

Summary Report

Global Refugee Forum Pledges from an Age, Gender and Diversity perspective: Challenges and Opportunities

9 June 2021

Introduction

The first [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) took place in December 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland and brought the international community together to demonstrate solidarity with the world's refugees and the countries and communities that host them. The mainstreaming and integration of an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach in GRF pledges was discussed in different spotlight sessions. An [AGD Tip Sheet](#) was developed to support GRF pledges to be AGD inclusive.

Almost two years after the first GRF, progress has been limited in how pledges address specific issues related to children, adolescents, youth, girls and young women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+, and other diverse groups of persons in refugee responses. On 9 June 2021, UNHCR, the Women's Refugee Commission, Plan International, the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts and the UNSW Forced Migration Research Network's Gender Audit Team co-organized a stocktaking event on GRF pledges from an age, gender and diversity perspective.

Objectives

The stocktaking event brought together diverse actors, including States, academic institutions, international organisations and civil society organisations to reflect on the barriers to applying an AGD lens to GRF pledging; the benefits of including AGD considerations in pledging; and how to make pledges more inclusive of girls, boys, youth, women and men of different ages, persons with disabilities and other diverse groups. The objectives of the stocktaking event were to:

- (1) Explore what an age, gender and diversity approach is in practice and what different stakeholders can do to implement AGD inclusive pledges, including by looking at how age, gender and diversity have been addressed to date in GRF pledges; and,
- (2) Learn from promising practice on how to support the implementation of AGD-sensitive approaches to the Global Compact on Refugees.

Speakers and Presentations

The event, moderated by the Women's Refugee Commission's Geneva Representative, Manisha Thomas, was opened by UNHCR's Director of the Division of International Protection, Grainne O'Hara. Ms O'Hara spoke of the importance of adopting an AGD approach to programming; the important role of Global Refugee Forum pledging entities in shaping and transforming humanitarian and development programming to take into account the unique characteristics, lived experiences, opportunities and challenges faced by forcibly displaced and stateless persons of different ages, gender identities and other diverse characteristics; and, the value of systematically integrating age, gender and diversity considerations in the formulation and revision of Global Refugee Forum pledges.

UNHCR presented an analysis of GRF pledges through an AGD lens, which focused on pledges that include meaningful participation of refugees, and/or are sensitive to various groups along the age, gender and diversity spectrum, including with consideration to children, youth, older persons, disabilities, gender and LGBTIQ+ persons.

Four panelists shared good practices in integrating age, gender and diversity considerations in their humanitarian and/or development programming:

University of New South Wales, Forced Migration Research Network, Ms Linda Bartolomei and Ms Apajok Biar, Gender Audit team members

- Presented a research methodology to undertake a participatory AGD analysis of protection concerns and solutions.
- Highlighted the need to ensure that diverse ages, genders and other considerations, including disabilities and sexual orientations, are meaningfully accounted for when needs and solutions are identified.
- The age, gender and diversity (AGD) matrix is an inclusive, flexible, intergenerational and insightful tool which allows participants to explore and analyze issues using an AGD framework.
- The storyboard technique draws out the lived experience, the knowledge, the analytical skills of the refugee women and men, girls and boys, opens the space to genuinely partner with refugee communities as equal partners in building solutions, as well as provide a safe space in which to feel heard, negotiate, and workshop solutions with different stakeholders to share their ideas.
- In every country where these tools have been used, sexual and gender-based violence is a major crosscut that keeps coming up.
- Women as first responders are also experts in designing and implementing effective solutions (e.g. women focal points have demonstrated to improve referral systems in place to prevent, respond, and mitigate GBV).
- Local multi-stakeholder partnerships led by refugee women enable multiple benefits for families, communities, NGOs, host governments, international organizations, etc.

Plan International Malawi, Ms Wezzie Mtonga-Kamphale, Project Manager

- Through a consultative process, identified barriers to services, gaps in services, and gaps in complaints mechanisms - all taking into account AGD.
- Success factors:
 - Leadership is committed to the AGD approach, there has been investment in capacity building and in the creation of adequate resources;
 - Community participation structures at various levels allows participation of persons of concern, using community-led organisations (girls, boys, women and men) to create fora for ongoing consultation and collaboration.
- Political will is essential – e.g. national level frameworks such as gender equality act, GBV act, child rights act (domestication of the CRC).
- UNHCR provides specific funding e.g. in relation to child protection programs, gender equality, persons with disabilities, persons with diverse sexual orientations. More funding is needed for these dedicated programmes.
- Coordination and technical support by various UN organisations is crucial.

- Challenges: restrictive legal frameworks on persons with diverse sexual orientations so need to be very careful to not expose those we work with on this point. Not providing comprehensive disabilities services and need more investment in this (e.g. sign language, braille etc). Gaps in meaningful participation and support to young people and safe spaces for them.

INTERSOS, Ms Eleonora Sceusa, Global Protection Global Protection Advisor West and Central Africa

- Use AGD-sensitive protection monitoring to inform needs-based interventions.
- Challenges: identify protection needs, but not all needs can be addressed due to lack of funding or inflexible funding, restrictive local laws, cultural/religious challenges, safety issues. Advocacy undertaken to address these issues. This process gives voices to marginalized groups and ensures their needs are not neglected.
- There are some topics that continue to be sensitive e.g. GBV, disability inclusion.
- Language can be a barrier.
- INTERSOS provides information on services, strengthens feedback and complaint mechanisms.
- Benefit of the AGD approach is that it ensures that the needs and perspectives of diverse groups are taken into account.

Minister of Labor in Coahuila, Mexico, Ms Nazira Zogbi Castro

- Coahuila has been a leading state in promoting the economic inclusion of refugees.
- Numbers of refugees in Coahuila are increasing, and predominantly originate from central America. Mexico is a transit, return and destination country. 45,000 refugees, mostly from Honduras but also from other countries, fleeing gang violence.
- Working to access dignified employment for AGD diverse groups – access to employment and services and rights e.g. health, education including recognition of former learning, access to documentation and work.
- Programme to identify and support refugees to receive training, link to employment opportunities.
- Solidarity cities for refugees.
- Established policy of inclusion for refugees in employment programmes for the State.

Summary of Recommendations

The event identified lessons learnt, and put forward recommendations for the High-Level Officials' Meeting to further advance the systematic inclusion of diverse persons of concern in all decisions and actions that affect their lives, and to better ensure the realisation of their rights. Based on the interventions and reflections from speakers, as well as discussions and consultations with participants, the following next steps were proposed:

- (1) **Decision-makers at national level must have the political will to enact an AGD approach to reform discriminatory laws, enact and implement policies** that tackle inequalities based on gender, age and diversity in the long-term. During the interventions, many speakers highlighted the key role of national level frameworks and legislation, such as gender equality acts, gender-based violence acts, and child rights acts, in implementing an approach sensitive to Age, Gender and Diversity.

- (2) **Commitment from leadership to incorporate an AGD approach in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes targeted at displaced populations.** This includes investment in capacity building, adequate resources, ensuring meaningful participation through community organizations and forums, community participation inclusive of different ages, gender and other diversity characteristics. Finally, it also entails ensuring that the leadership in UN agencies and partners have strong technical know-how and place AGD front and centre of their terms of reference.

- (3) **All actors working at the policy and field levels should ensure an intersectional perspective for needs assessments and analyses of refugee responses, including through refugee participation.** Analyses include the diverse experiences of refugees. This entails engaging focus group discussions or other methods that include older people, minorities, women and girls, and other groups and perspectives of often-overlooked groups, ensuring they are heard, documented, and responded to.

- (4) **Donors and financial institutions should ensure proper funding, particularly multi-year funding targeted to address gender, age and diversity inequalities and make AGD reporting mandatory.** Securing long-term funding is particularly important to ensuring programs and advocacy that go beyond the humanitarian community only. Donors and UN agencies should dedicate specific funding streams to allow actors working in refugee responses to target the different aspects compounding discrimination of specific groups and all their diversities.

- (5) **Actors working on refugee responses should ensure a whole of society and whole of government approach,** including the participation of local CDOs and institutions to promote behavioral change and increasing reform of the legal framework to address specific barriers diverse groups face in accessing services based on their age, gender and diversity.

The Stocktaking event was closed with reflections from Machtelt de Vriese, Senior Community-based Protection Advisor in the Division of International Protection at UNHCR, who reaffirmed the commitment of UNHCR and partners to systematically integrate AGD considerations across programs and interventions. GRF pledging entities were encouraged to continue their concerted efforts to address the risks faced by persons of concern in forced displacement and statelessness, and to join the movement to strengthen and transform the systematic integration of age, gender and diversity dimensions in pledging, coordination, programming and beyond.

The High Level Officials' Meeting provides an extraordinary opportunity to follow these recommendations, enhancing the inclusiveness and accountability of all pledges already shared and expressing a shared commitment towards an Age, Gender and Diversity approach in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.