthen national preparedness and response capacity’.

The *UN WOMEN 2014 SWAP Report* mentions ‘encouraging progress between 2012 and 2013’, but calls for intensified implementation if the UN system is to achieve the SWAP targets by 2017.¹⁷⁰

The *IASC AAP/PSEA Implementation Tools* do not refer to the development-humanitarian continuum and are focused on humanitarian action.¹⁷¹ Though the *2012 IASC Reference Model for Cluster Coordination* does not refer to UN-SWAP, it includes explicit reference to the above mentioned continuum (see Box).¹⁷² Indeed the importance of this continuum was among the issues discussed in various IASC Working Group sessions; for example, the 84th IASC Working Group meeting (March 2013) refers to the ‘nexus between humanitarian and development’; the 85th IASC Working Group meeting (October 2013) also reiterates the ‘link between humanitarian action and development’.¹⁷³ The 87th IASC Working Group meeting (October 2014) includes a section entitled ‘Bridging the Relief to Development Gap’, and calls on the IASC Principals to address the divide.¹⁷⁴

‘The differences internally between the humanitarian and development sides of multi-mandated organizations were noted, with a suggestion for Principals to provide good examples through bridging divides within their own organizations’.

¹⁶⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/h. *IASC Transformative Agenda – 2012*, p. 3. Other key objectives include leadership, coordination and the link with security.

¹⁶⁷ Annex 2/B: ECOSOC. 2012. ‘ECOSOC Resolution 2012 61.. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes in United Nations system: SWAP’. July.

¹⁶⁸ UNWOMEN. 2014/c. ‘Promoting UN Accountability (UN-SWAP): Guidance on the development of gender equality and the empowerment of women policies, strategies and plans’, p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Annex 2/B: ECOSOC. 2013/a. ‘ECOSOC Resolution 2013/16. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes in United Nations system’. July; ECOSOC. 2014/a. ‘ECOSOC Resolution 2014/2. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes in United Nations system’. July.

¹⁷⁰ Annex 2/B: UNWOMEN. 2014/d. ‘UN-SWAP. A plan to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women across the UN system’.

¹⁷¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/x. ‘Accountability to Affected Populations. Tools to assist in implementing the IASC AAP Commitments’.

¹⁷² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/m. ‘4. Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the country level’. November.

¹⁷³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/q. ‘IASC 84th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record and Action Point’. 18-19 March, p. 6; IASC. 2013/s. ‘IASC 85th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record. 28-29 October, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/i. ‘IASC 87th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record’. 29-30 October, pp. 2-3.

The joint *2013 Improving Impact: Do Accountability Mechanisms Deliver Results?*¹⁷⁵ takes gender and age into consideration in consultations with communities in the sample field countries. The study concludes that ‘it is of concern that development and humanitarian projects continue to seem opaque to so many people’, although accountability mechanisms have a positive impact in terms of improving the quality of programming as well as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of projects. The Report points out that there is ‘significant scope for building on the findings’ given the priority placed on accountability by the IASC Transformative Agenda.¹⁷⁶

The HCT and Cluster Lead Agencies should be more visible in performing their accountability functions in terms of holding individual agencies, the clusters and themselves to account for integration of gender in all elements of the response.¹⁷⁷

The *2014 IASC Gender Marker Assessment* defined the area of accountability as requiring attention. Specifically ‘a lack of clear lines of accountability within the coordinated humanitarian response for gender integration’ was flagged by stakeholders at both the global and national levels (see Box). Attention was also

drawn to the importance of the ‘role of national governments in holding organizations and agencies to account for delivery on projects’.¹⁷⁸

4.3 Minimum Standards for Gender Mainstreaming

Though the 2008 IASC Gender Equality Policy does not explicitly refer to ‘minimum standards’ for gender equality programming, there is reference to ‘international norms and standards that lay the foundation for gender equality in all areas of humanitarian action’, and for applying ‘common standards’ in gender capacity building.¹⁷⁹

IASC Members, as well as other non-IASC humanitarian agencies and networks, have issued position papers and reviews on minimum standards in humanitarian action. For example, the *2010 Review of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* - commissioned by the IASC - defining Minimum Operating Standards (MOS) supported by key indicators.¹⁸⁰ The *2010 Minimum Standard for Education* issued by the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is posted on the IASC Global Education Cluster (GEC) website.¹⁸¹ The *2012 INEE/GEC Training Toolkit* calls for gender-responsive strategy for implementing the Minimum Standards.¹⁸² The 2010 GenCap Experience document on *Demystifying Gender Programming in WASH* covers five minimum gender commitments.¹⁸³

The *IASC 2012 Gender Marker Tip Sheets* call for minimum commitments¹⁸⁴ for gender programming in thematic and sector areas. This covers Child Protection, Coordination, Early Recovery, Education, Food Security (Food Assistance/Agriculture and Livelihoods), GBV Response, Health, Mine Action, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter and Non-Food Items, WASH.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁵ To which Save the Children/ IASC Standing Invitee/SCHR member contributed.

¹⁷⁶ Annex 2/C: Christian Aid/Save the Children/Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. 2013. ‘Improving Impact: Do Accountability Mechanisms Deliver Results?’ p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/a. ‘IASC Gender Marker Assessment. Findings and Recommendations’. June, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/a. ‘IASC Gender Marker Assessment. Findings and Recommendations’. June, p. 7, 8.

¹⁷⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. ‘Gender Equality Policy Statement in Humanitarian Action’. June, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁸⁰ Reddick, Moira. 2010. ‘Global Synthesis Report. IASC Review of PSEA by UN, NGO, IOM and IFRC Personnel’. Submitted to the IASC Working Group 77th Meeting, July.

¹⁸¹ Annex 2/C: INEE. 2010/a. ‘INEE Minimum Standards’.

¹⁸² Annex 2/C: INEE. no date. ‘Training Toolkit/Key Thematic Issues/Module 16 – Gender-Responsive Education.’

¹⁸³ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2010/c. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 9: Demystifying Gender Programming in Water, Hygiene and Sanitation’. By Delphine Brun.

¹⁸⁴ It should be noted that the terms ‘minimum standards’ and ‘minimum commitments’ tend to be used synonymously in the sources referred to in this section of the current Review.

¹⁸⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/c. ‘IASC Gender Marker Tip Sheets (all clusters except for Logistics). September.

Together with other agencies, some of which are part of the IASC Standing Invitees, the IASC Global Protection Cluster contributed to the *2012 Minimum Inter-Agency Standards for Protection Mainstreaming*. It indicates that 'all humanitarian actors are expected to mainstream protection in their humanitarian assistance activities covering assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and includes reference to addressing gender discrimination and gender inequality in core standards underlying humanitarian response activities'.¹⁸⁶

A further example is the *2013 OXFAM Minimum Standards for Gender in Emergencies* totalling 16 minimum standards, covering gender analysis, participation, and GBV. Each minimum standard is linked to specific key actions.¹⁸⁷

The minimum standards established and further developed by the *Sphere Project* was endorsed by the IASC in 1997, and various global level IASC stakeholders refer to Sphere in their documents.¹⁸⁸ The *2011 Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* explicitly refer to cross cutting themes covering children, gender, older people, HIV/AIDS, disability, psychosocial support and environment, which in turn are linked to individual and subgroup vulnerabilities. Furthermore the document stresses that 'gender cuts across other cross-cutting themes' to ensure equality of outcomes, while taking into consideration that the focus is not limited to the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls, but also on 'the need to understand what men and boys face in crisis situations'.¹⁸⁹

The *2014 Sphere Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability* is underpinned by the people-centred approach and includes reference to culture, gender, and social and political relationships; gender, age and diversity; and ethnic, social, religious or other background as part of 'ensuring the full and equal respect of the rights if all individuals'.¹⁹⁰

4.4 Views of IASC Stakeholders

During discussion with various global level stakeholders on the subject of accountability for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action, the following questions tended to be raised:

- *Is it about accountability for implementing the IASC 2008 Gender Policy?
- *If yes, how can this be enforced, i.e. ensuring that key elements of accountability for gender mainstreaming is appropriately reflected in the TORs and work plans of the IASC Subsidiary Bodies, and of the global and field cluster system, as well as relevant IASC strategic and operational guidance?
- *How can the Gender Reference Group (GRG) - given its current role - function as the gate-keeper that ensures that accountability for gender mainstreaming is adhered to in the work of the IASC bodies and groups?
- *Is it about accountability to populations, i.e. the rights-holders, on which the IASC stakeholder community is already focusing as part of the Transformative Agenda?
- * Or is it about accountability of humanitarian staff, i.e. the duty-bearers, to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed in humanitarian action; which by definition should cover accountability to affected populations but also include mobilizing state and non-state parties to support integrating

¹⁸⁶ Annex 2/C: WV. 2012. 'Minimum Inter-Agency Standards for Protection Mainstreaming'.

¹⁸⁷ Annex 2/C: OXFAM. 2013/b. 'OXFAM Minimum Standards for Gender in Emergencies', pp. 3-4. OXFAM is a member in the IASC Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, which is part of the IASC Standing Invitees group.

¹⁸⁸ The Sphere Project was established in 1997 by a group of humanitarian agencies ; the majority of the current members are part of the IASC Standing Invitees, either as separate entities or as part of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response. <http://www.sphereproject.org>>Home>AboutSpohere>Governance

¹⁸⁹ Annex 2/C: The Sphere Project. 2011. 'Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response', pp. 12, 15; see also The Sphere Project. 2014/a.' Sphere Unpacked: Sphere for Assessments'; The Sphere Project. 2015. 'Sphere for Monitoring &Evaluation'.

¹⁹⁰ Annex 2/C: The Sphere Project. 2014/b. 'Sphere Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability', pp. 12, 13, 19.

For some respondents, staff accountability for gender mainstreaming is part and parcel of accountability to populations affected by crisis and emergency. Therefore, accountability should not be split between 'duty bearers' and 'rights-holders', but should be institutionalized as 'one package' at all levels of humanitarian action. Some respondents believe that it is the IASC Gender Policy that should point the way on how accountability for gender mainstreaming is to be dealt with at the global level and operationalized at the field level. Various respondents would concede that whatever the approach to developing and implementing the accountability framework for gender mainstreaming may be, it is the IASC Leadership that needs to mobilize and achieve consensus among the IASC stakeholder community what accountability for gender mainstreaming entails, and how its framework should be incorporated in global and field level humanitarian action.

During global level discussions on accountability for gender mainstreaming, some respondents would point out that their respective organizations and agencies have their own accountability framework for gender mainstreaming, which may also cover staff accountability and job performance. As a respondent familiar with the challenge of institutionalizing gender mainstreaming put it, experience for accountability for gender mainstreaming in the organization or agency with which the IASC stakeholder has his/her contract may not necessarily be translated into pro-actively advocating for such accountability within the IASC stakeholder community.

Raising the above point during discussions with global level stakeholders did not elicit conclusive views. Some would point out that part of the challenge of institutionalizing accountability for gender mainstreaming within the IASC Architecture is dealing with the reality that some IASC bodies – such as Task Teams and Reference Groups - tend to work in 'parallel streams'. The IASC Leadership is not deemed by some respondents to be according appropriate attention to addressing this particular challenge.

Either way, and as the desk review confirms, to date a minority among IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies do not yet have formal regulations in place that also cover staff accountability for gender mainstreaming, cascading from senior management to the operational/field level. Some respondents representing the pertinent organizations and agencies would concede that more effort is required to expedite institutionalizing relevant staff accountability regulations for gender mainstreaming.

Though overall global level respondents representing IASC Full Member organizations are familiar with the SWAP, and the mandatory obligation of the UN system to report to UNWOMEN, there appears to be less awareness regarding the applicability of SWAP as an accountability tool for the humanitarian sector. This appears to be also generally the case in UN organizations that cover both humanitarian and development interventions; although some of the 'gender experts' in these organizations may concede that SWAP performance indicators are largely applicable and could be adapted to take account of different humanitarian contexts. However, further probing of this topic did not reveal that there was any concerted effort within the global level IASC stakeholder community to discuss the relevance of SWAP performance indicators to the humanitarian context. There is however some awareness that the 'custodian' of SWAP, i.e. UNWOMEN, is neither an IASC Full Member nor a Standing Invitee.

In discussions of accountability for gender mainstreaming with field level stakeholders the latter would generally draw a distinction between 'abstract ideas on gender equality' and realities on the ground, which 'require a pragmatic approach'. Overall there appeared to be some consensus that accountability for gender mainstreaming needs to be perceived as a process linking accountability by the senior leadership, in this case the RC/HC and the HCT, with responsibility for gender

mainstreaming by cluster coordinators, and the overlap with competency in gender analysis required for effective gender mainstreaming. As may be gleaned from various discussions with field level stakeholders, inclusion of gender relevant topics in agendas of HCT, intra- and inter-cluster meetings pertains largely depends on how pro-active field level leadership and operational staff are in addressing the challenges of gender mainstreaming; to which may be added 'personality dynamics (to paraphrase some respondents) which may impact on intra- and inter-cluster coordination and cooperation in implementing gender mainstreaming.¹⁹¹

Discussion with global level IASC stakeholders reveals that overall there is awareness and understanding of the link between accountability for gender mainstreaming and minimum standards or commitments to ensuring the effective implementation of this process.¹⁹² Some respondents would refer to The Sphere Project, ALNAP or the INEE when discussing the topic of minimum standards. Others would point out that the concept of minimum operating standards (MOS) is known within the IASC stakeholder community, though could not necessarily provide examples of how gender is integrated in MOS. Other respondents with professional experience relevant to gender equality programming would point to the Gender Marker Tip Sheet as a key example for promoting commitment to gender mainstreaming.¹⁹³

5. IASC Subsidiary Bodies

The IASC Gender Policy includes explicit directives on how the (former) Gender SWG is to work with and coordinate with the other IASC Subsidiary Bodies. This includes providing IASC bodies and structures with guidance for integrating gender in their work; supporting them to mainstream gender in their annual work plans; and nominating focal points to maintain contact with the Gender SWG.¹⁹⁴

The current IASC Architecture includes designated Task Teams (TTs) established by the Working Group (WG) with time-bound priority objectives and tasks. Each priority is overseen by a WG Sponsor. Reference Groups (RGs) are voluntary communities of practice who are not directly overseen by the IASC. Through their sponsor or WG member, RGs may bring specific issues to the attention of the IASC Leadership, though - as indicated on the pertinent IASC website – these issues may be relevant to the IASC but not perceived to be a current priority.¹⁹⁵

5.1 Gender Reference Group

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the (former) *IASC Gender Sub-Working Group* (Gender SWG) refers to its Strategic Goal which aimed to support the IASC and its members in the realization of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy, underpinned by the following Strategic Actions:¹⁹⁶

- Refining/disseminating common interagency standards;
- Supporting capacity building of humanitarian on gender and developing practical tools;
- Improving monitoring and assessment of gender mainstreaming;
- Strengthening gender expertise;

¹⁹¹ Discussed further in Section B/7.1 of the current Review.

¹⁹² Respondents tend to use the terms standards and commitments inter-changeably. In the context of the current Review, 'standard' is defined as attaining an agreed upon set of measure to implement gender mainstreaming; 'commitment' is defined as accountability to uphold the agreed upon standards.

¹⁹³ Discussed further in Section B/7.2 of the current Review.

¹⁹⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'Gender Equality Policy Statement in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-su...>

¹⁹⁶ The IASC Gender SWG was created in 1998. See Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2010/b. 'IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action. Updated Terms of Reference'. Final/November, p. 1.

- Strengthening programming and response to GBV;
- Enhancing partnerships, including establishment of the Gender Network;
- Documenting best practice;
- Keeping an up-to-date IASC gender website and disseminating GSWG products.

The *2008, 2009 and 2010 Gender SWG Work Plans* cover activities such as disseminating the Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook; developing the gender e-learning course; developing/finalizing the GBV data management tool; supporting strengthening of accountability systems of gender in humanitarian action; developing the Gender Alerts; and integrating gender and GBV in the cluster system.¹⁹⁷ Reporting on progress in implementing the *2011 Gender SWG Work Plan* covers activities such as strengthening gender responsive action through the Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Project (flagged as ‘the *de facto* operational arm of the Gender SWG’); developing/disseminating the Gender Marker Tip Sheets;¹⁹⁸ and supporting the roll out/application of the IASC Gender Marker as part of ‘strengthening the accountability framework for gender sensitive humanitarian action’.¹⁹⁹ Gender SWG support to global clusters and to global cluster lead agencies included presentation of the Gender Marker and key documents during global cluster retreats; strategic planning support to prioritized clusters, including development of guidelines and assessment of tools; support to gender capacity training; and advocacy. However it was also flagged that the Gender SWG tended to be pressured into being the ‘doer’ rather than the ‘facilitator’.²⁰⁰

The *2012 Gender SWG Work Plan* reports on supporting global and field level clusters; mainstreaming gender in needs assessments and real time evaluations;²⁰¹ support to global clusters and global cluster lead agencies; and presentation of the SADD Report.²⁰² The *Gender SWG News and Announcement* provide further information on 2013 activities, including participation in the ECOSOC Side Event on Gender Equality and Resilience in Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS’).²⁰³

As previously discussed in respect of the IASC Transformative Agenda, mainstreaming gender in pertinent documents is generally inconsistent, as also observed in the *2012 Gender SWG Annual Report*.²⁰⁴ The Gender SWG request that the IASC Working Group support ‘raising the profile of

¹⁹⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2008/a. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action Work Plan 2008’; IASC/GSWG. 2009/a. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action Work Plan 2009’; IASC/GSWG. 2010/a. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action Work Plan 2010’.

¹⁹⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/c. ‘IASC Gender Marker Tip Sheets: Child Protection, Coordination, Early Recovery, Education, Food Security (Food Assistance/Agriculture and Livelihoods), GBV Response, Health, Mine Action, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter and Non-Food Items, WASH’. September.

¹⁹⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2011/a. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action Work Plan 2011’; IASC/GSWG. 2011/b. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action . Report on Activities 2011, pp. 1-2’.

²⁰⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. no date. ‘2.2 Support to Global Clusters & to Global Cluster Lead Agencies’. By Patricia Colbert & Delphine Brun. PowerPoint Presentation.

²⁰¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2012/a. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action . Report on Activities 2012’.

²⁰² Annex 2/D: Mazurana, Dyan, et. al. 2011. ‘Sex & Age Matter. Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies’. By Feinstein Internal Centre/Tufts University. Commissioned by OCHA and CARE.

²⁰³ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2013/b. ‘IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action. News and Announcements’. Issue 1/June; Issue 2/July; Issue 3/August; Issue 4/September; Issue 5/October; Issue 6/November. See also IASC/GSWG. 2013/a. ‘IASC Gender SWG Monthly Meetings (January, February, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November).

²⁰⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2012/b. ‘IASC Subsidiary Bodies. Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action. Annual Report 2012, pp. 1-2.

gender’, and pointing to the ‘clarity needed on how gender, age and cross-cutting issues should be included in the transformative agenda’, does not appear to have been sufficiently heeded.²⁰⁵

With the launching of the current IASC Architecture the Gender SWG in July 2013 was restructured as the *IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action* (referred to as the Gender Reference Group/GRG), which by definition downgrades its status and authority compared with that of the former Gender SWG which had been accorded an important role in implementing the IASC Gender Policy. In effect, the IASC Leadership appeared to be signalling that gender is not perceived to be an IASC priority, as also reflected in the inconsistent way that gender, age, diversity and SADD are addressed in the various TA documents.

The GRG is headed by four co-chairs,²⁰⁶ with UNWOMEN functioning as the GRG Secretariat since January 2014.²⁰⁷ Attendance of GRG meetings during the period 2013-2014 and up to 1 April 2015 varied, with some GRG members attending all or most meetings, while other members who are formally part of the GRG list of participants, have not.²⁰⁸

The GRG does not report directly to the IASC Working Group, though its sponsor is the Working Group’s Chair who is also ASG for Humanitarian Affairs and DERC. It appears that the change in status ‘created some confusion and concern among (GRG) members, uncertain of the leverage they could have under the new status’.²⁰⁹

The GRG TOR specifies expected results and identifies tasks to be attained, which are underpinned by the ‘key principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment’ (see Box). This includes developing an accountability framework for monitoring the implementation of the 2008 IASC Gender Policy; acting as a resource for mainstreaming gender in the IASC structure and activities; strengthening field-level gender capacity; influencing humanitarian standards to ensure ‘proper provisions on gender equality and the empowerment of women’; and ‘advocating for gender mainstreaming in the Transformative Agenda and related initiatives’.²¹⁰ However, its very definition as a Reference Group has almost inevitably meant that the GRG has not been enabled to fulfil its function and responsibilities as spelt out in its TOR.

Key objective of the Gender RG will be to direct the output of the IASC’s Working Group and its subsidiary bodies to meet its Gender Policy commitments.
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‘One of the main challenges of the GRG is

²⁰⁵ Annex 2/A: (IASC). no date/gg. ‘1.1 HC/RC’s TOR, handbook & training materials; 3.1 Needs assessment tools & training material’. PowerPointPresentation:

²⁰⁶ The current GRG co-chairs are IFRC, UN-Women and WFP. The fourth co-chair -WRC - has stepped down and to date has not been replaced.

²⁰⁷ UNWOMEN is not an IASC Full Member or Standing invitee. See Annex 2/B: UNWOMEN. 2014/e. ‘Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017’.

²⁰⁸ Active GRG UN members in 2015(up to 1 April) include UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWFP, UNWOMEN; active non-UN members in 2015 (up to 1 April) include Care International, IFRC, IMC, InterAction, OXFAM, Plan International, WRC. The following attended GRG meetings in 2014 but not in 2015: UNHCR, UNWHO, UNOCHA, UNWHO; and GenCaps, HelpAge, HREA, NRC, Save the Children. Frequency of attendance, i.e. % of meetings attended, varied, with co-chairs representing their respective organizations attending 11 meetings (100%) during 2015, though this varied during the preceding two years. Agencies such as ICRC and UNFAO, formally listed as GRG members, have not attended any GRG meetings during 2013-2015.. Attendance sheet compiled by Humanitarian Unit/UNWOMEN.

²⁰⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2014/a. ‘Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action. Annual Report 2013’. January 2014, p. 3.

²¹⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2013. ‘Gender In Humanitarian Action Reference Group Terms of Reference’. December, p. 1.

the systematic application of gender in humanitarian response. More often than not, a gender analysis is not built into strategic plans, programmes, projects or tools.

The GRG adhered to the 2013 Work Plan of the Gender SWG. Taking the TA action points into account, the *GRG's 2013 Annual Report* presents key achievements covering leadership; coordination, preparedness and advocacy; accountability; and management and communication.

The Report also flags key challenges to the effective mainstreaming of gender in IASC activities (see Box); both at the global level – including specifically in the roll out of the TA – and at the field level; and also points out that most agencies and organizations are not prioritizing deployment of GenCap Advisers.

Furthermore the *2013 GRG Annual Report* calls for using the IASC Working Group's leverage 'to raise the profile of and mainstream gender in the Transformative Agenda'. The GRG proposes that it be used as an 'advisory body to promote gender equality in humanitarian action as per the commitments in the 2008 IASC Gender Policy; that its members participate in Working Group meetings as required; and that the Working Group 'call on the IASC members to advocate for their engagement with the Gender RG'.²¹¹

The *GRG 2014 Work Plan* details how the GRG intends to address its leadership role in terms of acting 'as the gender expertise resource to the IASC and its subsidiary bodies' and review the latter's annual work plans;²¹² supporting accountability to gender equality within the IASC; and coordinating and knowledge sharing with the humanitarian community through provision of timely and practical information and tools.²¹³

Achievements in 2014 include organizing the ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment (HAS) Side Event on Gender and Humanitarian Outcomes organized by the GRG,²¹⁴ advocacy around the CSW Agreed Conclusions,²¹⁵ and engaging with the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) Secretariat regarding omission of gender in the WHS Concept Note, as well as advocacy for the gender e-learning course to become mandatory for humanitarian organizations as part of promoting accountability.²¹⁶ The *Draft GRG 2015 Workplan* largely continues with the activities identified during 2014, added to which is lobbying to invite other IASC Subsidiary Groups to participate in GRG meetings; and conducting a survey on the usefulness of the Gender Alerts.²¹⁷

The *January 2014 GRG Annual Strategic Planning Meeting* reflects continuing efforts to engage with other parts of the IASC Architecture (including Task Teams and the Working Group), thus 'making gender *their* issue and *their* business; as well as increasing efforts to connect more closely with operational work in the field; clarifying the 'role, relationship and responsibilities' of the GRG vis-a-

²¹¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2013. 'Gender In Humanitarian Action Reference Group Terms of Reference'. December, pp. 3-4.

²¹² Designated GRG Focal Points would follow up with IASC Task Teams AAP/PSEA, Preparedness & Resilience, Humanitarian Financing, Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action), Mental Health and Psychological Support in Emergency Settings Reference Group, Protection Priority and Humanitarian Challenges'. Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2014/b. 'IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action – Workplan 2014'.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Annex 2/B: ECOSOC. 2014/c. 'Report of ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) Side Event: Impact of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes'. 25 June.

²¹⁵ Annex 2/B: UNWOMEN. 2014/a. '2014 Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions'.

²¹⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG 2014/c. 'IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action. First Quarter Progress Report 2014', p. 3.

²¹⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2015/a. 'IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action – Draft Workplan 2015'. Gender Alerts are discussed in Section B/7.3.

vis the GenCap Project Steering Committee; lobbying some UN and other agencies to (re)engage with the GRG, and also included a discussion on diversity as a cross-cutting issue.²¹⁸

For its part, the *2014 October Face to Face GRG Meeting* covered issues such as updating the Gender Handbook and the gender e-learning course; continuing with the current format for Gender Alerts; developing gender profiles and action points for the GRG's Emergency Response Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). However, no consensus was apparently reached among GRG members in respect of discussion of the GRG's role in further developing the Gender Marker; clarifying the relationship between the GRG and the GenCap Steering Committee as well as the GRG's role and participation in meetings of the other Subsidiary Bodies; defining the People Centred Approach to Humanitarian Action and other cross-cutting issues; and explicit reference (or otherwise) to gender equality and women's rights.

As flagged in the *GRG October 2014 Meeting Report*, this has implications for 'presenting a collective position on key messages to the humanitarian community'.²¹⁹ The GRG 2015 Monthly Meetings (January and March) further reflect some dissonance in respect of GRG members' views of the people centred approach and the relationship with the GenCap Project (the latter does not perceive itself as the 'operational arm' of the GRG as was previously the case in respect of the Gender SWG).²²⁰

Results of the 2015 *Study on Effect of Gender Equality Programming (GEP) on Humanitarian Outcomes* concludes that GEP has a number of discernible impacts. This includes contributing to access to/use of humanitarian services; improving the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and how the needs of women, men, girls and boys are addressed; and improving power relations between men and women.²²¹

5.2 Task Teams

Review of the TOR of the IASC Task Teams and other Reference Groups indicates that overall efforts on the part of the GRG to engage with the other Subsidiary Bodies as flagged in the above mentioned Briefing Note is generally not reflected in their TORs and annual work plans. Moreover, there are discernible inconsistencies in the way these Subsidiary Bodies address and incorporate gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues as well as SADD in their working documents.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the *IASC Accountability to Affected Populations, Including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Task Team (AAP/PSEA/TT)* does not include explicit reference to gender, age and diversity or to SADD.²²² However, the *AAP/PSEA January 2014 - December Work Plan* explicitly refers to consultation with the IASC Gender Reference Group (GRG) as part of Work Stream 3, focusing on embedding AAP and PSEA in humanitarian processes.²²³

²¹⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2014/d. 'IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action Annual Strategic Planning Meeting'. 23-24 January; see also IASC/GRG. 2014/f. 'IASC Gender RG – Monthly Meetings (February, April, May, June, July, August, September, November); IASC/GRG. 2015/b. 'IASC Gender RG Monthly Meeting (January, March).

²¹⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2014/e. 'IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action Face to Face Meeting'. 1-2 October.

²²⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2015/b. 'IASC Gender RG Monthly Meeting (January, March).

²²¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2015/c. 'The Effect of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes: Synthesis Report'. By Institute of Development Studies, Sussex/UK. Commissioned by UNWOMEN on behalf of the GRG, and funded jointly by UNWOMEN and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

²²² Annex 2/A: IASC/AAAP/PSEA/TT. 2014/a. 'AAP/PSEA Task Team Terms of Reference'. 21 January.

²²³The reference is specifically to consultation with the GRG Focal Point/Women's Refugee Commission. Annex 2/A: IASC/AAAP/PSEA/TT). 2014/b. 'AAP/PSEA Task Team Work Plan January 2014-December 2015', p. 5.

The *2012 AAP Operational Framework*,²²⁴ taking into account the five AAP Commitments endorsed by the IASC Principals in 2011,²²⁴ explicitly refers to gender, age, diversity and SADD.²²⁵ Similarly the *2012 AAP Tools* cover these terms and also refer to humanitarian standards issued by various stakeholders.²²⁶ As per the current IASC Architecture, the AAP/PSEA/TT is linked with the IASC Protection Priority carried forward by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC).

As also discussed further below (Section B/6), a few exceptions apart, overall documents issued by the GPC covering strategic framework, guidance and tools, work plan and training include explicit reference to gender, age and diversity.²²⁷ The GPC focuses particularly on GBV and the justification for according priority to targeting women and girls (see Box). It is also pointed out that confusion may arise since GBV and VAW tend to be interpreted differently by different stakeholders, therefore requiring agreement and consensus on terminology (see Box below).²²⁸

‘While GBV can take many forms in an emergency context... most reported GBV incidents are sexual violence involving female survivors and male perpetrators’.

‘Any coordination efforts should seek to establish some common understanding so that all action-planning, advocacy, training, fieldwork – and other activities undertaken by the GBV coordinating partners – is consistent in terminology, theory and practice’.²²⁹

The *IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team (HFTT)* TOR does not include any explicit reference to gender – for example, it would be relevant to mention gender balance in the section on participation.²³⁰ The *2014-2015 HFTT Work Plan* refers to links between its four objectives and complementarity with other Task Teams,²³¹ but there is no explicit reference to complementarity with the GRG. Nor is there any explicit mention of gender or the Gender Marker²³² in the updated HFTT Work Plans,²³³ although, for example, gender is flagged as a cross-cutting issue in the operational

‘Implementing partners to CBPFs should ensure that projects are designed, implemented,

²²⁴ Leadership/governance; transparency; feedback and complaints; participation; design, monitoring and evaluation.

²²⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/w. ‘Accountability to Affected Populations. The Operational Framework’.

²²⁶ HAP Standard; Sphere Core Standards; People in Aid Code; Global Humanitarian Platform’s Principles of Partnership; and CDA Do No Harm Framework. Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/x. ‘Accountability to Affected Populations. Tools to assist in implementing the IASC AAP Commitments’.

²²⁷ See Annex 6: IASC Global Clusters: Mainstreaming Gender in Humanitarian Action.

²²⁸ Annex 2/A: GPC. 2010. ‘Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings’. Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility Working Group. July, 10.

²²⁹ Annex 2/A: GPC. 2010. ‘Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings’. Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility Working Group. July, 10.

²³⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/HFTT. 2014/a. ‘Humanitarian Financing. IASC Task Team Terms of Reference’. Final Version, January, p. 2.

²³¹ Specifically Principled Humanitarian Action Task Team (PHATT), Accountability to Affected Populations/ PSEA Task Team (AAP/PSEATT) and Preparedness and Resilience Task Team (PRTT). Annex 2/A: IASC/HFTT. 2014/b. Humanitarian Financing Task Team (HFTT) Work Plan January 2014-December 2015’. Updated 28 February.

²³² For example, the review of funding gender in emergencies which notes that funding for projects that focus principally on gender has decreased. Annex 2/C: GHA. 2014. ‘Funding Gender in Emergencies. What are the trends?’ Briefing Paper Development Initiatives, September.

²³³ Annex 2/A: IASC/HFTT. 2014/c. Humanitarian Financing Task Team (HFTT) Work Plan January 2014-December 2015’. Updated 20 May; see also IASC/HFTT. 2014/d. Humanitarian Financing Task Team (HFTT) Work Plan January 2014-December 2015’. Updated 4 September.

Guidelines for the Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) (see Box).²³⁴ The opportunity has also been missed in respect of mainstreaming gender in the HFTT presentation of best practices to accelerate implementation of Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) projects.²³⁵ Moreover, there is no indication in accessible HFTT documentation regarding gender responsive budgeting in peace-building and conflict resolution.²³⁶

monitored and evaluated considering the specific needs and constraints faced by women, girls, boys and men’.

The *2013 Review of the CERF Performance and Accountability Framework* reports that overall stakeholders ‘felt that as much as possible essential data should be disaggregated in terms of vulnerability, gender and age’, but also identified that the CERF Monitoring & Reporting Framework as an area requiring revision of indicators to take account of gender, protection and diversity issues’.²³⁷ The *October 2014 Quality of Reports from RCs/HCs* does not include explicit reference to gender, other- cross cutting issues or SADD.²³⁸

Though the *IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience (TTPR)* TOR does not explicitly refer to gender, age and diversity or to SADD - for example in the work stream objective covering ‘advocacy and policy’²³⁹ - the *TTPR Work Plan 2014-2015* mentions ‘inclusion of a gender focus in disseminating and strengthening guidance tools’; although there is no reference to engaging with the Gender Reference Group (GRG).²⁴⁰ The *bi-annual TTPR Early Warning Reports* providing an overview of crises affected countries, reflects the repeated use of gender neutral language. For example, the latest *Early Warning Report* (December 2014-May2015) - covering 20 countries - refers to ‘people affected by the crises’, or ‘people in need’, and provides data that are not sex and age disaggregated.²⁴¹

The *2007 IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines* refer to gender, age and diversity in addressing cross-cutting issues, and to SADD in respect of monitoring and reporting,²⁴² as does the *2014 IASC Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) Guidance*; for example, in the section covering management accountability for needs assessment, and Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPA).²⁴³ While it would have been relevant for the *2013 IASC Common Framework for Preparedness* to include explicit reference to gender, age and diversity, the Framework does refer to the importance of policies to ‘mitigate the human rights consequences of crises ... based on international humanitarian and human rights law’.²⁴⁴

²³⁴ Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. 2015/c. ‘Operational Handbook for Country-based Pooled Funds’. February, p. 44.

²³⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/HFTT. 2014/e. ‘Best Practices to Accelerate Implementation of CERF Projects’; see also IASC/HFTT. 2014/f. ‘IASC Priority/Task Team Progress Report 2014: HFTT’. Submitted to IASC 87th Working Group Meeting (IASC, 2014/j).

²³⁶ For example, see Annex 2/B: UNWOMEN. no date/c. ‘Planning and Financing for Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding. 1325+10 Women Count for Peace’; Annex 2/C: (CORDAID/GNWP). 2010. ‘Costing and Financing 1325’.

²³⁷ Annex 2/D: Hidalgo, Silvia. 2013. ‘Review of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Performance and Accountability Framework’. Development and Humanitarian Learning in Action, pp. 17, 28, 49.

²³⁸ Annex 2/B: UN/CERFS. 2014. ‘Quality of reports from Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators on the use of 2013 CERF grants’. October.

²³⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/TTPR. no date. ‘Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience Terms of Reference’, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/TTPR. 2014/a. ‘Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience Work Plan January 2014-December 2015’, p. 2.

²⁴¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/TTPR. 2014/b. ‘IASC Early Warning Report December 2014-May 2015’.

²⁴² The 2007 Guidelines continue to be posted on the IASC TTPR website page. Annex 2/A: IASC/TTPR. 2007. Inter-Agency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance’. Endorsed by the Working Group/Developed by the IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning. 5 November, pp. 16, 28, 36. See also Annex 2/B: UN. 2008. ‘Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response. Guidance and Indicator Package for Implementing Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework’, p. 5.

²⁴³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/s. ‘IASC Emergency Response Preparedness’ (draft for field testing in 2015), pp. 24, 38.

²⁴⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/v. ‘Common Framework for Preparedness’. October, p. 3.

The IASC Principled Humanitarian Action Task Team (PHATT) TOR does not explicitly refer to gender, age and diversity in defining expected results (see Box), or in the assigned tasks; rather reference is to the gender neutral term 'population'.²⁴⁵ The

PHATT 2014-2015 Work Plan uses gender neutral terms such as 'access to people and respond to humanitarian need', or 'affected populations', rather than including explicit reference to gender, age and diversity or to SADD; for example where there is mention of 'the potential to survey community perceptions',²⁴⁶ and furthermore does not refer to the GRG in respect of coordination. Similarly gender neutral language is used in the PHATT presentation to the 85th Working Group Meeting;²⁴⁷ as also noted in accessible PHATT Meeting Minutes.²⁴⁸

'An enhanced humanitarian response to populations affected by conflict and disaster through strengthened adherence of IASC organizations to the humanitarian principles'.

5.3 Other Reference Groups

Apart from the GRG, the current IASC Architecture includes the *IASC Reference Group for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas*, and *IASC Mental Health and Psychological Support in Emergency Settings Reference Group*.

The TOR of the *IASC Reference Group for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas* (RGMHCUA) does not include explicit reference to gender, age, diversity or SADD though there is recognition that growing urban humanitarian challenges require effectiveness in carrying out humanitarian activities among the urban poor and a better understanding of their coping mechanisms.²⁴⁹ The *2010 IASC Strategy for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas* includes six strategic objectives, one of which covers protection of vulnerable urban population

'Enhance interface with the IASC Global Clusters, IASC subsidiary bodies and NGOs on strengthening urban preparedness, humanitarian policies, capacities and tools for urban crises responses'.

against gender-based exploitation and violence. The Strategy also refers to the importance of establishing links with other IASC bodies (see Box), as well as developing and adapting appropriate tools for humanitarian action in

urban areas given that 'the great majority of tools, approaches, policies and practices for humanitarian responses are designed for rural settings'.²⁵⁰

The *2012 RGMHCUA Work Plan* provides an overview of key expected outcomes and also refers to developing a model gender-sensitive land planning and management tool.²⁵¹ The *2013 RGMHCUA Work Plan* refers to enhancing cooperation with other IASC bodies (see Box), though does not single out the GRG for this purpose.²⁵² The *RGMHCUA Progress Report 2011-2012* does not explicitly mention gender, age, diversity or SADD, though provides an overview of the state of achievement of

²⁴⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/PHATT. 2013/a. 'Revitalized Principled Humanitarian Action IASC Task Team Terms of Reference'. 17 December, p. 1.

²⁴⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC/PHATT. 2014/a. 'IASC Task Team on Principled Humanitarian Action Work Plan January 2014-December 2015'. January, pp. 1, 3, 8.

²⁴⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC/PHATT. 2013/b. 'IASC Priority: Revitalizing Humanitarianism'. Submitted to the 85th Working Group Meeting. October.

²⁴⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC/PHATT. 2014/b. 'Minutes – IASC Task Team on Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action'. 27 May; IASC/PHATT. 2014/c. 'Minutes – IASC Task Team on Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action'. 1 July.

²⁴⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/RGMHCUA. 2013/a. 'Terms of Reference for the Reference Group for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas'. October.

²⁵⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/f. 'ISC Strategy Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas', p. 2..

²⁵¹ IASC/RGMHCUA. 2012. 'Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas Work Plan for 2012', p. 1, 5.

²⁵² Annex 2/A: IASC/RGMHCUA. 2013/b. 'Reference Group Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas Work Plan for 2013', p. 2.

the strategic objectives. This includes contribution to developing/adapting humanitarian tools for urban areas; specifically the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) and the Initial Rapid Protection Assessment (IRPA).²⁵³

The TOR of the *IASC Mental Health and Psychological Support in Emergency Settings Reference Group* (MHPSSRG) does not include explicit reference to gender, age, diversity or SADD other than flagging the focus on GBV as part of mainstreaming MHPSS in the cluster system, specifically the Global Protection Cluster.²⁵⁴ The *MHPSSRG Work Plan 2012* covers training, activities with clusters and field implementation of guidelines, but does not include any explicit reference to gender, or to women, men, girl and boys.²⁵⁵

The *2014 Annual Meeting Report* indicates that MHPSS guidelines have been well integrated in the revised IASC GBV Guidelines. However, the section on Priority and Commitments for 2014 does not explicitly refer to gender, age, diversity or SADD; for example in monitoring & evaluation, or advocacy.²⁵⁶ There is no consistency in how documents issued by the MHPSSRG mainstream gender in operational challenges; for example, variability in the mention of gender differences; GBV; gender balance in assessment teams; and SADD.²⁵⁷ The 2012 Manual with Activity Codes mentions women and men, but also uses the gender neutral term children.²⁵⁸

5.4 Views of IASC Stakeholders

Some senior level IASC respondents would concur that the importance of gender mainstreaming in the Draft Concept Note issued by the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat should not have been overlooked. Various respondents are aware of and acknowledge the role of the Gender Reference Group (GRG) in bringing this to the attention of the IASC Leadership. However, in general no conclusive response could be elicited when the question regarding the current status of the GRG was raised. Specifically, if gender mainstreaming continues to be a challenge in humanitarian action, as reflected, for example, in recent IASC Operational Peers Reviews as well as strategic objectives and operational activities of IASC Full Member organizations and IASC Standing Invitee agencies, and the fact that the GRG has a 'Gender Champion',²⁵⁹ then why has this Subsidiary Body not been accorded the status of a Task Team. Nor could a conclusive response be elicited from discussions with IASC senior stakeholders regarding why gender mainstreaming does not appear to be addressed as an integral component of humanitarian principles, and as part of designated IASC priorities reflected in various TA documentation.

In discussions with global level senior IASC stakeholders, mention of the *2013 IASC Briefing Note on IASC Restructuring* clarifying the status of the GRG within the IASC Architecture was generally not

²⁵³ Annex 2/A: IASC/RGMHCUA. 2013/c. 'IASC Reference Group for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas. Two-Year Summary Report 2011-2012'. January, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC/MHPSSRG. 2007. 'Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Terms of Reference', p. 1. The 2014 MHPSSRG Annual Meeting flagged that the TOR needs to be updated.

²⁵⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/MHPSSRG. 2012/a. 'Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings Reference Group Work Plan 2012'.

²⁵⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC/MHPSSRG. 2014. 'IASC Reference Group on MHPSS Annual Meeting 2014'. 29-31 October, p. 13.

²⁵⁷ Many MHPSS documents have been translated into other languages'. Annex 2/A: IASC/MHPSSRG. 2008. 'IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support: Checklist for Field Use'; IASC/MHPSSRG. 2010/a. 'IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support: What Should Protection Programme Managers Know?'; IASC/MHPSSRG. 2010/b. 'IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support: What Should Humanitarian Health Actors Know?'; IASC/MHPSSRG. 2013/a. 'IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support: What Should Camp Coordinators and Camp Managers Know?'; IASC/MHPSSRG. 2013/b. 'Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Assessment Guide'.

²⁵⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC/MHPSSRG. 2012/b. 'Who is Where, When, doing What (4Ws) in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support: Manual with Activity Codes'.

²⁵⁹ Currently the Chair of the IASC WG/ASG for Humanitarian Affairs/ DERC.

spontaneous; specifically that the GRG should have ‘systematic access and input into the on-going work of the IASC Working Group, as well as the Task Teams and other Reference Groups’, as part of maintaining ‘gender’s status as an essential cross-cutting issue’.²⁶⁰ Neither does there appear to be much institutional memory regarding the *2013 Report of the UN Secretary General (SG)* - issued during the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) - explicitly referring to the contribution of the (former) IASC Gender SWG to mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action. As mentioned earlier, the Report also points out that the function of the Gender SWG as a voluntary body limits its role to recommendations and advice, and calls on the IASC to address this limitation.²⁶¹

GRG co-chairs and various GRG participating organizations and agencies generally perceive it to be ‘something of a challenge’ to implement the GRG TOR and annual work plan. Granted having a ‘Gender Champion’ should be expected to pave the way to ‘putting gender on the IASC agenda’. But as pointed out by some respondents, the reality remains that gender as a thematic area - which should be integral to the human-rights based approach underlying humanitarian action - is not perceived to be a priority within the IASC structure, as evidenced in pertinent TA documentation. Some GRG members concede that part of the challenge of establishing the GRG’s ‘credentials’ a technical and operational resource for gender mainstreaming is its composition as a voluntary community of practice.

In effect – and as various GRG monthly and other meeting minutes reflect - this implies that there tends to be some difference of opinion on approaches to mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action; or on the most effective way to establish synergies with IASC Task Teams, other Reference Groups and Global Clusters; or how to strategically support movement along the humanitarian/recovery/development continuum and by implication institutionalize the link with promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment; or whether or not a gender mainstreaming mechanism such as the GenCap Project remains the operational arm of the GRG (as was the case with the previous Gender SWG) , or operates separately from the GRG; or the role of the GRG in further developing the Gender Marker.

Moreover, as the discussion on cross-cutting issues (see Section B/7.4) reveals, there does not appear to be consensus among GRG members on how gender, age and diversity – the three key variables covered in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy – are linked with other cross-cutting issues. However, GRG members generally believe that sections of the Gender Policy ‘are no longer fit for purpose’. Overall there appears to be agreement among GRG members that the Gender Policy has since 2008 been overtaken by developments within the IASC Architecture that need to be clearly reflected in the updated Policy and its accountability framework. In turn – as some respondents would point out - this requires clarifying the position of the IASC Leadership on how to effectively address and implement gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action.

Overall discussions with co-chairs and members of IASC Task Teams (TTs) and other Reference Groups (RGs) regarding how gender is mainstreamed in their respective TORs and annual work plans reveals the variations noted in the desk review of pertinent documents. Some respondents are aware that gender, age and diversity may not be explicitly referred to in their guidance documents, but believe that such cross-cutting issues would be addressed at the operational level through the work of the global clusters.

²⁶⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2013/u. ‘Briefing Note: IASC Restructuring’. 4 September, p.2; see also IASC. 2014/c. ‘IASC Architecture 2014’ (organogram).

²⁶¹ Annex 2/B: UNESC/CSW. 2013. ‘Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters’. Report by the Secretary General/December, submitted to CSW 58th session March 2014.

Discussion with IASC TTs and other RGs representatives also reveal some ambivalence regarding the role of the GRG. Various respondents would concede that they are not very familiar with the GRG TOR and ‘how the GRG actually works’. Unless they attend the GRG meetings, pertinent respondents would not be familiar with GRG meeting minutes. Neither does there appear to be much familiarity with GRG work plans, and the fact that these include reference to working with other Subsidiary Bodies. Some among this group of IASC stakeholders are unclear how cooperation with the GRG is to be put in place – ‘who takes the initiative?’ as some respondents put it. Other respondents – for example representing the AAP/PSEA TT – would point out that the latter’s work plan explicitly refers to cooperating with the GRG. Overall none among this group of respondents referred to the previously mentioned *2013 IASC Briefing Note on IASC Restructuring* clarifying the status of the GRG within the IASC Architecture.

6. IASC Cluster System

The IASC cluster system was officially established in 2005 following recognition of gaps in the response to, and quality of, humanitarian action. This was part of ‘a wider reform process aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability and accountability’.²⁶² While interviews with global cluster coordinators focused on Education, Health, Protection, Shelter and Wash, the in-depth desk review covered all 10 clusters that are part of the system at the field level.²⁶³

6.1 Global Level Clusters

The IASC Gender Policy explicitly refers to the responsibility of global cluster leads to provide guidance to the country level ‘on how to integrate gender equality as a cross-cutting issue’, and to work with all global cluster working groups and with the field level cluster system ‘to strengthen their capacities to incorporate gender equality in cluster programmes’.²⁶⁴

The *IASC 2006 Guidance Note on the Cluster Approach* also covers establishment of clusters at the global level aiming to ‘enhance technical capacity and better ensure the immediate availability of critical material and expertise’. Responsibilities of global cluster leads include: development and dissemination of standards and policies; capacity training; establishing and maintaining surge capacity and pertinent rosters; providing operational and technical support to the field; advocacy and resource mobilization; and enhanced partnership reflected in pooled resources and complementarity of efforts.²⁶⁵

*no observable increase in ultimate accountability; *results of the global cluster capacity-building have not fed through to field operations; *partnerships with international NGOs have marginally improved (but) no significant gains were seen for local NGO participants;
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²⁶² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2006/a. ‘Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response’. November, p. 1.

²⁶³ Keeping in mind that the number of clusters activated at the field level may differ from one country to the other that are covered by the current Review, depending on the type of crisis; or the cluster system may have been phased out, as in the case of Haiti.

²⁶⁴ Annex 2/A: (IASC). 2008/a. ‘IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action’. June, p. 4.

²⁶⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2006/a. ‘Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response’. November, pp. 2-4.

The 2007 *Evaluation of the Cluster Approach* commissioned by the IASC concluded that while overall improved 'efforts to identify and address gaps within programming in humanitarian response in the field' and 'prioritisation of response and strategic planning at the level of CAPs/CHAPs' was discernible, there were also limitations that required attention (see Box).²⁶⁶

*engagement of host states has been mixed, and overall has suffered from insufficient emphasis and strategic focus.

The 2010 *Evaluation of the IASC Cluster System* concluded that overall improvements and benefits are discernible: notably improved coverage of humanitarian needs in some thematic areas; better identification of humanitarian needs with positive implications for reducing duplication; greater clarity in respect of leadership and deployment of better trained staff; stronger partnership between UN and other agencies; and improved planning and quality of funding proposals. However, the evaluation also points out recurrent challenges, including inter-cluster coordination and systemic obstacles affecting the functioning of some key clusters.²⁶⁷ Relevant to the current Review are conclusions of the above mentioned evaluations regarding how the cluster system addresses cross-cutting issues, including how gender is integrated in cluster activities (discussed in the following Section B/7.4).

Also relevant to the current Review is how the IASC cluster system at global level addresses gender mainstreaming in the documents posted on their respective websites.²⁶⁸ The desk review of accessible documents reveals that overall global clusters have mainstreamed gender and age in pertinent documents. However, the extent to which such mainstreaming is in place differs not only from one global cluster to the other. In addition, in some cases there is some inconsistency in how gender and/or age are mainstreamed in documents posted by the same global cluster.

Annex 6 provides an overview of selected examples of documents posted on global cluster websites.²⁶⁹ While there is generally explicit mention of gender and/or age, in some cases this may be omitted. There are examples where there is no explicit mention of these variables in, for example, strategy plans,²⁷⁰ training tools,²⁷¹ guidance notes,²⁷² needs assessment,²⁷³ or thematic priorities.²⁷⁴ Either way, the IASC Working Group statement - flagged in a previous section of the current Review, namely that 'given that populations are not homogenous, gender and other differentiations should be reflected'²⁷⁵ - does not appear to have been consistently taken on board by the global clusters concerned.

Gender Marker Tip Sheets are explicitly referred to on the IASC Gender Marker website as part of the tools to assist in implementing the GM.²⁷⁶ Global cluster websites generally refer to the pertinent Tip Sheet, usually under tools and where the Gender Marker is mentioned.²⁷⁷ The apparent exception is the Logistics Cluster which does not have a separate

²⁶⁶ Annex 2/D: Stoddard, Abby, et. al. 2007. 'Cluster Approach Evaluation'. Final Draft, pp. 1-2.

²⁶⁷ Annex 2/D: Steets, Julia, et. al. 2010. 'Cluster Approach Evaluation 2. Synthesis Report'. GURD & GPPI, pp. 8-10; Humphries, Vanessa. 2013. 'Improving Humanitarian Coordination: Common Challenges and Lessons Learnt from the Cluster Approach'. *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. April.

²⁶⁸ As noted earlier, age and gender are explicitly referred to in the IASC 2008 Gender Equality Policy.

²⁶⁹ Annex 6: IASC Global Clusters: Mainstreaming Gender in Selected Documentation

²⁷⁰ For example, Global Early Recovery, Food Security, Logistics, Nutrition and Shelter Clusters; see Annex 5.

²⁷¹ For example, Global Early Recovery and Education Clusters; see Annex 5.

²⁷² For example, Global CCCM, Health and Protection Clusters; see Annex 5.

²⁷³ For example, Global WASH Cluster; see Annex 5.

²⁷⁴ For example, Global Shelter Cluster; see Annex 5.

²⁷⁵ See Section A/3.1 in the current Review. Annex 2/A: IASC.2013/s. 'IASC 85th Working Group Meeting. Final Summary Record. 28-29 October, p. 10.

²⁷⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/z. IASC Gender Marker – Frequently Asked Questions', p. 2.

²⁷⁷ Referred to in Section B/6.2 in the current Review.

Gender Marker Tip Sheet; apparently in the assumption that – similar to Telecommunications - it is ‘gender neutral’. In fact it may be argued that gender balance in staff recruitment – among the objectives of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy Statement – is a gender mainstreaming issue that is also applicable to logistics and telecommunications. Moreover, it may be noted that UNWFP as the lead cluster agency for Logistics indicates that logistics and security staff need training in analysing operational contexts and risks as part of improving programming.²⁷⁸

6.2 Field Level Cluster System

The IASC Gender Policy is also explicit on responsibility for gender mainstreaming at the field level, ensuring that the TORs of the RC/HC, the HCT and the cluster/sector leads ‘incorporate gender analysis and actions into programming, assessment and policy development’, and that the ‘needs of women and girls as well as men and boys are addressed’.²⁷⁹

The *2013 Common Challenges and Lessons Learnt from the Cluster Approach* conclude that while overall effectiveness of humanitarian action has improved, there remain challenges to be addressed. The latter pertain to ‘leadership’ (primarily due to high turnover), ‘lack of impartiality of cluster lead agencies’, and ‘insufficient training and experience of cluster coordinators’. Furthermore the cluster system ‘has largely failed to create a sense of NGO ownership and involvement; and mechanisms to enhance accountability to affected populations are insufficient’.²⁸⁰

At the field level, the *Gender Marker Implementation Country Reports* reveal variability in cluster system participation, and - by implication - the extent to which gender is mainstreamed in cluster activities. The GM report template includes a section on ‘cluster participation’ covering the cluster system’s ‘commitment to gender’, noting that country reports apply different terms to evaluate cluster commitment to gender.²⁸¹

The desk review of accessible cluster reports carried out as part of the current Review reveals that performance of the same cluster may vary from one country context to another. For example, commitment to gender in the Education Cluster was identified as positive in Chad, OPT, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, but was considered to be limited in Yemen. Overall commitment to gender in the Health Cluster in the afore mentioned countries varied from moderate to good. Commitment to gender in the Protection Cluster also varied, ranging from very good in the case of Somalia to acceptable in the case of Chad. In the case of the WASH Cluster, all the afore mentioned country examples were evaluated positively with the exception of South Sudan, where commitment to gender was deemed to be moderate.²⁸²

It is also relevant to note that, with the exception of the Logistics Cluster, the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Cluster Coordinators posted on the pertinent global cluster websites include reference to gender and age. As Annex 7 reveals,²⁸³ the pertinent TORs also either mention diversity separately, or as part of other cross-cutting issues. However, while the TORs for Education, Food Security,

²⁷⁸ Annex 2/B: UNWFP. 2012. ‘WFP Humanitarian Protection Policy’. Executive Board First Regular Session/Policy Issues/Agenda item 5/ February, p. 15.

²⁷⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. ‘IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action’. June, p. 4.

²⁸⁰ Annex 2/D: Humphries, Vanessa, 2013. ‘Improving Humanitarian Coordination: Common Challenges and Lessons Learnt from the Cluster Approach’. *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, April, pp. 1-2.

²⁸¹ The Consultant notes that this does not facilitate comparison between GM country reports.

²⁸² Annex 2/A: IASC. 2011/b. ‘Gender Marker Country Report: **Chad**’ (pp. 3-4); Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2011/c. ‘Gender Marker Country Report: **Occupied Palestinian Territories**’ (pp. 7-8); Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2012/e. ‘Gender Marker Country Report: **Somalia**’ (pp. 8-11); Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2012/f. ‘Gender Marker Country Report: **Sudan**’ (pp. 6-7); Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2012/g. ‘Gender Marker Country Report: **Yemen**’ (pp. 6-8).

²⁸³ Annex 7: Terms of Reference for Field Cluster Coordinators

Health, Nutrition and Shelter Cluster Coordinators explicitly mention SADD, the rest of the clusters – CCCM, Early Recovery, Protection and WASH - do not; rather reference to data is in general terms.

6.3 Inter-Cluster Coordination

The IASC Gender Policy also refers to inter-cluster coordination at the field level. Specifically the requirement that IASC Members and Standing Invitees ‘will promote gender equality strategies in their work as members of the Humanitarian Country Team’, and are encouraged to ‘share and promote IASC materials and resources’.²⁸⁴

UNOCHA’s role in support of inter-cluster coordination involves:²⁸⁵

- promoting dialogue and building consensus among humanitarian partners on key normative issues relating to humanitarian coordination leadership;
- expanding the pool of potential Humanitarian Coordinators;
- improving the leadership and coordination skills of Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators;
- ensuring that Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators get the support they need to be effective.

The *2012 Reference Module for Cluster Coordination*, issued as part of the Transformative Agenda products, identifies three levels: the HCT composed of cluster lead agencies which ‘provide the overall strategic direction’ for the humanitarian response; the group of clusters established by the HC in consultation with the HCT, composition of which may differ from one country to the other; and the inter-cluster coordination forum which brings together ‘all clusters to cross-reference cluster analysis, identify inter-cluster synergies and coverage gap, address cross-cutting issues and prepare strategic options and advocacy for the HCT’.²⁸⁶

The *revised 2014 Reference Module* also elaborates on the objective of inter-cluster coordination and provides examples of inter-cluster response and operational issues respectively. However, there is no explicit reference to gender or to SADD in the section covering Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM).²⁸⁷

Recent *IASC Operational Peer Reviews (OPRs)* provide some insight into the extent to which gender dimensions are integrated in the inter-cluster coordination mechanism, and the challenges affecting the gender mainstreaming process. As the three examples mentioned below highlight, though variations in country context and type of crises need to be taken into account, overall the OPRs conclude that gender mainstreaming in the cluster system is faced with a complexity of challenges that require to be addressed.

CAR: Three inter-agency, thematic advisors have been deployed on gender, early recovery and accountability to affected people (AAP)... Of concern to the review team were the arbitrary reporting lines of the advisers... (and the fact that)... they seem to stand parallel to the system (rather than being) anchored as part of the inter-cluster coordination group.²⁸⁸

Philippines: On the topic of gender, overall it seemed that there was a lack of traction to ensuring a gender dimension to the collective response. In a meeting with the inter-cluster coordination

²⁸⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. ‘IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action’. June, p. 4.

²⁸⁵ <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination/leadership/overview>

²⁸⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/i. ‘IASC Transformative Agenda Reference Document: 4. Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level’, p. 21.

²⁸⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/r. ‘Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level’. Revised July.

²⁸⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/p. ‘Operational Peer Review. Internal Report: Response to the Crises in the Central African Republic’. March, p. 16.

group ... most participants admitted that gender was not properly mainstreamed within the work of the cluster... (though the GenCap Adviser)... supported the strategic response planning process to ensure appropriate gender analysis informed the plan and to ensure the application of the Gender Marker.²⁸⁹

South Sudan: 'Concern was expressed that the over-prioritization of large-scale actors and large-scale 'life-saving' operations – rightly undertaken in the initial stages of the response – has undermined the quality of aid and the wellbeing of some segments of the population by limiting integrated programming related to psychosocial care, gender-based violence and education in emergencies'. Benefit from Deployment of the GenCap ²⁹⁰

Key observations and conclusions in the above mentioned OPRs more or less reflect the conclusions of the most recent evaluation of the cluster approach; namely that inter-cluster coordination is generally weak at the field level even though operational mechanisms exist. This is parallel to the finding that integration of cross cutting issues (including gender) in cluster activities remains minimal.²⁹¹

6.4 Views of IASC Stakeholders

Global Level Clusters

In discussions with key members of global clusters based in Geneva, respondents would point out that the approach to gender mainstreaming in their respective clusters is reflected in their strategic objectives and operational guidelines shared with the field level cluster system. Some would concede that there may be exceptions in global cluster documentation posted on their respective website where reference to gender and SADD may not be particularly explicit, but this would probably be applicable to older documents. Either way respondents from among IASC global cluster stakeholders are generally aware of gender mainstreaming mechanisms and tools and would point out that these would be prominently displayed on their respective website.

Some global cluster respondents would concede that follow-up on monitoring and reporting on how gender is mainstreamed at the field level may not be as optimal as required. This may be less a question of geographic distance between Geneva and the field; rather there is a perceived link with limitations of human capacity and financial resources. This may also have implications, for example, for frequency and coverage of training activities that global clusters can offer their respective cluster staff in the field, which by all accounts would be expected to include gender mainstreaming.

It appears that ensuring adequate financial resources to achieve strategic objectives and targets of the global cluster work plan may differ from one global cluster to the other. Some respondents point out that this is to some extent also linked to how successful a global cluster may be in its fund-raising strategy, in turn linked to donor interest in funding a particular cluster. Either way, some respondents would point out that donors generally demand explicit reference to gender mainstreaming in funding proposals, and global cluster funding proposals would aim to reflect this requirement.

No conclusive response was elicited on whether the GRG would be approached for input into global cluster funding proposals. Indeed, responses regarding if, and to what extent, links are maintained between the respective global cluster and the GRG also remain inconclusive. Similar to the overall

²⁸⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/o. 'Operational Peer Review. Internal Report: Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines'. February, p. 13.

²⁹⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/q. 'Operational Peer Review. Internal Report: Response to the Crisis in South Sudan'. July, p. 7.

²⁹¹ Annex 2/D: Steets, Julia et. al. 2010. 'Cluster Approach Evaluation 2. Synthesis Report . GURD & GPP, pp. 36, 56.

responses elicited from IASC Task Teams and other Reference Groups, familiarity with the GRG TOR and annual work plans differed among respondents. This appeared to be at least partly linked to the latter's familiarity with, and length of work placement within, the IASC structure but also to their gender-relevant experience.

Inter-cluster coordination at the global level is supported by designated inter-cluster coordinators, who would point out that by definition the cluster system implies joint planning in which gender is mainstreamed. However, no conclusive response was elicited on whether the Geneva-based global cluster system has developed a joint strategic gender mainstreaming action plan applicable to all clusters. Some respondents would concede that global cluster stakeholders are generally aware that gender mainstreaming at the field level may not be implemented as effectively as planned; deemed in some cases to be due to inadequate investment in relevant benchmarks and baseline indicators that take account of SADD. Some respondents would also point to the type of humanitarian crisis and the political and socio-economic - and by implication gender - dynamics in a country where the cluster system is activated; and how this may affect the approach pursued by the field level cluster system in tackling gender mainstreaming.

Various global cluster respondents concede that inter-cluster coordination at both global and field levels is generally easier where the same UN organization is the cluster lead (for example, UNICEF in respect of Education, Nutrition and WASH). How this unfolds at the field level tends to depend on the RC/HC and HCT leadership in promoting and supporting inter-cluster coordination, and how proactive field level cluster leads and cluster coordinators are in 'keeping up the momentum and ensuring that the gender agenda does not slip into the background', as some respondents would put it. As discussed in the previous section on accountability (Section B/4), global level clusters are aware of the link between accountability of the field-level leadership and how effectively gender is mainstreamed in the cluster system.

Field-Level Clusters

Skype/telephone discussions with some cluster leads and cluster coordinators in various field countries covered by the current Review echoes some of the points raised by global cluster stakeholders; such as the challenge of ensuring that gender is effectively mainstreamed in intra-cluster programme approach and project implementation, as well as in inter-cluster coordination activities; the role of field level leadership in ensuring that gender is effectively mainstreamed in humanitarian action on the ground.

The fact that inter-cluster coordination may be easier where the same UN agency leads a number of clusters was another point raised by various field level respondents; keeping in mind that the same cluster lead or cluster coordinator may be responsible for a number of clusters. However, as some respondents would point out, while some synergies between clusters are 'logical' and a more or less established way of working together, more effort is required to promote synergies between all clusters. Some respondents believe that this is not effectively addressed through inter-cluster coordination, and thus may constitute 'a missed opportunity to support a joint strategic approach to gender mainstreaming'.

Field-level cluster respondents would also point out that effective gender mainstreaming also hinges on the source, type and depth of support that may be tapped into. In some cases response by global clusters to requests of support from the field may be timely; in other cases there may be a time-lag. Specifically as concerns requests for support on gender mainstreaming, field-level staff 'may need to look elsewhere for the required information and support', as one respondent put it. This is where the deployment of the GenCap Adviser and/or the existence of the Gender Theme Group is

perceived to be crucial,²⁹² especially where capacity for gender mainstreaming is insufficient. The latter is generally deemed to be a ‘chronic problem’ given the relatively high staff turnover in the humanitarian sector.

There is some awareness among field level cluster stakeholders that support that may be tapped into at the field level does not necessarily translate into institutionalizing requirements for - and implementation of - effective gender mainstreaming. Much depends – as many respondents would point out – on the RC/HC and HCT leadership, but also on the leadership of OCHA given its role in inter-cluster coordination.

Moreover, tapping into such support does not necessarily imply that ‘all clusters are on the same gender page’, as one respondent put it. However much field level leadership may push for gender mainstreaming in intra- and inter-cluster activities, ‘personality dynamics’ may play a role, i.e. if and to what extent cluster staff are pro-active in pursuing common and overlapping interests underlying their respective cluster activities and who holds them responsible for this, as some respondents put it.

Though some respondents would also point out that perceived limited or even lack of cooperation in some clusters and among some cluster staff may quite simply be due to time pressure, especially in emergency and sudden onset humanitarian crisis contexts. It would also be pointed out that notwithstanding the geographical distance between the global level and the field, how inter-cluster coordination actually works out on the ground may to some extent also depend on how the respective global cluster leadership promotes and supports this.

Various field-level cluster staff would tend to focus on GBV in discussing gender mainstreaming, but which they would also perceive as being ‘the business of the GBV as well as the Protection Sub-Clusters’. But as some respondents would also point out, it may well be the case that interventions to combat GBV, including the culturally sensitive issue of FGM/C, are being implemented in the development sector, yet the humanitarian sector seemingly fails to tap into this. The same point was also raised in respect of access to SADD information. The pertinent respondents would appear to be aware of the need to link humanitarian and development interventions. This point was also raised where the cluster system is being phased out, and the challenge of maintaining the momentum on gender-relevant achievements.

Either way, promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment was generally not perceived to be a priority in humanitarian action because – as some respondents put it – ‘we are here to save lives, and that means everyone, regardless of gender and age’. Overall, field level cluster staff would not particularly refer to gender equality strategies of the organizations where they are located, and some do not seem to perceive a link between the latter and how gender is integrated in their own cluster activities.

7. Gender Mainstreaming Mechanisms and Tools

7.1 Gender Standby Capacity Project

The *Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Project* was initiated in 2007 under the auspices of the former IASC Gender SWG, in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).²⁹³ The

²⁹² Discussed in Section B/7.1 of the current Review.

²⁹³ The GenCap Project is funded by the NRC. The GenCap Steering Committee provides strategic direction and participates in recruitment and deployment decisions. Members include OCHA, FAO, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women, while NRC, the GenCap Support Unit, the IASC GRG, WHO and WFP have observer status.

<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/coordination/gencap/gen-cap-wh...>

It should be noted that there does not appear to be institutional memory within the IASC structure as to why the GenCap Project is not explicitly referred to in the IASC 2008 Gender Equality Policy. Reference in the latter to ‘capacity’ of

impetus for establishing the GenCap Project was recognition of the urgent need to improve gender equality programming in humanitarian interventions. The GenCap Project aims to facilitate and strengthen capacity for and leadership in mainstreaming gender in humanitarian interventions through the deployment - at short notice - of a pool of experienced gender advisers who would support the UN RC/HC and the HCT. Specifically:²⁹⁴

- Facilitate and strengthen humanitarian capacity and leadership to promote gender equality programming.
- Support the strategic and operational response of agencies in applying gender equality programming in humanitarian action.
- Ensure that women, girls, boys and men of all ages and backgrounds, affected by natural disasters or conflict, are able to access humanitarian assistance and protection.

GenCap Updates provide information on the GenCap Project's financial status; deployment of Advisers; implementation of the IASC Gender Marker, and GenCap Technical Workshops.²⁹⁵

GenCap Annual Reports have been issued yearly since 2009. The *2012 Gen Cap Annual Report* highlights achievements of the GenCap Project, such as increasing the roster and deployment of GenCap Advisers,²⁹⁶ setting up the Rapid Response Team (RRT) linked to the GBV Window of the GenCap roster; capacity building to strengthen gender as a cross-cutting issue at global level as well as within the cluster system, including implementation of the Gender Marker; securing further funding for the Project; and collaboration with the previous IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender.²⁹⁷

The *2013 GenCap Annual Report* provides an overview of highlights of the Project's implementation, including multi-dimensional support to GBV prevention and response; providing guidance on mainstreaming gender in the HPC and SRP; and development and piloting of a stand-alone training on gender in humanitarian action.²⁹⁸

The Report also flags recurrent challenges deemed to affect implementation of the GenCap Project, specifically funding; recruitment/availability and retention of GenCap roster members; and the link with sustainability of expertise and knowhow following departure of GenCap Advisers. The Report notes the implications of these challenges for ensuring that humanitarian actors take responsibility for gender equality programming (GEP). It was also noted that focus on the IASC Gender Marker appears to 'overshadow other areas of Gender Advisers' and humanitarian actors' work to achieve GEP'.²⁹⁹

A key component of implementing the GenCap Project is the development of the *Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Framework* (revised in 2008),³⁰⁰ based on clear objectives; expected results chain, monitoring process, data analysis and evaluation tools; a template for identifying good/poor

humanitarian staff and the affected population (women, men) is couched in general terms. See IASC. 2008. 'Gender Equality Policy Statement in Humanitarian Action'. June.

²⁹⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2014/a. 'GenCap: A Resource for Gender Equality Programming', p. 1.

²⁹⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2009. 'GenCap Update'. February, April, June, August, October; IASC/GenCap. 2011. 'GenCap Update'. April, October; IASC/GenCap. 2012/a. 'GenCap Update'. May, August, December; IASC/GenCap. 2013/e.. 'GenCap Update'. July; IASC/GenCap. 2014/d. 'GenCap Update'. July, October.

²⁹⁶ Including recruitment of male GenCap Advisers. According to information provided by the GenCap/ProCap Secretariat, by March 2015 some 10% of GenCap Advisers are male.

²⁹⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap). 2012/b. 'GenCap Annual Report 2012' (1 January-31December), p. 3.

²⁹⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2013/d. 'GenCap Annual Report 2013'. (1 January-31 December), pp. 3-4.

²⁹⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2013/d. 'GenCap Annual Report 2013'. (1 January-31 December), pp. 12-13.

³⁰⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GPPI. 2008/a. 'Interim Report: Revising and Implementing the GenCap M&E Framework'. September.

practice; as well as the required capacity building/training.³⁰¹ The 2010 status report on the M&E Framework reiterates the challenge of addressing the lack of SADD.³⁰² A revised M&E Framework was launched in 2013,³⁰³ while the 2009 M&E Guidelines were revised in 2014.³⁰⁴

A series of *GenCap Experience Documents* was issued during the period 2008 – 2010, which aim to present technical background information and lessons learnt from deployment of GenCap Advisers in the field. Topics covered include gender in natural disaster preparedness; needs assessment; coordination; GBV and the cluster system.³⁰⁵ The GenCap Project also issued in 2010 an overview of minimum standards for mainstreaming gender equality in the cluster system, as requested by the Pooled Fund (PF).³⁰⁶

The *2009 evaluation of the GenCap Project* concluded that overall there were positive results in respect of the operational environment, as well as at the input and output levels. However, the evaluation also pointed to a number of challenges in the field, including:³⁰⁷

- gender equality programming still faces a dismissive environment’;
- deployment tends to focus on a limited number of clusters;
- GenCaps may be used as ‘gap fillers’ rather than ‘capacity builders’.

Moreover, the GenCap Project is deemed to have a ‘mixed record of achieving its intended outcomes’. The Project was also generally less successful with ‘respect to the institutionalization of tools and mechanisms for gender equality programming’.³⁰⁸

Notwithstanding the above mentioned challenges and constraints, the overall positive results identified in 2009 were more or less flagged by the *2011 Evaluation of the GenCap Project*; specifically in terms of the effective contribution of GenCap Advisers in ‘increasing the understanding and acceptance of gender among humanitarian actors’. This was achieved mainly through the Gender Marker and capacity building, largely reflected in increased inclusion of gender issues in humanitarian planning documents. However, institutional follow-up and sustainability were deemed to be weak, to some extent due to high staff turnover, with implications for coordination

³⁰¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GPPI. 2008/b. ‘Introducing the M&E Framework for the Gender Standby Capacity Project’. December.

³⁰² Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2010/d. ‘Status Report #3: Results from the GenCap Monitoring and Evaluation Project’.

³⁰³ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2013/c. ‘A new M&E framework for GenCap’. Last updated November.

³⁰⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC/GPPI. 2009/a. ‘Guidelines for the Use of the GenCap Monitoring Tool’. March; Inter-Agency Standing Committee/Gender Standby Capacity Project (IASC/GenCap). 2014/c/. ‘Guidelines for the Use of the GenCap Monitoring and Evaluation Framework’ January.

³⁰⁵ Annex 2/A: **2008**: IASC/GenCap. 2008/a. ‘GenCap Experience Document #1: Opportunities for Contributing to the CAP Process’. By Siobhan Foran; IASC/GenCap. 2008/b.. ‘GenCap Experience Document #2: Gender Analysis’. By Siobhan Foran; IASC/GenCap. 2008/c. ‘GenCap Experience Document #3: Strengthening the Architecture of Coordination related to Gender Equality Programming’. By Siobhan Foran; IASC/GenCap. 2008/d. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 4: Facilitate and Coordinate the Initial Implementation of a Joint Programme’. By Madhumita Sarkar.

Annex 2/A: **2009**: IASC/GenCap. 2009/b. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 5: Initial Steps in Mainstreaming Gender into Natural Disaster Preparedness’. By Linda Pennells; IASC/GenCap. 2009/c. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 6: Opportunities for Comprehensive Assessments: How to Ensure Access to Sex and Age Disaggregated Data’. By Elizabeth Pender; IASC/GenCap. 2009/d. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 7: Opportunities for Coordination, Women’s Protection and Gender Based Violence’. By Elizabeth Pender; IASC/GenCap. 2009/e. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 8: Setting up Systems and Structure: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse’. By Angela Mackay.

Annex 2/A: **2010**: IASC/GenCap. 2010/c. ‘GenCap Experience Document # 9: Demystifying Gender Programming in Water, Hygiene and Sanitation’. By Delphine Brun.

³⁰⁶ Examples of operational standards for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action cover Education, Food Security, Health, Logistics, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter and WASH. IASC/GenCap. 2010/a. ‘Cluster Guidance Note for Gender Mainstreaming in Humanitarian Action. Projects Financed by the Pooled Funds. Examples of Operational Standards’.

³⁰⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC/GPPI. 2009. ‘Real Time Evaluation of the GenCap Project’. Final Report. By Andrea Binder, p. 4.

³⁰⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC/GPPI. 2009. ‘Real Time Evaluation of the GenCap Project’. Final Report. By Andrea Binder, p. 4..

efforts. This tends to be also ‘hampered by institutional tensions between the different gender-focused agencies on the ground’.³⁰⁹ These findings were further reiterated in the *2013 GenCap Monitoring and Evaluation Report*.³¹⁰

The agenda of the GenCap Annual Technical Workshops organized yearly since 2012 aims to provide opportunities for the GenCap Advisers deployed in the field to exchange experiences, as well as further capacity training. The Workshops also provide a forum for discussing recurrent challenges largely flagged in the above mentioned GenCap reports, updates and evaluations.³¹¹

The 2013 GenCap Technical Workshop translated identified challenges into four strategic results, which aimed to strengthen:³¹²

- engagement by GenCap in the UN Transformative Agenda and related initiatives;
- monitoring of gender mainstreaming at cluster strategy, programme/project design and implementation levels;
- strategic partnerships and emerging issues;
- GenCap strategic framework, accountability and knowledge management mechanisms.

The *GenCap Project Strategy 2014 - 2016* largely reflects the accumulated experiences since launching the Project in 2007, including the need to increase the timespan of deployment. It aims to be ‘a living document which will be revised on an annual basis to reflect developments in humanitarian processes and architecture’. The Strategy also recognizes that the GenCap Project ‘continues to face challenges from a systemic, organizational and mind-set level’, linked to a multitude of challenges, including lack of institutional leadership on gender; the need to translate commitments into supporting the role of gender and other cross-cutting issues in humanitarian action and the link with accountability; the chronic lack of sex and age disaggregated data; and ensuring sustainability of gender capacity in the humanitarian system.³¹³

7.2 Gender Tools

7.2.1 *Gender Marker and Tip Sheets*

- *More gender responsive projects.
- *More visibility for good work in gender quality and empowerment.
- *More gender expertise in the clusters.
- *More aid effectiveness and gender accountability to donors.
- *Better tracking of gender-related humanitarian investments.
- *Easier and better links to

³⁰⁹ Annex 2/C: GPPI. 2011. ‘Evaluation of the Protection Standby Capacity (ProCap) and Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Projects’. By Julia Steets and Claudia Meier, pp. 5-7.

³¹⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2013/g. ‘Results from the GenCap Monitoring and Evaluation Report’. October.

³¹¹ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2012/c. ‘GenCap Annual Technical Workshop. Final Report. Geneva/February; IASC/GenCap. 2013/f. ‘GenCap Annual Technical Workshop’. Final Report. Geneva/February; IASC/GenCap. 2014/e. ‘GenCap Annual Technical Workshop’. Final Report. Geneva/March; IASC/GenCap. 2014/f. ‘GenCap Annual Technical Workshop and Learning Event’. Event Report. Geneva/November.

³¹² Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2013/f. ‘GenCap Annual Technical Workshop’. Final Report. Geneva/February, p. 2.

³¹³ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2014/g. ‘IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap)Strategy 2014-2016’, p. 2-3.

The Gender Marker (GM) was jointly created by the IASC Sub-Working Groups on Gender and Humanitarian Action and the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), in response to the identified imperative 'to improve humanitarian programming and make humanitarian response more efficient'. This was linked to the expectation that clusters are 'accountable for advancing gender equality in their respective sectors'. The GM, application of which is mandatory in the IASC humanitarian structure, is deemed to offer benefits to the clusters as well as to affected populations (see Box).

development.³¹⁴

A particular characteristic of the IASC GM is that it is a tool focusing primarily on the project design level.³¹⁵ Indeed, the *Guidance Note for Clusters to Implement the IASC Gender Marker* includes a reference to the ADAPT & ACT Framework included in the 2006 IASC Gender Handbook. The Framework is designated as a practical tool for designing and reviewing humanitarian projects 'through a gender lens'.³¹⁶

The GM was rolled out in 2009 as a pilot covering four countries,³¹⁷ a process facilitated by the Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Project.³¹⁸ Lessons learnt from the 2009 roll-out were reflected in four specific recommendations for future application of the GM:³¹⁹

- Inclusion of gender markers from the start of the humanitarian funding cycle.
- Access to sufficient and effective technical support.
- Adapt gender markers to the context.
- Concrete standardized guidelines on the gender markers.

The 2010 consultation with key IASC partners aimed to achieve consensus on how to strengthen the Gender Marker in the CAP and other humanitarian appeals/funding mechanisms in the 2011 cycle.³²⁰ By 2012, *Gender Marker Tip Sheets* were issued for all cluster sectors as well as covering thematic areas.³²¹ Gender Marker Country Reports include the field countries covered by the Review of the IASC 2008 Gender Equality Policy.³²² Overall, the IASC GM Reports (2011, 2012, 2013),³²³ reveal that improvements in terms of the number of projects *coded 0* (reduction from 35% to 6%) and those *coded 2a* (increase from 14% to 54%) are discernible; though it was also noted that projects *coded*

³¹⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/e. 'Guidance Note for Clusters to Implement the IASC Gender Marker. Creating Gender-responsive Projects and Tracking Gender-related Allocations in Humanitarian Appeals and Funding Mechanisms', p 8.

³¹⁵ In contrast, for example to the DAC GM which focuses on activities, and the UNDP GM which measures outputs. IASC. 2010/b. 'Consultation on the IASC Gender Marker'. Summary Report, Geneva/February, p. 3.

³¹⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/t. 'Guidance Note for Clusters to implement the IASC Gender Marker', p. 11.

³¹⁷ DRC, Ethiopia, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/c. 'Gender Markers in Humanitarian Appeals and Funding Mechanisms. Lessons learnt from the Roll-Out in 2009'.

³¹⁸ Discussed in the Section on the GenCap Project; in cases where no GenCaps were deployed implementation of the GM was supported by Gender Advisers. See also Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2013. 'IASC Gender Marker analysis and coding'.

³¹⁹ Annex 2/A :IASC. 2010/c. 'Gender Markers in Humanitarian Appeals and Funding Mechanisms. Lessons learnt from the Roll-Out in 2009', p. 16.early recovery, education, food security (food assistance, agriculture and livelihood), GBV,health, mine action, nutrition, shelter and non-food items, protection, WASH

³²⁰ Annex 2/A :IASC. 2010/b. 'Consultation on the IASC Gender Marker'. Summary Report, Geneva/February, p. 2.

³²¹ Specifically GM Tip Sheets covering child protection, coordination. Annex 2/A: IASC. 2012/c. 'IASC Gender Marker Tip Sheets'.

³²² Notably DRC, CAR, Chad, Mali, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Yemen. <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/topics/gender/page/gender-mark...>

³²³ Annex 2/A : IASC. 2011/a. 'IASC Gender Marker: Analysis of Results and Lessons Learnt'. January; IASC. 2012/d. 'IASC Gender Marker: Analysis of Results and Lessons Learnt'. February; IASC. 2013/b. 'IASC Gender Marker: Analysis of Results and Lessons Learnt'. February.

2b only increased from 6% to 7%.³²⁴ By 2013, projects coded 2a had decreased to 48% while those coded 2b stood at 4%.³²⁵

The 2013 Donor on Gender in Emergencies Report compiled by CARE International reveals that it remains 'unclear just what proportions of international aid were being directed to gender projects'. Moreover, 'even those projects which have scored well on the Gender Marker in the project proposal and design stage may not always fully translate into effective project implementation and monitoring on the ground'.³²⁶ This has led to calls to ensure that an outcome of the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) is agreeing on the 'need for a standardized and systematic international approach to donor reporting on gender'.³²⁷

Moreover, analysis of results and lessons learnt also reveals that 'challenges identified in previous years of Gender Marker application have yet to be resolved', specifically in terms of 'sustainability', 'ownership and engagement', 'coding confusion', and 'the association of Gender with women's and girls' issues'. Collection and analysis of SADD continues to be a particular challenge, where few projects reviewed 'give any clear indication of how SADD will be analysed and used to inform and strengthen project design'.³²⁸

The 2014 IASC Gender Marker Assessment reveals that overall it 'has been successful in raising the profile of gender and ensuring that it is integrated in some programming'. There is also appreciation of 'the added depth that the tool can bring to the design process'.³²⁹ Successes also include establishing minimum commitments, use of the Tip Sheets and donor engagement.³³⁰ However, the 2014 Assessment also reveals that there was a drop in the percentage of projects coded 2a and an increase in the percentage of projects coded 0.³³¹

Furthermore, the 2014 Assessment notes continuing challenges to be addressed as part of further developing the GM for implementation in the next phase (referred to as IASC Gender Marker 2).³³² Key areas deemed to require further exploration and discussion include:³³³

- Need to apply the GM throughout the project cycle, and monitor and evaluate its impact.
- Challenge of developing collective monitoring mechanisms while avoiding additional reporting burdens.
- Articulating a single purpose for the GM tool against which it could be measured.
- Broader engagement of clusters, UN agencies, donors and NGOs in the process of developing the GM 2.

³²⁴ Code 0/no visible potential to contribute to gender equality. Code 1/potential to contribute in some limited way to gender equality. Code 2 a/ gender mainstreaming/potential to contribute significantly to gender equality. Code 2b/targeted action/project's principal purpose is to advance gender equality). Annex 2/A :IASC. 2012/d. 'IASC Gender Marker: Analysis of Results and Lessons Learnt'. February, p., vii.

³²⁵ Annex 2/A IASC. 2013/b. 'IASC Gender Marker: Analysis of Results and Lessons Learnt'. February, p. 5.

³²⁶ Annex 2/C: CARE International. 2013. 'Donor Spending on Gender in Emergencies 2013', p. 4; see also GHA. 2014. 'Funding Gender in Emergencies. What are the trends?' Briefing Paper, September, p. 2; and OCHA Financial Tracking System (FTS) <http://www.programmableweb.com/api/un-ocha-financial-tracking-system>.

³²⁷ Annex 2/C: GHA. 2015. 'Reporting on gender in emergencies in is decline – can the World Humanitarian Summit help to address this?'

³²⁸ Annex 2/C: GHA. 2015. 'Reporting on gender in emergencies in is decline – can the World Humanitarian Summit help to address this?'

³²⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/a. 'IASC Gender Marker Assessment. Findings and Recommendations'. June, p.25.

³³⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GenCap. 2014/b. 'Gender Marker Report 2013-2014'.

³³¹ Ibid. p.2. The Report indicates that the reasons for this change is unknown.

³³² The further evolution of the IASC GM, including its application in L3 emergencies, was among the topics for discussion during the November 2014 meeting in Geneva. See Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/b. 'IASC Gender Marker –Update'. Geneva/ November.

³³³ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/a 'IASC Gender Marker Assessment. Findings and Recommendations'. June, p.25.

Particularly relevant to the current Review are two specific recommendations presented in the 2014 IASC GM Assessment Report; namely institutionalizing mechanisms for sharing and building on lessons learnt; and as mentioned above in the discussion of IASC and accountability, the need for 'clearer and stronger accountability mechanisms for gender interaction in the humanitarian response'.³³⁴

7.2.2 Gender Alerts

The IASC Gender Alerts were launched by the former Gender SWG and are part of the annual work plans of the current GRG. The aim is to alert humanitarian staff and stakeholders in the field by identifying priorities to ensure gender sensitive humanitarian response and sustainable humanitarian outcomes.

The focus of the Gender Alert, which may differ by country and type of humanitarian crisis, identifies priority clusters/sectors and thematic areas requiring attention; flags the importance of including SADD in needs assessment and project development; and points out immediate actions required to mainstream gender in humanitarian response.³³⁵ Improving the content, analysis and timing of issuing the Gender Alerts is an on-going discussion within the GRG.³³⁶

7.3 Knowledge Management and Capacity Building

As mentioned in the IASC Gender Policy, IASC Members and Standing Invitees are 'encouraged to share and promote IASC materials and resources, including related to work on conflict prevention, early warning, disaster risk reduction, and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation'.³³⁷ The Gender Policy is also explicit as regards capacity building, namely that 'members shall provide staff appropriate training and knowledge for meaningful contributions to inclusion of gender equality programming in IASC decision-making'.³³⁸

The *2006 IASC Handbook Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs - Equal Opportunities* is divided into two sections, covering fundamental principles and areas of work respectively. It includes checklists and the ACT & ADAPT collectively to ensure gender equality framework, and covers cluster-specific sectors. The Handbook is accessible via the IASC website and is available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.³³⁹

The *2009 Review of eight IASC Products* includes the Gender Handbook. The breakdown of responses to the survey reveals that 47% of the respondents used the Handbook occasionally; one in five respondents had received the Handbook directly from the IASC; some 50% used it project/programme design and for preparing country level guidance; 48% used it for training partners; 36% for advocacy; and 33% for examples of good practice; 43% indicated that their agency HQ has instructed that the Handbook be used; 21% indicated that their agency had incorporated

³³⁴ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2014/a 'IASC Gender Marker Assessment. Findings and Recommendations'. June, p. 7. Discussion of accountability is covered in Section B/4 of the current Report.

³³⁵ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2014/g. 'Humanitarian Crisis in Central African Republic Gender Alert'. January; IASC/GRG. 2014/h. 'Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan: Gender Alert'. January; IASC/GRG. 2014/i. Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan: Gender Alert'. May; IASC/GRG. 2014/j. 'Humanitarian Crisis in Central African Republic Gender Alert'. June; IASC/GRG. 2014/k. 'Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq: Gender Alert'. September; IASC/GRG. 2014/l. 'Humanitarian Crisis in West Africa (Ebola): Gender Alert'. September.

³³⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC/GRG. 2014/e. 'IASC Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action Face to Face Meeting'. 1-2 October, p. 1.

³³⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 4.

³³⁸ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2008/a. 'IASC Policy Statement. Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. June, p. 3.

³³⁹ Annex 2/A :IASC. 2006/d. 'Women, Girls, Boys and Men. Different Needs, Equal Opportunities. IASC Handbook for Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action'. December.

the Handbook into their own policy; 48% have been trained in the use of the Handbook and 29% use it in their work. However, 67% of respondents also indicated that the Handbook is too complicated to use; 64% believe it is out of date and 52% think it is too long.³⁴⁰

The *2011 IASC Product Guideline* drafted by the IASC Secretariat singles out the Gender Handbook as an example of how an IASC product may systematically reach its target audience when promoted by experts such as, for example, the GenCap Advisers.³⁴¹ This reality is also flagged by the GRG in various meeting and progress reports (discussed Section B/5.1).

The *IASC Global Cluster websites* have a sub-section on gender training tools and – with the exception of the Logistics Cluster – all mention the 2006 IASC Gender Handbook. The CCCM, Early Recovery, Food Security, Protection and WASH global cluster websites also mention the 2005 IASC GBV Guidelines.³⁴²

The 2006 IASC Gender Handbook is incorporated into the *IASC gender e-learning course*, available free of charge via the IASC website. The long version of the gender e-learning course is hosted by the Human Rights Educations Associates (HREA).³⁴³ The shorter version, condensed by the GRG, is hosted by the UNWOMEN Learning Centre in Santo Domingo.³⁴⁴ The websites of the CCCM, Education, Health, Nutrition and WASH global clusters include reference to the IASC gender e-learning course.³⁴⁵

Various IASC Full Members, Standing Invitees and members of Task Teams or Reference Groups have committed to providing the gender e-learning course to their staff, as well as facilitating access for their partners.³⁴⁶ Upon completing the course, participants are requested to fill out a survey regarding the relevance, quality and usefulness of the gender e-learning course.³⁴⁷

The *2010 IASC Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings* is also accessible via the IASC website, and is available in several languages apart from English.³⁴⁸ The GBV Handbook is linked to the *2005 IASC Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings*, which in turn serves as a complement to the Gender Handbook.³⁴⁹ Implementation of the GBV Guidelines is supported by the *2008 Gender-based Violence Resource Tools and Standard Operational Procedures developed by the former Gender SWG*.³⁵⁰

The *2010 Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response* is another relevant IASC product. Gender is mainstreamed in key sections and a separate chapter covers cross-cutting issues defined as age, diversity, environment, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and mental health and

³⁴⁰ Annex 2/D: Ferretti, Silva. 2009. 'Review of IASC Products. Survey on the IASC Gender Handbook.

³⁴¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2011/g. 'IASC Product Guideline'. Drafted by the IASC Secretariat, p. 10.

³⁴² See Annex 8: Global Clusters & IASC Gender Products.

³⁴³ HREA is registered as a charity in the Netherlands and is based in Cambridge/Massachusetts.

³⁴⁴ It appears that the HREA does not hold a complete tracking record of users of the IASC gender e-course. This is expected to be addressed by the UN WOMEN Learning Centre.

³⁴⁵ See Annex 8: Global Clusters & IASC Gender Products.

³⁴⁶ To date 16 agencies have committed to the use of the gender e-learning course.

³⁴⁷ <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content>

³⁴⁸ <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/iasc-gender-eleatrningsurvey>

³⁴⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/g. Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings'. Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility Working Group/Global Protection Cluster.

³⁴⁹ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/l. 'Guidelines on Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings'.

³⁵⁰ Annex 2/A: IASC/GSWG. 2008/b. 'Gender-based Violence Resource Tools'.

psychosocial support.³⁵¹ However, data is referred to in general terms rather than SADD. The RC/HC Handbook is accompanied by a Checklist which includes explicit reference to gender and other cross cutting issues, but not to SADD.³⁵²

7.4 Cross-Cutting Issues

Defining what constitutes a cross-cutting issue and applying it during the process of gender mainstreaming through pertinent mechanisms and tools is deemed integral to strengthening humanitarian response and outcomes, as various evaluations of the cluster approach have highlighted.

Relevant to the current Review is how the IASC community of stakeholders addresses cross-cutting issues. The previously mentioned *2007 Evaluation of the Cluster Approach* concluded that addressing cross-cutting issues – defined as gender, HIV/AIDS, the environment and the needs of older people – remains a challenge. More specifically, while acknowledging that overall improved ‘efforts to identify and address gaps within programming in humanitarian response in the field’ are discernible, the evidence ‘does not suggest that cross-cutting issues were more effectively incorporated’ relative to humanitarian intervention prior to establishing the cluster system; and that a ‘more fundamental barrier to addressing cross-cutting issues stems from weak inter-cluster coordination, including inadequate information management and analysis’.³⁵³

The *2010 Evaluation of the IASC Cluster System* also concluded that overall improvements and benefits are discernible: notably improved coverage of humanitarian needs in some thematic areas; better identification of humanitarian needs with positive implications for reducing duplication; greater clarity in respect of leadership and deployment of better trained staff; stronger partnership between UN and other agencies; and improved planning and quality of funding proposals.³⁵⁴

Relevant to the current Review is the conclusion of the above mentioned 2010 cluster system evaluation that, some exceptions apart, integration of cross-cutting issues – defined as age, gender, environment and HIV/AIDS – in cluster system activities has been minimal. This is deemed to be largely due to limited inclusion of SADD; insufficient attention to cross-cutting issues during inter-cluster meetings; lack of clarity in respect of responsibility for integrating cross-cutting issues; insufficient capacity of cluster coordinators and limited guidance for integrating cross-cutting issues; and limited attention to cross-cutting issues in needs assessments.³⁵⁵ In addition there was lack of clarity in what constitutes a cross-cutting issue.³⁵⁶

The discussion in preceding Sections of the current Review has also served to highlight that within the IASC stakeholder community there does not appear to be consensus on what constitutes a ‘cross-cutting issue’. The *2006 IASC Mainstreaming and Funding Cross-Cutting Issues* document defines cross-cutting as gender, HIV/AIDS, environment, protection (including human rights), camp

³⁵¹ Annex 2/A: IASC. 2010/h. ‘Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response.

³⁵² Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/m. ‘Checklist for RCs and HCs in Emergency Preparedness and Response.

³⁵³ Annex 2/D: Stoddard, Abby, et. al. 2007. ‘Cluster Approach Evaluation’. Final Draft, pp. 1-2, 40.

³⁵⁴ Annex 2/D: Steets, Julia, et. al. 2010. ‘Cluster Approach Evaluation 2. Synthesis Report . GURD & GPPI, pp. 8-10; Humphries, Vanessa. 2013. ‘Improving Humanitarian Coordination: Common Challenges and Lessons Learnt from the Cluster Approach’. *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. April.

³⁵⁵ Annex 2/D: Steets, Julia, et. al. 2010. ‘Cluster Approach Evaluation 2. Synthesis Report . GURD & GPPI, pp. 8-10, 56-58; see also Humphries, Vanessa. 2013. ‘Improving Humanitarian Coordination: Common Challenges and Lessons Learnt from the Cluster Approach’. *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. April.

³⁵⁶ Apart from age, gender, HIV/AIDS and environment, some humanitarian actors would add early recovery, disaster risk reduction, protection, disability and human rights. Some confusion was also discernible whether age referred to old people or all age groups. Annex 2/D: Steets, Julia, et. al. 2010. ‘Cluster Approach Evaluation 2. Synthesis Report . GURD & GPPI, p. 57.

coordination and camp management, early recovery and information management.³⁵⁷ In 2006/2007 a Cross-Cutting Review Team – involving IOM, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNOCHA and UNWHO - discussed cross-cutting issues within the cluster approach, but apparently no decision was reached.³⁵⁸

The 2007 IASC guidance paper entitled *Cross-Cutting Issues: Key Things to Know*, prepared for the IASC Cluster/Sector Leadership Training, focuses on gender, HIV/AIDS and environment in emergencies. As regards gender, key recurrent challenges affecting the process of mainstreaming gender in the cluster system are highlighted (see Box). The guidance paper includes a framework for gender equality programming, and refers to the IASC 2006 Gender Handbook and the ADAPT & ACT framework, as well as best practice examples from the field.³⁵⁹

<ul style="list-style-type: none">*data is not disaggregated by sex ad age;*needs assessments underlying gender analysis are not truly participatory;*gender is perceived to be something that is not vital to take into consideration in the rush to provide immediate humanitarian relief.
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As a recent strategic review commissioned by UNOCHA points out, within the humanitarian stakeholder community, there is no apparent clarity regarding what constitutes a cross-cutting issue.³⁶⁰ Indeed, and as discussion in preceding Sections of the current Review indicate, IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitees agencies, as well as IASC Subsidiary Bodies and the Global Cluster System, may have different definitions of what constitutes a cross-cutting issue. In some documents consulted for the current Review, gender and age are included in what may be referred to as the ‘cross-cutting package’, thus apparently according these two variables equal weight with whatever other cross-cutting issues may be included in the ‘package’. In other cases, gender and age are mentioned separately. Either way, the ‘cross-cutting package’ adhered to by the different IASC stakeholder groups may include disability, HIV/AIDS, environment, and in some cases also variables such as culture, diversity, early recovery, GBV, governance, human rights, people-centric, protection and psychosocial/mental health.³⁶¹

Another cross-cutting issue debated within the IASC stakeholder community is the ‘people-centred approach’, which aims to take into account the different needs of women, men, girls and boys. While this approach essentially reiterates key messages in the IASC 2006 Gender Handbook, it does not explicitly articulate the link with promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment,³⁶² and by implication contribute to bridging the humanitarian/development divide highlighted by the IASC Leadership. Definition of the people-centred approach may also cover the term ‘diversity’. Here too there does not appear to be consensus within the IASC stakeholder community regarding what constitutes diversity. UNHCR, for example, defines diversity in terms of different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics.³⁶³ This definition may not be adhered to by other humanitarian actors.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁷Annex 2/A: IASC. 2006/e. ‘Humanitarian Reform – Cross-Cutting Issues. Recommendations on Mainstreaming and Funding Cross-Cutting Issues’. Geneva/December, p. 1.

³⁵⁸ Foran, Siobhan and Kate Burns. no date.’ Cross-Cutting Issues at a Cross-Roads?’ PowerPointPresentation. By all accounts, the Team was disbanded in 2007.

³⁵⁹ IASC). 2007/b. ‘Cross-Cutting Issues: Things to Know. Gender, HIV/AIDS and Environment in Emergencies’. Prepared for the IASC Cluster/Sector Leadership Training/October.

³⁶⁰ Annex 2/B: UNOCHA. no date/b. ‘Coordination and Funding of Cross-Cutting Issues in Humanitarian Action’. A strategic review commissioned by UNOCHA.

³⁶¹ See also Annex 2/D: Foran, Siobhan and Kate Burns. no date.’ Cross-Cutting Issues at a Cross-Roads?’ PowerPointPresentation.

³⁶² Annex 2/A: UNOCHA. 2012/a. Policy Instruction. Gender Equality: A people-centred approach’.

³⁶³ Annex 2/B: UNHCR. 2011. ‘Age, Gender and Diversity Policy’.

³⁶⁴ See discussion of various IASC documents in preceding Sections of the current Review.

Linked with the above observation is the fact that, for example, the *TORs of Cluster Coordinators* do not reflect consensus on what cross-cutting-issues are to be taken into account in their operational work. While, one exception apart, there is consistent reference to gender and age, in some Cluster Coordinator TORs there is no reference to diversity, environment, HIV/AIDS or to SADD, and only four of the ten TORS explicitly refer to human rights.³⁶⁵ The *revised TOR of RC/HC* includes one reference to gender as part of cross-cutting issue ‘examples’ (diversity, environment, HIV/AIDS, human rights),³⁶⁶ while the *ERC/HC Compact Paper and Template* does not include any reference to gender, age, diversity or cross-cutting issues.³⁶⁷

7.5 Views of IASC Stakeholders

Gender Standby Capacity Project

Discussions with selected Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Advisers reveal the challenges they may face in the field. A key challenge flagged by all respondents is how much their experience in the field, and the extent to which they are able to fulfil the objectives of their deployment and their work plan, may hinge on the leadership of the RC/HC and by implication the HCT.

In cases where in-country leadership is proactive in supporting institutionalizing gender mainstreaming mechanisms and tools in humanitarian action, then ‘other humanitarian staff will usually fall in line’, as one respondent put it. This may include agreeing on gender equality minimum commitments, as adopted by the Yemen HCT, to ensure that ‘women, girls, boys and men of all ages and abilities and backgrounds have access to humanitarian assistance and protection that cater to their distinct needs and experiences’.³⁶⁸ However, some respondents would also point out that the same Cluster Lead who is part of the HCT needs to be also pro-active in following up on how gender is integrated in the operational activities supervised by the pertinent Cluster Coordinator.

The experience of some GenCap Advisers also reveals that it tends to be ‘gender aware’ humanitarian staff who request support for strengthening integrating gender in humanitarian action; ‘because they are ready to acknowledge that their own capacity in this area is insufficient’, as one respondent put it. This pro-active attitude is generally reflected not only in placing the GenCap Adviser in a position with direct access to the humanitarian leadership, and directives to humanitarian staff to support him/her, but also in the follow-up on how gender equality programming is implemented on the ground.

This is where inter-cluster cooperation also plays a crucial role, as some respondents would point out. Where such cooperation reflects effective leadership for establishing and reinforcing synergies between the various clusters, then the task of the GenCap Adviser to develop joint gender capacity training programmes and activities will generally be easier to implement. Though keeping in mind that some crisis countries may have a relatively large number of humanitarian staff, who may be placed in different parts of the country of deployment, and which does not facilitate joint capacity training.

This reality may be further affected by the security situation, especially in conflict countries, which means that planned gender capacity building may be repeatedly postponed. Rescheduling the

³⁶⁵ See Annex 7: Terms of Reference for Field Cluster Coordinators.

³⁶⁶ Annex 2/A: IASC). 2009. Revised RC/HC Terms of Reference’. May.

³⁶⁷ Annex 2/A: IASC. no date/ff. ‘ERC/HC Compact Concept Paper’.

³⁶⁸ See Annex 11: HCT & Cluster Minimum Commitments 2015 – Yemen. Shared by the Consultant with permission from HC and HCT/Yemen with field level stakeholders interviewed via Skype/telephone.

training may not be feasible, as GenCap Advisers may have concluded their short-term deployment. Either way, in the view of some respondents, gender capacity training should not be a separate exercise but rather linked to, and ideally integrated in, other capacity training in which humanitarian staff participate, be this mandatory or voluntary.

The same issue is also raised by the field level leadership who point out the need for consolidated training in which gender is integrated, since humanitarian staff does not have time to attend separate training courses. A related issue flagged by various respondents is that overall there is insufficient investment in gender capacity training of partners and counterparts, 'who are the ones we leave in place when we depart', as expressed by one respondent. In humanitarian contexts where the population is geographically dispersed, supporting local gender capacity is a key requirement. The latter is also crucial during the process of phasing out the cluster system and handing over to the counter-part authorities, in turn perceived to be an additional imperative to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development interventions.

But, as some respondents would also point out, relying on gender capacity training organized and implemented by the GenCap Adviser should not detract attention from the responsibility of the humanitarian leadership to ensure that cluster staff has basic knowledge of requirements for gender equality programming. This is particularly pertinent in humanitarian crises contexts where staff turnover tends to be high. Deployment of GenCap Advisers is a short-term intervention that cannot by itself achieve the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming. Field level humanitarian leadership needs to follow up with establishing and supporting a Gender Theme Group, the TOR of which should ideally include bridging the divide between humanitarian and development interventions.

The recent decision of the GenCap Project to extend the timeline of deployment was perceived to be a positive step forward by all respondents. Another positive development flagged by some respondents is the effort to recruit male GenCap Advisers, which contributes to countering the prevailing perception that 'gender is about targeting vulnerable women and children', and which 'female humanitarian staff are best equipped to do'. Either way, some respondents would point to the need for more effort to address how prevailing concepts of masculinity impact on gender inequality in the communities targeted in humanitarian interventions.

As also mentioned by some field level humanitarian staff (see Section B/6.2), various GenCap Advisers would confirm that some clusters may tend to cooperate more easily due to established modes of operation – for example, where clusters may fall under the same cluster lead/UN organization. Here too respondents would flag the factor of 'personality dynamics' in explaining different attitudes towards cooperation, and how this may cascade down to the sub-field level, even where synergies between cluster activities are an established mode of operation.

The point was raised by some respondents that gender capacity training is also about raising awareness of the links between gender sensitive needs assessment and the importance of SADD, applying the Gender Marker and using the Gender Tip Sheets, strategic planning, monitoring and reporting. Humanitarian staff needs to be aware and understand these links even if they may be responsible for implementation of some programme and project components, and this message should be clearly communicated by the humanitarian leadership.

Some respondents would point to the reality that developing the strategic approach to institutionalizing effective gender mainstreaming requires taking into account not only the humanitarian context but also 'the gender situation' in the country of deployment; keeping in mind

that gender dynamics may differ from one intra-country community to the next. This requires that the GenCap Adviser familiarize her/himself with 'gender challenges' before travel to the country of deployment, as part of 'advance preparation requirements'. GenCap Advisers are generally aware that there may well be gender relevant information, including on SADD, in the development sector of the country of deployment.

However, while some respondents would concede that humanitarian action should not only focus on the 'symptoms of gender inequality', but also keep in mind the link with promoting/supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, others believe that it may not be feasible to address the latter during humanitarian interventions. Nonetheless, overall respondents believe that more effort needs to be invested in preparedness and resilience – a phase which should afford the time required to 'put gender on the map', as one respondent put it - but also reinforce the link with the Early Recovery Cluster.

Some GenCap Advisers would point out that responding to the question regarding the sustainability of their inputs and activities – as required in the GenCap reporting format - remains a challenge. In some cases this is deemed to be due to minimal feedback from the RC/HC, HCT and cluster leads. While one reason may be the time pressure under which the latter may be operating, the fact remains that there needs to be an 'office culture where dealing with gender paperwork is not pushed to the bottom of the pile', as one respondent put it. Some respondents would point out that providing feedback on GenCap Advisers' interim and final deployment reports should not only be part of humanitarian leadership accountability. It would also contribute to pulling together good practice examples for wider dissemination, and which can also be integrated in gender capacity training.

Various GenCap Advisers point out that in spite of the good practice template in the GenCap Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, more effort is required to compile and disseminate good practice examples in a format that is user-friendly, and to support translation into at least the main UN languages for sharing with local counterparts in the country of deployment. Current and previous GenCap Advisers have been pro-active in sharing lessons learnt and good practice through the informal *GenCappers Google Group*, on which questions and advice may be posted and shared.

Responses to the Online Survey (regarding views on effectiveness of the GenCap Adviser)³⁶⁹ reveal that around 31% of respondents are not familiar with this mechanism. Around 62% indicate that based on their experience, the work of the GenCap Adviser is deemed effective. Reasons cited include encouraging humanitarian partners to consider gender issues in the HPC and integrating gender into the SRP; bringing skills that may not be readily available among humanitarian partners; the importance of practical examples provided during gender capacity training; and the GenCap Advisers knowledge of the local gender context.

Reasons for deeming GenCap Advisers as not being effective includes implications of short-term deployment, i.e. they may not be available when it comes to operationalizing gender mainstreaming in the cluster system and generally tend to focus on the strategic level; dedicating too much attention to GBV issues; weak strategy for dealing with the field level humanitarian leadership; focus on the GM and training rather than widening the approach to implementing gender mainstreaming; limited knowledge of the local context; and focusing on changing the local culture rather than improving the quality of humanitarian programming.

Gender Tools

³⁶⁹ Annex 10: Summary Results of the Online Survey March-April 2015; question 25.

Discussions with global and field level stakeholders reveal variation in their familiarity with the IASC 2008 Gender Policy. Overall global level stakeholders directly involved in, or familiar with the work of, the GRG and GenCap Advisers know about the Gender Policy; though some would admit that the request to participate in the current Review led them to 'revisit the Policy'. Other global level stakeholders, as well as various field level stakeholders, would indicate that receiving a copy of the Policy with the invitation to participate in the current Review provided the impetus to familiarize themselves with the Policy, in some cases for the first time.

Discussions with field level stakeholders contacted via Skype/telephone reveal that overall respondents are familiar with the *Gender Marker* (GM), even in cases where they may not be directly involved in its application. Respondents in field countries where GenCap Advisers were or are deployed are more likely to be familiar with the GM coding requirements. Overall there is also some awareness that the GM focuses on improving integration of gender in project proposals. Apart from GenCap Advisers, who would generally point out that there needs to be a more effective link with actual project implementation, some among the field level cluster staff interviewed would also concede that relying on the GM for gender mainstreaming is not sufficient.

Overall familiarity with the *Gender Marker Tip Sheets* on the part of humanitarian staff interviewed by Skype/telephone is linked to whether or not GenCap Advisers were/are deployed in the pertinent field countries. Where this may not be the case, gauging respondents' familiarity with the Tip Sheets – i.e. whether they had heard of them or are actually familiar with their content – remains inconclusive. As for *Gender Alerts* developed by the GRG for selected crisis countries, gauging familiarity with this particular gender tool also remains inconclusive.

Knowledge Management and Capacity Building

Overall there was variable response from field level stakeholders regarding their familiarity with and use of gender knowledge and training products. Some indicated they had had heard of the *IASC Gender Handbook* and are familiar with its content, though this did not necessarily imply that they could offhand indicate, for example, what ADAPT & ACT stands for.

Other respondents were introduced to the Gender Handbook via their participation in the *gender e-learning course*, or through gender capacity training received via the GenCap Adviser. In some cases respondents had participated in gender training provided by the UN organization where they are placed; though some would also concede that the one-off training is insufficient and they would welcome 'more hands-on' and 'less abstract' gender training. As for the senior field leadership, RCs/HCs indicated their knowledge of the pertinent RC/HC Handbook, and their familiarity with its 'gender-specific messages', and this is also covered in the TOR and induction of the RC/HC.

Responses of cluster leads and cluster coordinators to the online survey more or less confirm that gender capacity training is not necessarily mandatory in the UN organizations where they are placed. In fact around one in three respondents to the online survey indicate that though gender capacity training is mandatory in their organization they have yet to do so. Responses to the online survey also confirm that there are various non-IASC gender capacity training possibilities which stakeholders may access.³⁷⁰

Correlating gender training received with perceptions of Gender Tools reveals a variety of responses.³⁷¹ For example, *Graph 8* reveals that 64% of respondents found the *Gender Marker* (GM) useful, of whom around 44% have not participated in gender capacity training; 32% are not familiar

³⁷⁰ Annex 10: Summary Results of the Online Survey March-April 2015; question 6.

³⁷¹ Annex 9: Selected Graphs/Results of Online Survey March-April 2015

with the GM, of whom around 38% had received gender training; while one respondent who has not received gender training does not find the GM useful.

As regards the *Gender Marker Tip Sheets*, 72% found this Gender Tool useful; 24% are not familiar with the Tip Sheet; while one respondent did find the latter useful (*Graph 9*). Participation or non-participation in gender training is more or less evenly divided in responses to this question.

As *Graph 10* reveals, of the 13 respondents who indicated they are not familiar with the IASC Gender Handbook, 38% have participated in gender capacity training. Of the 12 respondents who find the Handbook useful, 42% have not had gender training. No respondent indicated that the IASC Gender Handbook was not useful.

Reasons for not finding IASC Gender Tools not useful includes inconsistency in applying the GM coding and the fact that gender analysis of project proposals 'was often quite superficial', although it is conceded that GM training is useful as it includes gender sensitization of all stages of humanitarian programmes. It is also pointed out that there is less incentive to apply the GM where projects have already received donor funding. Responses to the non-usefulness of Gender Marker Tip Sheets and Gender Alerts are largely inconclusive.³⁷²

Graph 11 presents correlation between perceptions of gender tools and gender training received, according to UN affiliation of respondents. Among respondents who had participated in gender capacity training, the majority who are affiliated with the UN agencies listed – IOM, UNFAO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWFP, UNWHO - indicated that they found the IASC Gender Handbook, the Gender Marker and the Gender Marker Tip Sheets useful. A minority of respondents who participated in gender capacity training are not familiar with the Gender Handbook (UNFAO, UNICEF, UNWFP), or the Gender Marker (WFP), or the Gender Marker Tip Sheets (UNICEF, UNWFP).

Cross-Cutting Issues

Discussions with IASC global level stakeholders regarding what they perceive to be challenges to effectively mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action also raised the topic of cross-cutting issues. Various global level respondents appear to be aware that cross-cutting issues are not clearly defined in, for example, key Transformative Agenda (TA) documentation, or in documents issued by IASC Task Teams and Reference Groups, or in global cluster products.

Overall responses are inconclusive on gender and its link with cross-cutting issues. The points raised during discussions with global level stakeholders may be summarized as follows:

- should gender and age be defined as universal social determinants or are they, together with diversity, part of the 'package of cross-cutting issues';
- is dealing with gender different and therefore more challenging since - more than other cross-cutting issues - it tends to be dealt with subjectively, with implications for supporting gender equality and women's empowerment;
- is it 'easier to address age as a cross-cutting issue' than in the case of gender; (one may hear of 'gender fatigue' but not 'age fatigue' or 'human rights fatigue'); and is it sufficient to address 'age' through SADD;
- is GBV a cross-cutting issue in its own right; or should it be addressed as part of gender equality and women's empowerment;
- what should be the commonly used definition of 'diversity' by IASC stakeholders?;
- is protection part of cross-cutting issues, or is it a variable that should itself cross-cut all other cross-cutting issues;
- does the 'people-centred approach' ensure that promoting and supporting the human rights goal of gender equality and women's empowerment is achieved;

³⁷² Annex 10: Summary Results of the Online Survey March-April 2015; questions 20-23.

- what about poverty, should it be included as a cross-cutting issue; how would this be applied;
- how can consensus be achieved on definition of which cross-cutting issues should be included in the 'cross-cutting package applicable to humanitarian programming;
- whatever the definition of cross-cutting issues may be, how can the link with human rights be reinforced given that this variable appears to have 'disappeared into the background' in various IASC documentation .

Some global level respondents would point out that as different organizations may define cross-cutting issues according to their mandate and strategic objectives, this will tend to be reflected in how Subsidiary Bodies and global clusters define which cross-cutting issues are relevant to their own work. This may not facilitate achieving consensus on definition of cross-cutting issues and which issue should be included in the 'standard package'. The apparent absence of such consensus has implications for the content of global guidelines cascading down to the field, and reflected in the apparent reality that different clusters may mainstream gender differently, as pointed out by some respondents.

Discussions with field level respondents reveal that either they do not give much thought to cross-cutting issues and follow the directives of their agency and cluster lead; or they would concede that they find how to address gender and other cross-cutting issues a challenge when it comes to monitoring and reporting on outcomes. For some field level stakeholders, singling out GBV as a cross-cutting issue, as some appear to understand the role of the GBV Sub-Cluster, is deemed to inadvertently divert attention away from what gender mainstreaming is supposed to achieve. As some respondents put it, GBV has been inadvertently 'artificially separated' from what should be a holistic approach to gender mainstreaming to ensure development and implementation of gender equality programming.

Among the GenCap Advisers interviewed for the current Review, opinion is divided on what may or may not constitute the 'standard package of cross-cutting issues', and where gender fits in. Some respondents believe that the people-centred approach resolves the matter, since this approach by definition also deals with gender, age and diversity, and ensures that protection is an overlapping variable. For others it is the historical challenge of countering resistance to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment that is the issue. In turn this requires that gender be 'treated somewhat differently', to avoid it being submerged in other cross-cutting issues, 'to the point where we may lose sight of it and revert to talking about people and populations'.

C. CONCLUSIONS

1. IASC and Integrating Gender in Humanitarian Action

Overall analysis of key IASC documents and products, views and opinions solicited from interviews with global and field level members of the IASC stakeholder community, and information captured through the Online Survey, reveal mixed results, inconsistent IASC leadership on gender in humanitarian action, as well as missed opportunities for integrating gender in the work of the ISASC bodies and structure.

1.1 Mixed Results

Some progress in mainstreaming gender in the work of the IASC may predate the launching of the IASC Gender Policy in 2008. For example, the *IASC Gender Handbook* launched in 2006 continues to be used by both global and field level humanitarian stakeholders, and remains an important knowledge product posted on various humanitarian action websites. Views of stakeholders

interviewed for the current Review and targeted via the online survey further substantiate that the IASC Gender Handbook is a useful tool.

This also pertains to the *IASC Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Project*, a gender mechanisms initiated in 2007 under the auspices of the former IASC Gender Sub-Working Group (SWG) in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Though various assessments indicate that the GenCap Project requires further strengthening, available evidence suggests that the Project is contributing to improving gender mainstreaming results at the field level.

Another Gender Tool developed post-2008 is the *IASC gender e-learning course* launched in 2010. Available evidence suggests that take-up of this training tool, and IASC stakeholder agencies' commitment to its use, is increasing perceptibly; though to date it has not become mandatory for members of the IASC stakeholder community. The recent launching of a refined and user-friendly version of this training tool, under the auspices of the IASC Gender Reference Group (GRG) and hosted by UNWOMEN (Santo Domingo) is expected to further contribute to entrenching gender relevant capacity-building in humanitarian action.

The roll-out of the *IASC Gender Marker (GM)* in 2009 – facilitated by the GenCap Project – is also indicative of progress; not least the fact that application of the GM and its coding system is now mandatory for IASC field level humanitarian interventions carried out by cluster lead organizations and supported by the donor community. However, assessments reveal that there is room for improvement including further developing the GM to cover programme/project implementation.

Though the *Gender Marker Tip Sheets* may be less well known among IASC humanitarian stakeholders compared with the GM, use of the Tip Sheets appears to be increasing; not least through incorporation in gender capacity training implemented, for example, by GenCap Advisers.

The *IASC Gender Alerts*, first issued by the Gender SWG and continued under the auspices of the current Gender Reference Group (GRG), are deemed to contribute to raising awareness of gender dimensions in humanitarian emergency contexts. The brief and concise format of the Gender Alerts aims to counter the tendency of overlooking gender dimensions in the rush to provide urgent humanitarian aid, and which by all accounts may continue to prevail at the field level.

By contrast, analyses of integrating the gender perspective in IASC operational and other guidelines generally reflect rather mixed results. Some operational guidelines may explicitly flag the importance of gender, other cross-cutting issues and SADD, largely evident in operational guidelines issued during the years 2008-2011. Overall, operational guidelines on needs assessment and strategic programme planning issued 2012 onwards also reveal efforts to mainstream gender; for example in the HPC, specifically the HNO and the SRP, which include reference to SADD. However, as the in-depth desk review reveals, some exceptions apart, various operational guidelines issued 2012 onwards, tend to be inconsistent in the way they refer to gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues. In particular, reference to SADD may be omitted, in spite of the SADD document issued in 2011 and posted on the IASC humanitarian.info website.

Similarly mixed results in respect of achievements in mainstreaming gender are discernible in the documentation issued by the IASC Task Teams as well as the IASC Reference Groups (excluding the GRG). More often than not, the TORs of these IASC Subsidiary Bodies do not include explicit reference to gender, age, diversity and/or other cross-cutting issues, or to SADD. Reference to gender and various cross-cutting issues is generally also inconsistent in respect of their work plans.

Mixed results are also discernible in respect of how documents issued by the global cluster system integrates gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues and to what extent there is reference to SADD. In this respect – as Annex 6 reveals – documents issued during 2008-2012 are as likely to include explicit reference to gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues as are global cluster documents issued 2012 onwards and up to 2015. Global cluster documentation that omits explicit reference to gender mainstreaming may include strategic documents and operational guidelines covering needs assessment or capacity-building.

1.2 IASC Leadership

The in-depth desk review of documentation issued by or on behalf of the IASC Principals, and by the IASC Working Group, reveals some inconsistency in the way gender, age and diversity – the three key variables covered in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy – are referred to. In particular, documentation issued by the IASC Leadership 2012 onwards – which more or less coincides with the launching of the IASC Transformative Agenda (TA) – does not consistently reflect the documented and well-known challenges which largely continue to affect the process of mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action. This is deemed to be particularly reflected in slippage into use of gender neutral terms, such as ‘people’ and ‘populations’ which may mask gender blind language. TA documentation does not reflect the importance of various Security Council Resolutions on women, conflict, peace, security and humanitarian crises.

Indeed, nor does documentation issued by or on behalf of the IASC Leadership appear to take effective account of the fact that IASC Full Member organizations and IASC Standing Invitee agencies are continuing to address systemic and operational challenges to effective gender mainstreaming, as reflected in their own gender policies, strategies and/or action plans, but such experience is not much reflected in key IASC documentation issued by them or on their behalf. Yet the IASC Leadership has endorsed and supports the GenCap Project, thus acknowledging that effective implementation of the HPC requires strategic support to gender mainstreaming in programme planning, needs assessments and project implementation to ensure that desired humanitarian outcomes are achieved.

In effect there is perceptible dissonance between, on the one hand, the position of the IASC Leadership on gender mainstreaming in the work of the IASC, and, on the other hand, how the same IASC Leadership comprising Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies develop and implement their respective strategic aims and programme approach for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action.

Not to mention the mandatory obligation of the UN system to report to UNWOMEN as the custodian of the System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP). Given the *raison d'être* for establishing UNWOMEN by the UN General Assembly in 2010, the organization is well placed to function as the gate-keeper for ensuring that such dissonance is addressed. To date, UNWOMEN is neither an IASC Full Member nor a Standing Invitee.

1.3 Missed Opportunities and Lagging Momentum

The momentum for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action - evident in the work of the former IASC Gender SWG, and to some extent in various IASC operational guidelines - appears to have become side-tracked by the time the IASC Transformative Agenda (TA) was developed and launched in 2012. It appears that the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) did not much heed this slippage; reflected, for example, in the way gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues, as well as SADD, are to some extent inconsistently addressed in various TA mission reports.

Indeed, this slippage is largely reflected not only in the normative framework underlying the TA, but also in some of the systemic changes recently introduced in the IASC Architecture. The in-depth desk review and discussions with selected IASC stakeholders at global and field levels largely confirm that in spite of the undoubted progress on integrating gender in humanitarian action, there is slippage in the momentum for gender mainstreaming within the work of the IASC.

Apart from what may be referred to as a 'core group of gender converts' who believe that gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to the human rights agenda, and as such require to be addressed by appropriate strategic interventions, there appears to be insufficient understanding among some segments within the IASC stakeholder community of the value added of mainstreaming gender and the link with sustainable humanitarian outcomes. There is also the perception among some IASC stakeholders that progress on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action is such that explicit reference to the three key variables – gender, age and diversity - in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy is not always necessary, since these variables are perceived to be subsumed under terms such as 'populations', 'people-centred approach' and 'protection'. This perception overlooks the reality that there is no clear consensus on definition of these terms.

By implication, there also appears to be insufficient understanding of the value added of gender mainstreaming for effectively tackling the divide between humanitarian action and development interventions; and the apparent fact that addressing the continuum of humanitarian/recovery/development is not accorded strategic priority, as flagged in some documentation issued by or on behalf of the IASC Leadership.

1.3.1 Normative Gaps

The normative framework underpinning the TA – with its stress on leadership, coordination, accountability, capacity building, and advocacy/communications identified as key areas requiring attention for improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action – is implicitly based on the human rights-based approach defining responsibilities of duty-bearers towards rights-holders. By definition – even if this is not explicitly spelt out – this should include addressing gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action as part of the strategic objective of promoting and supporting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Yet, as the in-depth desk review reveals, relevant TA documentation – for example the TA Protocols and Priorities - are generally not consistent in the way they integrate gender, age, diversity and other cross-cutting issues, or for that matter SADD. In fact, available/accessible TA documentation is largely silent on the existence of the IASC 2008 Gender Policy. Various IASC stakeholders contacted for participation in the current Review would indicate that it is the request for an interview that brought the Gender Policy to their attention.

Indeed, the TA documentation referred to above, as well as various other IASC documents and products reviewed, do not consistently take into account the well-established gender relevant normative framework endorsed, for example, in the *1995 Beijing Platform for Action* and in the *1997 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Agreed Conclusions*. Both examples, as well as pertinent *UN Security Council Resolutions* on women, peace, conflict and security, and humanitarian crisis, call for implementing gender mainstreaming mechanisms and tools as a strategic means to achieve the human rights goal of gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action and development interventions.

In fact, both the in-depth desk review and discussions with various IASC stakeholders point to some inconsistencies on the part of the IASC Leadership in the way the normative framework underpinning the TA has addressed the normative standards and requirements underlying the rights-based approach to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. Overlooking some of the key normative requirements for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action is to varying extent also reflected in the strategic approach adopted by various IASC Subsidiary Bodies and Global Clusters.

The current Review could not identify a common reference or guidelines on gender mainstreaming issued by the IASC Leadership, and linked to the key area of accountability identified in the strategic approach underlying the TA. By all accounts, the generally inconsistent approach in this strategic area – i.e. gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action – has implications for how the field level cluster system addresses and manages the process of mainstreaming gender in programme development and project implementation. This apparent reality is largely reflected in the reports of GenCap Advisers, as well as recent Operational Peer Reviews.

The way cross-cutting issues are defined and debated within, but at times also ignored by, the IASC stakeholder community is deemed to be a particularly revealing example of inconsistent IASC Leadership on the three key variables integral to the IASC 2008 Gender Policy, i.e. gender, age and diversity. As the in-depth desk review of key IASC documents reveals, no clear guidance appears to have been issued from the IASC Leadership on how these key variables are to be addressed and incorporated in TORs, work plans, operational and other guidance documents.

Discussions with IASC stakeholders at both global and field levels also reveal some confusion in this area; not least due to the reality that different clusters may incorporate gender and other cross-cutting issues into their programming and project activities in different ways; in turn linked to how cluster lead agencies address and incorporate cross-cutting issues. To which may be added that while the focus on GBV is undoubtedly crucial, particularly in conflict situations, it mainly addresses a particularly virulent symptom of gender-based inequalities as part of protection. Humanitarian action tackling GBV does not and cannot by itself resolve gender-based inequalities. Either way, the predominant focus on GBV appears to have inadvertently led to its operational separation from the overall human rights goal of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

The apparent lack of consensus on cross-cutting issues within the IASC stakeholder community is deemed to be reflected in the type of questions raised during discussions with IASC stakeholders. What may almost be referred to as the 'chronic and vexed challenge of gender and cross-cutting issues' is also being grappled with within the GRG, to some extent reflecting the challenge of achieving consensus among this voluntary community of practice. GRG activities are monitored by the IASC Working Group but the GRG is seemingly not accountable to report to the IASC Leadership. Opinions within the GRG appear to be divided whether or not gender and age are universal social determinants or simply additional cross-cutting issues; how to define diversity and the people-centred approach; implications of linking GBV with the focus on AAP; and what should constitute a standard package of cross-cutting issues that needs to be taken into account in all humanitarian action, and how this is linked to gender as a central organizing principle in human societies.

1.3.2 Systemic Hurdles

The missed opportunity to ensure that the normative framework underlying the IASC Transformative Agenda takes appropriate account of the established normative requirements for effective gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action is to some extent mirrored in the recent restructuring of the IASC Architecture.

There appears to be some contradiction between, on the one hand, IASC Leadership support to further strengthening and implementing gender mainstreaming mechanisms and tools, and, on the other hand, the decision to relegate responsibility for gender mainstreaming to the IASC GRG. As mentioned earlier, the GRG is a voluntary community of practice that by definition does not have the status or authority inherent in the TOR of IASC Task Teams. In effect, the GRG cannot effectively fulfil the role and responsibilities prescribed in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy.

Though there are clearly laudable efforts on the part of the self-designated IASC Gender Champion to support the GRG, such effort cannot by itself compensate or rectify what may be defined as systemic hurdles if not limitations in the way the IASC Architecture is dealing with the challenge of mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action.

In fact, apart from seemingly overlooking pertinent directives in the IASC Gender Policy, the IASC Leadership decision regarding the role and status of the GRG appears to have also overlooked the *2013 UN Secretary General (SG) Report* calling for a formal mechanisms within the IASC with the appropriate authority and capacity to 'fully integrate gender equality considerations within the humanitarian assistance agenda'. The SG Report also points out that the voluntary membership in the Gender SWG – which was in place at the time – 'limits its role to recommendations and advice, and calls on the IASC to address this limitation'.

Nor has the *2013 Briefing Note on IASC Restructuring*, which clearly flags the expectation that the GRG is to be supported, been effectively addressed by the IASC Leadership. More specifically, the Briefing Note flags that there is a need to ensure that the GRG has direct entry points to influence technical and policy areas relevant to mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action. Furthermore, there should be the mandatory requirement that the IASC Working Group, other IASC Subsidiary Bodies and IASC stakeholders use the GRG as an in-house resource and systematically consult with it.

The in-depth desk review of work plans and annual reports reveals that this mandatory regulation has not been systematically heeded by the IASC Subsidiary Bodies or the Global Cluster System. In fact, the same IASC Full (UN) Members and Standing Invitees who in their own organizations and agencies expend efforts to elevate the status of Gender Units or their equivalents - reflected for example in reporting mechanisms that afford direct access to senior management - do not appear to have taken this into account in the decision to establish the GRG. This apparent dissonance is seemingly not much heeded by the IASC Leadership or questioned within the IASC stakeholder community.

The findings of the current Review do not by any means claim that it is the apparent absence of a coherent framework for gender mainstreaming - to be adhered to by the IASC stakeholder community and systematically integrated in strategic objectives, work plans and operational guidance - that may alone explain apparent weaknesses in the horizontal synergies in the IASC Architecture; to some extent also reflected in the way some IASC bodies and groups may at times function in parallel streams, and which may cascade down to the field level.

However, the findings of the current Review generally indicate that efforts to overcome challenges that may impede institutionalizing horizontal and vertical synergies in the work of the IASC, as required by the strategic objectives of the TA, may to some extent be further impeded by the apparent weakness in the systemic integration of gender mainstreaming in the work of the IASC at global and field levels. Both the in-depth desk review and discussions with global and field level IASC stakeholders reveal that that there is no clear consensus on a common definition of the

requirements for effective gender mainstreaming. Recent evaluations of the field level cluster system and inter-cluster coordination, the Operational Peer Reviews, as well as discussions with IASC stakeholders, largely confirm this observation.

2. Accountability for Gender Mainstreaming in Humanitarian Action

The IASC 2008 Gender Policy is explicit regarding the responsibility of the IASC Working Group to ensure that an accountability framework for integrating gender in the work of the IASC is developed. by the (former) Gender SWG.

However, there does not appear to be institutional memory within the IASC stakeholder community why to date no accountability framework for integrating gender is in place, and why this omission was not followed up by the IASC Leadership; not even during the process of developing the Transformative Agenda (TA) which aimed for more coherent and effective humanitarian action and response. Nor does there appear to be much awareness that there is dissonance between, on the one hand, the fact that no IASC accountability framework for gender mainstreaming has to date been developed, yet, on the other hand and as Annex 5 reveals, IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies have developed, or are in the process of putting in place, their own internal accountability frameworks and regulations, which generally includes staff accountability for gender mainstreaming and efforts to achieve gender balance in the workplace. Though the IASC Gender Policy objectives do not explicitly focus on the latter, it may be maintained that inherent in the first mentioned objective – gender mainstreaming across all sectors – is the requirement for staff accountability for gender mainstreaming.

As mentioned earlier, the TA refers to accountability as a key area of the strategic approach to improving effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian response. The in-depth desk review did not uncover documentation indicating that accountability specifically for gender mainstreaming was a topic raised during the development phase of the TA. Nor is there explicit mention of the link between accountability for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action and the mandatory reporting by the UN system on SWAP, the custodian of which is UNWOMEN. Neither was this point raised by IASC stakeholders during discussions.

The TA addresses accountability primarily in relation to affected populations, an IASC Priority reflected in establishing the AAP/PSEA Task Team, and supporting synergy with the work of the Global Protection Cluster. However, various IASC reports – for example, IASC Operational Peer Reviews and Gender Marker Assessments – indicate that the area of accountability for gender mainstreaming reflects lack of clarity in respect of lines of accountability within the coordinated humanitarian response.

Insofar as accountability for gender mainstreaming is linked to minimum standards or commitments for gender mainstreaming, here too the in-depth desk review and discussions with IASC stakeholders reveal that guidance in this area is generally sector or thematic specific. There is no evidence of efforts on the part of the IASC Leadership to provide minimum normative and operational standards for gender mainstreaming applicable to all bodies and groups within the IASC stakeholder community whatever the sectoral or thematic focus may be. Discernible initiatives in this respect are relatively limited, and largely appear to be the product of gender sensitive RC/HC leadership with support from pro-active GenCap Advisers.

Discussions with IASC stakeholders on accountability for gender mainstreaming generally reveal awareness of its importance and contribution to effective humanitarian response and sustainable

humanitarian outcomes. There is generally also awareness of the line of accountability linking global and field level senior management with responsibility for gender mainstreaming by humanitarian staff in the operational sphere. However, responses of various IASC stakeholders regarding the link between, on the one hand, an effective accountability framework for gender mainstreaming, and, on the other hand, the current status of the GRG which limits its ability to function as a knowledge and technical source of support, are overall inconclusive. It would seem that this more or less reflects that not much attention appears to be accorded to this link by the IASC Leadership and segments of the IASC stakeholder community.

Indeed, discussions with various global level IASC stakeholders on the subject of accountability for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action largely reveals lack of clarity regarding the objective of this framework and where it may fit into the current IASC Architecture.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of having gender policies, strategies and/or action plans and accountability regulations in place in their own organizations and agencies (and specifically in the case of the IASC Full Members in spite of the mandatory obligation to report to UNWOMEN as the custodian of SWAP) the same IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies comprising the IASC Principals group, as well the IASC Working Group and the IASC Emergency Directors Group, have seemingly insufficiently noted gender specific shortcomings in the content of the Transformative Agenda, be it protocols, priorities or other relevant documentation issued by the IASC.

Clearly within the IASC Leadership there is currently no ‘gate-keeper’ with the requisite capacity and technical expertise to ensure that the strategic objectives of the IASC Gender Policy are effectively consistently translated into action; and that gender is integrated in the work of the IASC at both global and field levels to ensure effective humanitarian response and sustainable humanitarian outcomes. It is equally evident that the current status of the IASC’s gender focused subsidiary body (the Gender Reference Group) prevents it from fulfilling its designated role as prescribed in the IASC Gender Policy.

The following recommendations are specifically addressed to the IASC Leadership. They are based on a multi-pronged approach to addressing identified weaknesses affecting the process of integrating gender equality in humanitarian strategies and programmes of the IASC:

- *Firstly*, address the systemic hurdles which have seemingly impeded the IASC Leadership from providing coherent guidance on integrating gender in the work of the IASC; this includes addressing the systemic hurdles undermining the GRG’s role to effectively function as an in-house resource and technical support for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action, as prescribed in the IASC Gender Policy, as well as in the *2013 Briefing Note on IASC Restructuring* and flagged in the *2013 Report of the UN Secretary General*.
- *Secondly*, ensure that gender is systematically and coherently integrated in the normative framework underpinning the IASC Transformative Agenda with its stated aim to substantively improve the current humanitarian response model and ensure sustainable humanitarian outcomes.
- *Thirdly*, advocate for donors and other humanitarian stakeholders to support the required levels of humanitarian funding ensuring that gender equality programming is enabled to effectively contribute to achieving sustainable humanitarian outcomes.
- *Fourthly*, ensure that the IASC stakeholder community shares a common understanding of ‘gender rights as human rights’, achievement of which is the responsibility of all humanitarian actors at global and field levels, and not just the ‘gender experts’.

These inter-linked recommendations would have the added value of contributing to strengthening gender relevant horizontal synergies at the IASC global level, with anticipated positive implications for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action cascading down to the field level.

1. Addressed to the IASC Leadership

1.1 Gender Responsive IASC Architecture

The IASC Leadership should:

a) Nominate UNWOMEN to join the IASC group of (UN) Full Members to provide the requisite capacity to ensure the adequate integration of gender into the work of the IASC towards more effective and coherent humanitarian action and to provide its (SWAP-related) experience in the area of accountability for gender mainstreaming;

b) Ensure that the IASC's directives clearly and consistently spell out the requirements for effective gender equality programming both through gender mainstreaming and targeted actions based on gender analysis (as called for in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy).

1.2 Gender in Humanitarian Financing

The IASC Leadership to:

a) Advocate for adequate levels of humanitarian financing required to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action;

b) Integrate gender as a central facet of the work of the IASC Humanitarian Finance Task Team to ensure that the current funding architecture supports the funding requirements of gender equality programming in the humanitarian response;

c) Ensure appropriate funding is available to build the necessary capacity across the humanitarian system to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action (as called for in the IASC 2008 Gender Policy);

d) Support the further development of the Gender Marker to cover both project design and project implementation.

1.3 Status of the IASC Gender Subsidiary Body

The IASC Leadership to:

a) Accord the GRG the required status and authority to function as an in-house resource and technical support for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action, and ensure that this is explicitly reflected in an updated GRG TOR;

b) Ensure that the GRG has the required human and financial resources to effectively fulfil its function as an in-house resource and technical support for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action;

c) Require the GRG to designate Focal Points for liaising with each of the IASC Subsidiary Bodies and the Global Cluster System as part of providing the required technical support for mainstreaming gender in their strategic objectives and annual work plans in a timely manner.

1.4 Gender in the IASC Normative Framework

The IASC Leadership, with guidance from the upgraded GRG, to commission a position paper on integrating gender in the IASC normative framework underlying the TA, to include:

a) presentation of key premises in the normative framework for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action - reflected in international human rights instruments and UN Security Council Resolutions - and the value added of symbiosis with the normative requirements of the IASC mandate, in particular the strategic approach of the TA;

b) proposal for effective inclusion of the IASC gender sensitized normative framework in strategic objectives and work plans of IASC Subsidiary Bodies and the Global Cluster System, and proposed indicators to track this process;

c) proposal for a strategic approach to integrating the IASC gender sensitized normative framework in the work of the field level cluster system, with anticipated value added in respect of strengthening inter-cluster coordination;

d) proposal for establishing the link with the accountability framework for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action.

1.5 IASC Gender Policy

The IASC Leadership to:

a) Update the IASC Gender Policy Statement, with the aim of:

- ✓ Ensuring that its objectives and proposed actions at global and field levels are 'fit for purpose' and it appropriately reflects the current global humanitarian system, as well as strategic and operational approaches to integrating gender in humanitarian response;
- ✓ Including strategic guidelines for bridging the divide between humanitarian action and development interventions, conducive to promoting and supporting gender equality programming and women's empowerment;
- ✓ Including guidance on minimum standards for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action, and the link with gender competency and commitments of members of the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels..

b) Issue a directive designating the updated IASC Gender Policy as a corporate policy to be taken into account by all members of the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels.

1.6 Mobilizing IASC Stakeholder Community

The IASC Leadership to issue directives for IASC Task Teams, other Reference Groups and the Global Cluster System to:

a) Update their TORs and annual work plans to ensure that they appropriately reflect normative and operational requirements for effectively mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action.

b) Check the gender sensitivity of their strategic and operational documentation, and update the latter if necessary, including avoiding gender neutral terms that may mask gender blind language;

c) Include in their TORs the mandatory requirement to utilize the GRG as an in-house resource and technical support for mainstreaming gender in their strategic objectives, to be reflected in their annual work plans;

d) Designate a Focal Point for systematically liaising with the GRG.

1.7 Cross-Cutting Issues

The IASC Leadership to provide clear guidance on how cross-cutting issues are to be addressed in IASC strategic objectives, operational guidelines and other relevant IASC products:

a) Designate 'gender' and 'age' as universal key social determinants, rather than being submerged in other cross-cutting issues.

b) Solicit consensus on the definition of diversity and ensure that this definition is taken on board by the IASC stakeholder community.

c) Provide guidance on what may constitute other cross-cutting issues which need to be taken into account in humanitarian programming and project implementation, to ensure coherence in humanitarian response and action.

2. Establish an IASC Accountability Framework to Monitor Implementation of the IASC Gender Policy

The IASC Leadership to establish an IASC Steering Group comprising representatives from the upgraded GRG, other IASC Subsidiary Bodies and the Global Cluster System, with the time-bound

mandate and TOR to develop an accountability framework based on the following proposed parameters:

a) Based on the roles and responsibilities prescribed in the updated IASC Gender Policy, develop a robust working accountability framework to monitor progress towards the objective and outcomes of the policy.

b) Identify measurable targets and related indicators at the global and field levels for results-based monitoring and reporting to efficiently and accurately inform the accountability framework on the extent that the policy is being effectively implemented.

c) Establish the required reporting mechanisms and responsibilities for all relevant IASC stakeholders and ensure that these are included in their TOR as deliverables.

d) Set up an IASC oversight committee to work in tandem with the upgraded GRG with the mandate to audit implementation of the accountability framework for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action.

3. Establish IASC Endorsed Minimum Standards on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Humanitarian Action

a) Identify minimum standards for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action that reflect the key objectives of the (updated) IASC Gender Policy, to be incorporated in the TORs of members of the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels; that support synergy between cluster activities at the field level; and also reflect the importance of addressing the humanitarian/development divide.

b) The IASC Leadership to disseminate these minimum standards for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian action for consideration by the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat, as part of the IASC document package to be submitted to this global gathering.

4. Strengthening Capacity for Integrating Gender in Humanitarian Action

With guidance from the IASC Leadership:

a) Develop a template that identifies gender-relevant competence requirements applicable to the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels; and ensure that this is incorporated in the TORs of the IASC Subsidiary Bodies and the global and field level cluster systems.

b) Require the mandatory participation of members of the IASC stakeholder community in the IASC gender e-learning course or its equivalent; and advocate for its inclusion in staff performance templates where this is not yet mandatory in IASC Full Member organizations and Standing Invitee agencies.³⁷³

c) Require the mandatory inclusion of the (updated) IASC Gender Policy, IASC Gender Handbook and IASC Gender Marker Tip Sheets in refresher courses for existing humanitarian staff, and in the induction course for newly appointed staff members, in the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels.

d) Commission a user-friendly guidance document that identifies good practice examples linked to key messages inherent in the Gender Marker Tip Sheets and in evaluations of humanitarian programmes - to be translated into the main UN languages.

e) Incorporate the good practice document and minimum standards for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action in gender capacity training of members of the IASC stakeholder community at global and field levels (refresher and induction training courses); and state and non-state actors in the pertinent country targeted for humanitarian assistance.

³⁷³ Taking into account that some IASC Standing Invitees agencies – with membership based on a network of national organizations - may require modifications in the approach to staff performance.

f) Disseminate the good practice document for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action for consideration by the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat, as part of the IASC document package to be submitted to this global gathering.