



IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action

**IASC Gender Reference Group Annual Strategic Planning Meeting
23-24 January 2014, UN Women Headquarters, New York**

Agenda

Please see Annex I

Meeting Chairs and Participants

Please see Annex II

Summary of Day 1 Discussions

1. Welcome and Introductions

Gülden Türköz-Cosslett, Director of Programme Division of UN Women, welcomed the participants and opened the meeting. The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

2. Update on the IASC subsidiary body restructuring and its thematic priorities

Christelle Loupforest, Head of IASC Secretariat, OCHA, updated the participants on the IASC subsidiary body restructuring and its five thematic priorities. Christelle reassured the group that gender is important for IASC, citing the work of IASC in three countries as examples: the Philippines operational review, gender equality and resilience in Sahel, and the Central African Republic (CAR) humanitarian country team.

Some participants expressed concerns that many humanitarians are either “allergic” to gender or would view gender just as a “box ticking” exercise. It was agreed that we need to redouble our efforts to show understanding of technical areas and demonstrate how these areas must take gender into account to deliver and demonstrate impact for all members of affected populations.

3. Endorse the RG TOR, finalize the discussion on its structure

At the beginning of this session, there was some discussion concerning the proposal of UN Women acting as the Secretariat, as well as holding a permanent co-chair of the RG. It was generally agreed that if one agency acted as the permanent secretariat, this would be provide practical convenience as well as institutional memory to the work of the RG; the

lack of both have posed major challenges in the past. However, such a permanent co-chair could lead to an organization having undue influence over the group. It would also, in practice, eliminate the opportunity for other NY-based UN agencies to be able to hold co-chair, which was agreed was not an option.

The Group decided that, at this point, no organization should be granted a permanent co-chair, especially given that UN Women could in effect have three years left to run in its tenure as a co-chair if they seek and get the approval for a second consecutive two-year term.

UN Women was officially designated as the Secretariat for the Reference Group.

Some participants expressed concern regarding the absence of several key UN entities from the Gender RG over recent years, such as UNFPA and WHO and other key agencies such as the IOM. Discussions were held as how to re-engage these key entities. Some members expressed the wish to encourage the key entities to re-engage by making the work of the RG more relevant and, in this regard, planned to reach out to some inactive entities both in New York and Geneva. Some other members added that alongside this approach, outreach efforts from the RG's IASC WG sponsor and other high-level officials in active UN Agencies would also be helpful.

It was discussed and decided that meeting on a monthly basis is most suitable for the group, so monthly meetings should continue. To facilitate more effective and time-efficient meetings, the Co-chairs should endeavor to send out all related documents before each monthly meeting, and the members should read the documents in advance. It was agreed that, in the interests of time and efficiency, from the February 2014 meeting onwards, it will be assumed that all meeting participants have read the materials sent in advance and they will not be repeated in the course of the meeting itself.

4. Review of the results of the Gender SWG 2013 work and the gaps and successes in Humanitarian Response.

The participants reflected on the work of the Gender SWG in 2013, and considered the SWG 2013 Annual Report (Annex III). The general consensus was that the Group was too ambitious last year and listed too many goals in its annual work plan, some of which were not met, therefore the 2014 work plan should include fewer and more manageable goals.

The Group's inclusion of the work of the GenCap Project achievements to demonstrate achievements was noted and it was agreed that there needs to be a clear distinction between the work of the GenCap Project, which contributes so significantly to the work of the Gender RG, and the work of the Gender RG itself. It was also agreed that it would be important, moving forward, to capture and document all of the members' specific areas of gender expertise across the Gender RG in order to demonstrate a comprehensive picture of achievements and progress.

Participants reflected on the key achievements in 2013 work:

- Gender Alerts were issued for the Philippines (x 2), Mali and Syria.
- The e-learning course “Different Needs—Equal Opportunities” (the ‘gender e-learning’) was translated into French.
- The Gender SWG side-event at ECOSOC attracted a large number of participants and resulted in strong conclusions and recommendations.
- The transition from Gender SWG into Gender RG went smoothly.
- The co-chairs were regularly consulted on, and regularly fed in to, key UN policy documents and processes in New York, including the transition process from Gender SWG to Gender RG.

Participants reflected on how to increase the impact of the Gender RG’s work. It was agreed that the Gender RG should continue to increase its efforts to engage with other parts of IASC (including Task Teams and the Working Group) to demonstrate how the inclusion of a gender perspective can help them reach their goals, thus making gender *their* issue and *their* business. Members also expressed the importance of connecting the work of the Gender RG more closely to operational work in field and the need to redouble efforts in this regard.

Action points:

- The RG will advocate for the gender e-learning tool to become mandatory for the staff of IASC organizations in the field.
- CARE translated the e-learning into Spanish. The RG will double-check the Spanish version and launch it.

5. Discussion on relationship between RG as an advisory body and GenCap

Participants considered the draft document “*Gender RG and GenCap*” (Annex IV). A concern was raised that, in the field, there is often an inaccurate perception of GenCap as a stand-alone institution, separate from the IASC. The group reached agreement in its efforts to clarify the roles, relationship and responsibilities of the RG vis-à-vis the GenCap Project (Steering Committee).

Action Point:

- The “Gender RG and GenCap” document should be finalized by the next RG monthly meeting 26 February 2014

6. Work plan for 2014

Participants started to elaborate the Gender RG 2014 Work Plan and to identify the key areas of work. (The work planning continued in Day 2 of the Meeting.)

7. Discussion on age, disability and other diversity issues and implications for Gender RG

For the first session of Meeting Day 2, participants discussed how the Gender RG currently addresses diversity issues, particularly age and disability.

UNHCR discussed the people-centered and human rights-based approaches, and how a gender lens could be used to effectively take into account diversity issues such as age and disability. For further information on this subject matter, the UNHCR publication “Understanding Community-based Protection” (Geneva, 2013) was recommended

HelpAge International briefed the Group of HelpAge’s work approach on age and gender. IFRC presented its Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013 - 2020. WRC discussed its approach to addressing gender, age and diversity issues.

Whilst the importance of this intellectual debate was recognised, it raised the question as how to translate this into practice. The participants felt that it is important to engage with and highlight age and diversity issues. They also frequently referenced the 2008 IASC Gender Policy and agreed on the importance of recommitting to the full scope of it, in which these issues, and women’s empowerment, were included, and believed these were conversations that would be continued.

The participants would welcome the active engagement of organisations working on age issues, including HelpAge, Plan International and UNFPA, in the meetings and work of the RG to ensure the effective intersection of these issues with gender.

UNHCR committed as co-chair to draft a two-page summary on the 2008 IASC Gender Policy for the purpose of explaining that conducting a gender analysis also requires considering age and other diversity issues, so that the analysis reflects all men, women, boys and girls, irrespective of their age or background.

8. Work Plan for 2014 (continued)

The Group continued to elaborate the 2014 work plan, building on the initial Day 1 discussions. The outcome of the conversations and drafting are captured in the RG 2014 Work plan, Annex V.

9. Discussion of 2014 AWP to ASG Kang and senior representatives from Gender RG member agencies, for comment and input

At this lunch session, the Gender RG was joined by Ms Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (ASG/DERC) of OCHA, Mr John Hendra, ASG on Policy and Programme of UN Women, and Ms Gulden Turkoz-Cosslett, Programme Director UN Women.

The Women's Refugee Commission chaired this session, and the other three Co-chairs each presented one area of the Work Plan.

ASG Kang clarified that she is the Sponsor of the Gender RG, and as such the Gender RG *informs and briefs* her, but *does not report to* her. ASG Kang reiterated that she is very happy to be the Sponsor of the Gender RG, and is very willing to be an active advocate of gender issues in IASC and beyond.

ASG Kang fully supports making the gender e-learning mandatory, and committed to start this good practice at OCHA.

ASG Kang noted that, in terms of leadership on the ground, the Humanitarian Coordinators' (HC) pool contains very few women holding the HC position or applying for the pool.

With regards to incorporating diversity issues into the RG work, ASG Kang said that, although she recognizes the importance of diversity issues, she was not sure if this would be the best way forward.

ASG Kang encouraged the Gender RG to communicate the HQ awareness to the field, gain more relevance on the ground, and demonstrate added value. She wished the Gender RG a very productive year in 2014.

John Hendra, in his feedback, highlighted the issue of accountability, and committed his efforts to make the gender e-learning mandatory in UN Women. Regarding membership revitalization, he encouraged the Gender RG to implement and deliver the AWP effectively, and demonstrate the usefulness of its work.

Gulden Turkoz-Cosslett stressed the importance of supporting the field and strengthening country team capacity. She pointed out that it is very important to identify quality GenCap Advisers who would be a good fit, and who can really provide good help to the country team.

On the matter of membership revitalization, it was agreed to target key agencies that are strong on the ground. The Gender RG members will reach out at the working level, but it was hoped that the senior officials present could help advocate as well at their level.

Action points:

- The Gender RG should trim the gender e-learning back to three hours long.
- ASG Kang and ASG Hendra will issue a joint letter to UN agencies, advocating that the gender e-learning become mandatory for humanitarians in the field.

10. Review and Finalize work-plan based on feedback from ASG Kang and others

The Group reflected on the feedback received.

Action points:

- The 2014 AWP will be circulated to the group for inputs by the Secretariat. It should be finalized before February 26 (the next monthly RG meeting).
- The Gender RG Co-Chairs to review and comment on the revised GenCap strategy.
- GenCap protocol document will be circulated to members. Feedback to Luisa Cremones should be received by February 15.
- Target FAO, UNFPA, WFP and Oxfam to (re)engage them in the Gender RG's work. Draft letter to this effect for signing by ASGs Hendra and Kang.
- Check if the e-learning taken on a flash drive would allow issuing a certificate at the end of the training

11. Wrap up and Conclusion

The Women's Refugee Commission thanked the two temporary Co-chairs, David Coffey of UN Women and Larry Bottinick of UNHCR for their contributions and dedicated work during their tenure.