Gender Definitions and Mandates 2

Definitions of Key Gender Terms

Gender

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, and the relations between women and between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and learned through the socialization processes. They are context-/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in decision-making opportunities, responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, and access to and control over resources. Gender is part of the broader sociocultural context. Other important criteria for sociocultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age (www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm).

Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Gender equality is achieved when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured and do not give rise to different consequences that reinforce inequalities.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in its agreed conclusions 1997/2, defined gender mainstreaming as "…the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

In simple terms, gender mainstreaming is undertaken within sector work, such as in education and shelter interventions, to make sure that the benefits of the sector are equally enjoyed by women and men.

Gender Analysis

Gender analysis examines the relationship between females and males, their access to and control of resources, their roles and the constraints they face relative to each other. Gender analysis should be integrated into the needs assessments and in all sector assessments to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by humanitarian interventions and that, where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

Targeted Actions

Targeted actions are designed and put in place after a review of the gaps or failures of interventions to meet the equal needs of women and men, girls and boys. Specific projects or actions assist a particular group, e.g. women or men, girls or boys who have been left out or ignored. A good example of targeted action is girls' education. When large numbers of girls do not go to school, specific targeted actions to promote girls to go to school should be set up. Similarly, if young sexually active men are not visiting health services due to stigma or other reasons, services to meet these needs should be established.

Protection

Protection encompasses all activities aimed at securing the full respect for the rights of individuals (women, girls, boys and men) in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of human rights, and humanitarian and refugee law. Protection activities aim to create an environment in which dignity is respected,

specific patterns of abuse are prevented or their immediate effects alleviated, and dignified conditions of life are restored through reparations, restitution and rehabilitation.

Gender-Based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures and countries. Examples include sexual violence, including rape, sexual exploitation, abuse, forced prostitution and domestic violence; trafficking; forced or early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and honour killings; and widow inheritance.

GBV is a serious and life-threatening human rights, protection and gender issue that poses unique challenges in the humanitarian context. GBV increases in conflict situations. These violations place barriers on the enjoyment of rights and the attainment of gender equality.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are forms of GBV that have been reported in humanitarian contexts, specifically relating to humanitarian workers. In 2002, the IASC adopted six core principles relating to SEA, which are included in the UN Secretary-General's bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" (ST/SGB/2003/13). These principles together constitute SEA programing (PSEA). They are binding on humanitarian staff.

Gender Balance

Gender balance is a human resource issue. It is about the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work (international and national staff at all levels, including senior positions). Achieving a balance in staffing and creating a working environment that is conducive to a diverse workforce improves the overall effectiveness of our work, and it enhances the capacity to better serve the entire population.

As with many organizations, OCHA has decided to treat the issue of gender balance in the workforce as part of human resources policy and practice. Hence gender balance is not a focus of OCHA's Gender Equality Policy.

Mandates related to gender equality

ECOSOC conclusions

In 1998, ECOSOC requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator to "ensure the integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of humanitarian policy". Since then, this mandate has been reiterated to the present ECOSOC/GA resolutions requesting that Member States, UN and other actors ensure all aspects of humanitarian response address the specific needs of women, girls, boys and men. This includes improved collection, analysis and reporting of sex-age- and disability-disaggregated data.

IASC Transformative Agenda

In its guidance notes, the IASC Transformative Agenda establishes strong commitments on gender, on which OCHA is obliged to take a leadership role, within the core areas of coordination and strategic systems.

IASC Policy Mainstreaming Gender in the Humanitarian Response

The IASC commits itself to ensuring that its member organizations take the following actions:

- Formulate specific strategies for ensuring that gender issues are brought into the mainstream of activities within the IASC areas of responsibility. Priority areas are assessment and strategic planning for humanitarian crises; the Consolidated Appeal Process; principled approach to emergencies; and participation of women in planning, designing and monitoring all aspects of emergency programmes.
- Ensure data is disaggregated by sex and age, and include a gender perspective in information analysis.
- Produce gender-sensitive operational studies, best practices, guidelines and checklists for programming, and establish instruments and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, such as gender-impact methodologies, in order to incorporate gender-analysis techniques in institutional tools and procedures.
- Develop capacity for systematic gender mainstreaming in programmes, policies, actions and training.

Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000) recognized that war affects women differently. It reaffirmed the need to increase women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. Among other steps, this resolution calls for the recognition of the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. Available from www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf

The UN Security Council subsequently adopted four additional resolutions on women, peace and security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010). Taken together, the five resolutions represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women is considered as the "women's bill of rights" and a cornerstone of humanitarian, development and recovery assistance. It ensures gender equality and the equal protection of human rights of women alongside men in carrying out humanitarian and peacebuilding activities. It also pays special attention to the violation of human rights of women and the provision of appropriate remedies.

Outcomes Document – Beijing +5 (New York, 2000) Actions to be taken at the international level by the United Nations system and international and regional organizations: para 86 (a) Assist Governments, upon request, in developing gender-sensitive strategies for the delivery of assistance and, where appropriate, responses to humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflict and natural disasters. Full text available from: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/as2310rev1.pdf

To find out more about gender equality work in OCHA and additional gender tools, go to:

http://ochanet.unocha.org/TI/Gender/
http://gender.humanitarianresponse.info