



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



Advancing Participation and Inclusion

Age, Gender and Diversity
Accountability Report 2021

“The call for ‘nothing about us, without us’ is not merely a call to meaningfully engage with refugees, but to refrain from taking decisions without us and to allow us to contribute directly to solutions”

From the refugees' statement at the High-level Officials Meeting, December 2021



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Division of International Protection

Cover photo: Children and youth from the Local Integration Center La Milagrosa in Colombia paint their dreams and hopes for the future in the mural Dreaming Together.

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List of Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
AoR	Area of Responsibility
CBI	Cash-Based Intervention
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CBP	Community-Based Protection
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
EAC	Educate A Child
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GRF	Global Refugee Forum
GYAC	Global Youth Advisory Council
HI	Humanity & Inclusion
HLOM	High-Level Officials Meeting
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDA	International Disability Alliance
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other diverse identities
MCO	Multi-Country Office
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
PRIMES	Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem
proGres	Profile Global Registration System
PSEA/SH	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment
RBM	Results-Based Management
RLO	Refugee-Led Organization
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Accountability Report 2021 provides an overview of the work undertaken by UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) to ensure the AGD approach is mainstreamed across operations and field-level practices. It does so in the context of combined ongoing global challenges, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing effects of climate change and natural disasters, and protracted and emerging conflicts. In 2021, these factors continued to create uniquely complex and uncertain conditions for the people served by UNHCR, as well as for the organization's capacity to respond to the diverse needs and situations that they generated.

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons are among the hardest hit by these global challenges, which have put unprecedented pressure on them. The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 has further aggravated economic insecurity and further hampered access to health and protection services. Fear of infection, restricted mobility, isolation measures, stigma, discrimination, loss of livelihoods and uncertainty about the future have increased vulnerability to protection risks for all, and particularly for women, children and those living with disabilities.

This report draws on the analysis of available quantitative and qualitative data on the areas of engagement in line with the core actions in the 2018 UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (hereafter the 2018 AGD Policy). The report also includes six spotlights on particular groups among the populations that UNHCR works with and for. Consultations with key UNHCR staff were also held to further inform and guide the selection of relevant practices. Using examples and significant practices from 2021, the report intends to illustrate the commitment and accountability of UNHCR towards the 2018 AGD Policy, the organization's ever-adaptive capacity to implement AGD-sensitive interventions, and the evolving and wide-encompassing nature of the AGD approach.

Key findings

2021 marked the tenth year since the first UNHCR Policy on AGD was adopted, and the fourth year since it was reframed into the updated 2018 AGD Policy. Throughout the year, UNHCR continued to champion this approach both internally across its operations and externally in its relationships with key stakeholders and within the wider United Nations system. This resulted in a wealth of initiatives to promote AGD inclusion that UNHCR either led or actively contributed to, a summary of which can be found in the relevant sections of this report.

Efforts to advance and further consolidate the AGD approach developed into a new strategic framework on accountability to affected people (AAP); the roll-out of the newly established Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence; the UNHCR's five-year Action Plan for Disability Inclusion; and the Global Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) Persons in Forced Displacement (June 2021).

Operationally, the focus has been on further localizing the response, as well as on establishing a more effective and incisive partnership with forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and organizations representing their voices, in the design and implementation of programmes. A good example of this was in UNHCR's work on youth in 2021, including through the Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC), where UNHCR underlined the importance of localization by encouraging youth networks in various operations and by emphasizing the role of GYAC members in promoting youth-led actions within their communities.

Nonetheless, there is still some important work to be done to ensure the 2018 AGD Policy is implemented to its full extent, as also highlighted by the recently published interim report of the longitudinal evaluation of the AGD Policy. Among the constraints identified are the lack of a uniformed and harmonized approach to diversity in all its dimensions (at both the global and field levels and across operations) and limited incentives to date to encourage compliance with the policy, including through the existing monitoring and reporting systems.

More specific findings are illustrated throughout the report and summarized in the following paragraphs for each area of engagement and related core actions.

Highlights from UNHCR's achievements in 2021¹

-  UNHCR **integrated the Washington Group questions on disability statistics** into its registration system across all operations worldwide
-  **898 participatory assessments** were carried out across regions, including through remote systems to overcome COVID-19 related restrictions.
-  **89% of operations** reached refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and host community members through information campaigns about COVID-19 pandemic risks.
-  **65% of reporting operations** have a multi-channel feedback and response systems designed based on consultations with communities.
-  **85% of reporting operations** issued women with their own individual identity credentials.²
-  UNHCR supported **81,000 stateless women, men, girls and boys** who acquired a nationality or had it confirmed in 2021.
-  In the **46 countries** using UNHCR's cash management system CashAssist, **52% of cash recipients were female**.
-  Continued efforts to engage women in livelihood and economic interventions resulted in about **54% female participation in those initiatives**.

AGD-Inclusive Programming

Progress on the collection and use of data disaggregated by age, gender and other diversity considerations continued in 2021. ProGres v4 is deployed to **117 UNHCR operations** and sex and age are mandatory fields for all individual records in the system. Data on specific needs (including disabilities) are also collected in all operations, although not consistently. In addition, in 2021 UNHCR integrated the Washington Group questions on disability statistics into its registration system across all operations worldwide and released a set of tools to support the systematic identification of persons with disabilities in all data-collection efforts. Primary-health-care information for refugees living in camps/settlements was collected in **155 camps/settlements in 22 countries** in 2021.

Moreover, the new results-based management (RBM) system, COMPASS, was rolled out for use in 2022. The system widely reflects the AGD commitments, including by outlining “Impact” and “Outcome” areas, and it is expected that it will better capture AGD core commitments and results in its strategic planning, implementation and reporting dimensions.

Participation and Inclusion

Meaningful participation is rooted in UNHCR's community-based protection approach and is central to the AGD approach. In 2021, a newly established cross-divisional Task Team – gathering focal points from several areas of UNHCR's work and an Interim Advisory Group composed of 26 members from organizations of persons who UNHCR works with and for – advanced UNHCR's work on meaningful participation through several activities. Among them, an innovative grant agreement tool³ to support organizations led by refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees or statelessness persons to realize their own projects and to access small funding directly.

¹ These highlights are based on data received from operations reporting against relevant indicators. For more information, read the relevant sections of this report.

² Preliminary findings of a global survey on registration, biometrics and digital identity which targeted 100 operations. Identity credentials refers to refugee documentation such as refugee IDs, refugee cards, refugee certificates.

³ The aim of this tool is to provide grant funding to grass-roots organizations led by refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people, internally displaced persons (IDPs), women, youth and other community-based organisations (CBOs) to support their capacities and projects. More information on the grant agreement can be found at www.unhcr.org/61b28c784.

In 2021, **62 operations** made explicit reference in their year-end reports to the use of participatory methodologies, and a total of **898 participatory assessments** were carried out across all regions – including online to overcome COVID-19-related restrictions. Community outreach volunteers and strengthened partnerships with refugee-led organizations (RLOs) enabled UNHCR to ensure that interventions in several fields of activities or modalities – including shelter and settlements, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and cash-based interventions – were appropriate and relevant to the evolving needs of different groups within populations affected by forced displacement and statelessness. Finally, participatory methods were also successfully used in various operations to foster cooperation, trust and inclusion, thus positively contributing to societal peace and stability within forcibly displaced communities as well as with host communities.

Communication and Transparency

Despite access and mobility constraints continuously posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR adapted its operations to maintain communication and dialogue with affected people. This required sustained reliance on remote methods of communication and extensive use of digital platforms. While aimed at reaching a wider audience more effectively, these communication methods sometimes posed a new set of challenges in relation to security and privacy risks, and barriers to access and use in relation to age, gender and other personal characteristics such as languages spoken or understood, literacy levels and disabilities.

Among these methods, helplines were critical to ensure two-way communication and information-sharing about key protection concerns. The use of social media also saw an increase in 2021, and new regulations and guidance were introduced to prevent risks and ease barriers. A new partnership with the online peacebuilding organization BuildUp was also developed to counter hostile and toxic narratives against refugees online and promote digital peacebuilding and acceptance by host communities.

Importantly, in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, **89 per cent of 140 countries** reporting indicated that areas inhabited by refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other forcibly displaced and stateless persons were reached by information campaigns about COVID-19 pandemic risks.

Feedback and Response

In 2021, important efforts were made to maintain or expand opportunities for feedback from the people that UNHCR worked with and for, though with higher reliance on remote methods and technology than in the past. New initiatives were also initiated to address gaps in operations' capacity to manage large unstructured quantities of feedback data and investments were made in multiple communication channels to maintain proximity with people of concern to UNHCR. This included further development of contact centres' referral and response mechanisms, including at the inter-agency level.

As a result, **65 per cent of reporting operations** have multi-channel feedback and response systems designed based on consultations with communities.

Organizational Learning and Adaptation

This is an area that requires further investment. Reporting on this aspect remained quite limited in 2021, highlighting the need for strengthened knowledge-sharing to support learning and adaptation and the scale-up of innovative approaches. Interim findings from the ongoing longitudinal evaluation of the AGD Policy also suggested limited use of feedback from participatory exercises to inform adaptations of programme activities.⁴ Moreover, siloed ways of working often prevent a more systematic inclusion of feedback and learning.

⁴ UNHCR, "Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 report" (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html.

Advancing Gender Equality

Participation of forcibly displaced and stateless women in community leadership and management structures, including through networks of women- and girl-led organizations, remained a priority for UNHCR in 2021. Among the strategies adopted, and to overcome the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR increased the use of remote and virtual means, and made specific investments to build the capacity of women and girls on decision-making, management and leadership. Moreover, a package of tools was designed for all stakeholders within the Global Refugee Forum to ensure that the needs of people of different ages, genders and diverse characteristics are met and that stakeholder pledges integrate AGD.

Despite these efforts, the number of situations reporting that the participation of women in leadership and management structures was improved or maintained decreased from 48 in 2020 to **25 refugee operations and four internal displacement situations** in 2021. Barriers to women and girls' participation persisted, particularly for marginalized women such as indigenous women and women with disabilities.

In 2021, **106 operations** where UNHCR provided support on registration and individual documentation successfully facilitated individual registration for men, women, girls and boys. Individual documents were regularly and equitably issued for individuals of all genders by the majority of these operations, while issuance of individual documents for children depended on the norms in each country. Several operations also facilitated and fast-tracked the individual registration, status determination and resettlement of persons at heightened protection risks, including women at risk, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), unaccompanied or separated children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons. Despite challenges related to social distancing, almost **1.4 million new registrations** were facilitated in 2021.

According to the preliminary findings of the Global Survey on Registration, Biometrics, and Digital Identity, approximately **85 per cent of operations** reported that women were issued with their own individual identity credentials.

Overall, **81,000 stateless persons** acquired a nationality or had it confirmed in 2021. **Nineteen operations** reported acting on documentation and registration of women and girls. Of these, **13** have reportedly succeeded in providing women and girls with access to non-discriminatory registration and documentation.

Recognizing that direct access to, and control over, the assistance had positive effects on women's empowerment and more equitable divisions of roles and responsibilities, many operations in 2021 continued to prioritize women when providing assistance.

Currently, in **46 countries** using UNHCR's cash management system CashAssist, some 52 per cent cash recipients are female.⁵ Globally, most countries prioritize cash for people with specific needs.

Data on equal access to economic opportunities, including decent work and quality education and health services varied greatly in 2021, with access to health services being the least reported on. The focus was primarily on acknowledging harmful gender norms, roles and inequalities that impact health-seeking behaviour and access; advocacy on women's and girls' right to make decisions about their health and health care; and integrating considerations related to the protection risks and needs of men and women of different ages in health-care provision. Reference was also made to efforts to increase the number of female medical and nursing staff and women in management positions.

On education, UNHCR continued its strenuous advocacy for national data on enrolment to be disaggregated by sex and education level and its efforts to promote girls' access to educational opportunities.

Finally, throughout 2021, UNHCR continued to specifically engage women in livelihood and economic interventions, which overall registered about **54 per cent female participation**. Additionally, through **MADE51** (UNHCR's global collaborative initiative to connect fair-trade refugee-made products with international markets), **30 local social enterprise partners worked directly with refugee artisans in 23 countries in 2021** – approximately 85 per cent of whom were women.

⁵ UNHCR, "Digital payments to refugees – A pathway towards financial inclusion" (2020). Available from www.unhcr.org/5fdcd8474.

In 2021, **74 per cent of UNHCR operations** reporting on GBV⁶ activities reported that GBV services were available to survivors in the context of COVID-19, including through expanded mobile and remote services and updated referral pathways. Operations reported improved or maintained support to known GBV survivors in **83 refugee, IDP and returnee situations**. Communities were involved in GBV prevention and response activities in **42 displacement situations**. As for the support provided, **89,742 survivors received psychosocial counselling, 4,066 received legal assistance, and 3,845 received medical assistance**.

Finally, **60 per cent of UNHCR operations** prioritized GBV programming by selecting the GBV Outcome Area as part of their 2022 interim strategies and accompanying results frameworks based on identified needs.

Organizational accountability

Recognizing that diverse capacities, backgrounds and expertise are critical to creating an AGD culture and the conditions for fulfilling the AGD Policy commitments, UNHCR made significant efforts to foster a diverse, inclusive and enabling work environment.

To advance progress towards achieving gender parity across all levels by 2028, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) section within the Division of Human Resources Management continued to regularly track gender and other diversity indicators across levels for advocacy and accountability purposes.

An internal independent review of workplace race equality and equity considerations indicated that racial discrimination is still ingrained in global communities and political systems where UNHCR operates. The 2022–2024 Race Equality, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan was developed in response to this review to guide efforts to ensure that the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination are fully realized in UNHCR workplaces.

UNHCR continued to build on the progress made in previous years and to maintain a leadership role in the fight against sexual misconduct, in line with a victim-centred approach.⁷ UNHCR's work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse is set within the framework of the 2020-2022 Strategy and Action Plan on tackling sexual misconduct, and is led and coordinated by UNHCR's Senior Coordinator on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment in close collaboration with an internal and interdivisional multifunctional working group. Key highlights in 2021 included the finalization of a learning package on PSEA and sexual harassment, which was rolled out to **50 operations**; the PSEA Community Outreach and Communications Fund to support non-governmental organizations' (NGOs') work on PSEA through grants; and the implementation of the Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach in UNHCR's Response to Sexual Misconduct.

Ways forward

As key drivers of fragility, including the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to affect UNHCR's work, the following considerations are aimed at stimulating institutional reflection on the implementation of the AGD Policy and guiding future actions.

- I. Build upon existing initiatives and, recalling the dedicated focus of the 2020 AGD Report, continue to reinforce a more integrated and intersectional approach to working with people of all age, gender, and other diverse characteristics.⁸
- II. Further embrace the localization agenda and continue to consult, support, and invest in the capacity of grass-root organizations, particularly organizations of forcibly displaced and stateless people, including those that are led by women, persons with disabilities, youth, older people and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

⁶ The 2018 AGD Policy originally referred to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which was later changed to GBV to reflect standard language across organizations working on it.

⁷ In this report, the term "victim" is used in accordance with terminology used across the United Nations (including by the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate), while acknowledging fully that victims of sexual misconduct are also "survivors", and that for many the term "survivor" has a more empowering connotation.

⁸ UNHCR, "People at the centre: The intersection of age, gender and diversity. Age, gender and diversity accountability report 2020" (2021). Available from www.unhcr.org/age-gender-diversity/wp-content/uploads/sites/139/2021/10/AGD-v6-online.pdf.

- III. Continue to promote and support the identification, development, and exchange of promising practices regarding implementation of the AGD approach across regions and areas of UNHCR and its partners' interventions.⁹
- IV. Strengthen the existing accountability system related to the AGD Policy by including specific responsibilities at regional and country office levels, as part of a sharpened and more targeted monitoring and reporting system.
- V. Continue to emphasize the importance of monitoring and evaluation of AGD at all levels and investment in the annual AGD accountability reporting process to showcase the work of UNHCR across operations. This can be facilitated by (1) following the existing COMPASS guidelines on planning and selecting indicators relevant to AGD and (2) promoting existing global tools¹⁰ already prepared to facilitate operations to report on the implementation of the AGD Policy.
- VI. Continue leveraging new technologies and creative approaches to analysing and reporting on non-traditional AGD sources of information, including big data sources such as social media, media outlets, qualitative surveys and reports, recordings, and photographic evidence.
- VII. Build on UNHCR's experience over the last decade on implementing and promoting the AGD approach through its AGD Policy to encourage the United Nations system and other stakeholders to adopt similar approaches and policy instruments.



Recipients of the DAFI scholarship, awarded to refugee and returnee students, currently attend University in Zambia.
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⁹ See promising practices on AGD here: www.unhcr.org/search?comid=60db22434cid=49aea9390&scid=49aea939b&tid=49e5ee440&tags=CBP-PromisingPractices.

¹⁰ See internal guidance on UNHCR Intranet.



I. Introduction

Kuyunge Margaret Oliver, a representative of South Sudanese refugees in Bidibidi settlement, Uganda, addresses a crowd during the 2021 International Women's Day celebration.

© UNHCR/Esther Ruth Mbabazi

UNHCR first introduced the age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach in 2004 to orient staff and partners to be inclusive of women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity in their work.¹¹ The AGD approach sees individuals as unique in their needs, capacities and priorities, and recognizes the centrality of their contribution to decisions and solutions that affect their lives, without discrimination based on their age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics that may shape their identities.

The first few years following the introduction of the AGD approach served to promote its consistent and systematic application across UNHCR operations. In 2007, the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming accountability framework was adopted to promote accountability in the organization, and in 2011 the AGD approach was further established into a mandatory policy.

UNHCR's first official AGD Policy aimed at ensuring all refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, stateless people and

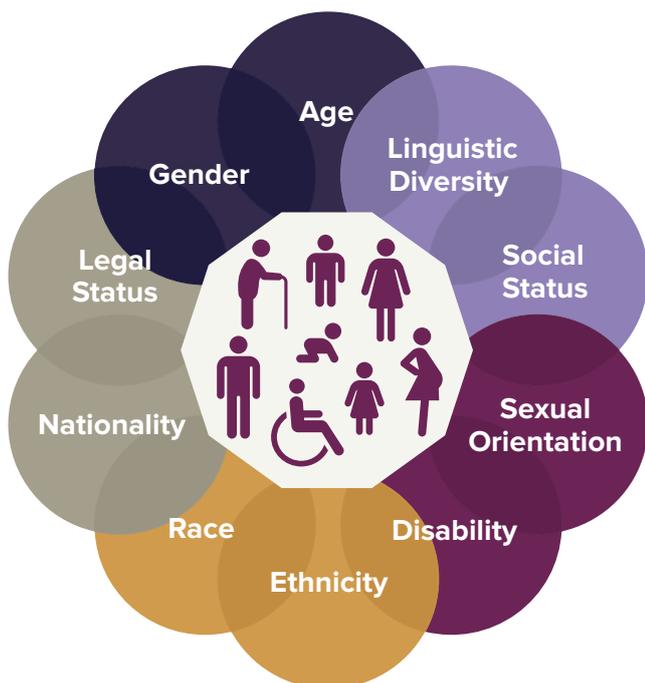
returnees enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives.¹² It also advocated for a consistent application of the AGD approach across the organization's practices, policies and programmes.

In alignment with the Strategic Directions 2017–2021, the 2018 UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity further consolidated and updated UNHCR's commitments to putting people at the centre of its work by integrating all AGD commitments and dimensions into one policy framework. This included the incorporation of UNHCR's existing commitments to women and girls as well as other inter-agency commitments such as those regarding "accountability to affected people". It reflected an understanding of the AGD dimensions of forcibly displaced people and stateless persons as interlinked personal characteristics that affect their access to rights, diminish or exacerbate protection risks, and shape the capacities and resources of individuals and communities across all UNHCR operations (see Figure 1).

¹¹ UNHCR, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, "Age, gender and diversity approach" (2012). Available from www.unhcr.org/500e570b9.pdf.

¹² UNHCR, "Age, Gender and Diversity Policy: Working with people and communities for equality and protection" (2011). Available from www.refworld.org/docid/4def34f6887.html.

Figure 1. Simplified representation of how diverse characteristics can intersect



2021 marked the tenth year since the first UNHCR Policy on AGD was adopted, and the fourth year since it was reframed into the updated 2018 AGD Policy.

Over the years, UNHCR has consistently reported on its AGD-related achievements and challenges through its annual AGD Accountability Report, which remains a central monitoring and reporting tool and an opportunity for the organization to take stock of the progress made in its implementation and promotion of the AGD policy commitments internally and, increasingly, also in partnerships with other stakeholders and within systems that UNHCR is part of. These include the United Nations system,¹³ the inter-agency forums and other inter-governmental forums such as the Global Refugee Forum.¹⁴

This year’s AGD Accountability Report continues to respond to this long-standing commitment. It offers a summary illustration of the AGD work across UNHCR operations in 2021, with a focus on key achievements and remaining challenges, and highlights relevant practices across UNHCR operations. A list of issues for consideration completes the report. This is the last

year using UNHCR’s current reporting system, Focus, as UNHCR’s new results-based management (RBM) system (COMPASS) will be used as of 2022.

At the time of writing, a longitudinal evaluation of the 2018 AGD Policy¹⁵ was also under way. Its preliminary findings contributed information to the analysis of the implementation and impact of AGD within UNHCR.

► **Championing AGD**

This section provides an overview of UNHCR efforts to promote and advocate for AGD inclusion in all initiatives initiated or led by the organization, as well as in those to which it has contributed in 2021. These include both initiatives to strengthen the institutional capacity to act on the AGD commitments effectively and consistently (inward-looking), as well as initiatives undertaken at the regional and global levels and in relation to the variety of stakeholders UNHCR collaborates with (outward-looking).

Institutionally, important progress has been made in advancing the AGD approach. Among them, the Conference in Europe and the Side Event on Meaningful Participation resulted in a list of recommendations to support the integration of AGD considerations in all stocktaking events and the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM)¹⁶ organized by UNHCR. These recommendations focus on how to ensure the meaningful participation of persons of concern to UNHCR of various ages and genders and with diverse backgrounds in the preparation and conduct of events, including as panellists and direct contributors to the discussions. An independent gender audit team, composed of refugee women and academics, analysed the stocktaking events, linked and side events and preparatory roundtables leading up to the HLOM and the HLOM itself, through a gender and intersectionality lens.

In the context of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), action-oriented guidance was developed to guide GRF stakeholders and ensure that they apply AGD considerations in their actions and pledges with various groups or persons of concern to UNHCR, for example children.¹⁷

¹³ The United Nations system, in addition to the United Nations itself, comprises many funds, programmes and specialized agencies, each of which have their own area of work, leadership and budget. The programmes and funds are financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributions. The specialized agencies are independent international organizations funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions. The United Nations coordinates its work with these separate United Nations system entities, which cooperate with the Organization to help it achieve its goals. For more information, please see www.un.org/en/about-us/un-system.

¹⁴ The Global Refugee Forum (hereinafter GRF) is a forum co-hosted by UNHCR that was first organized in December 2019 and is to be held every four years, with the participation of States and other stakeholders. It seeks to share good practices and contribute – through financial support, technical expertise and policy changes – to reaching the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees. More information is available at www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum.html.

¹⁵ UNHCR, “Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 Report” (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html.

¹⁶ The High-Level Officials Meeting (hereinafter HLOM) is an event held two years after every Global Refugee Forum to take stock of progress. The first edition of the HLOM was held on 14–15 December 2021. For more information, please see <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/high-level-officials-meeting>.

¹⁷ See, for example, Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, “A practical guide: Protecting and supporting children through the Global Compact on Refugees” (2021). More information on this can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIAlsIyEJ3E; www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/61b85fb44/refugee-statement-delivered-opening-high-level-officials-meeting-english.html; www.unhcr.org/search?comid=61b861cf4&cid=49aea93aa7&scid=49aea93a57&tid=49e5ee440&tags=HLOM14.



High Commissioner Filippo Grandi holds a virtual meeting in his Geneva office with a delegation of refugee leaders representing refugee-led initiatives in different parts of the world. The meeting was a prelude to the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021.
© UNHCR/Mark Henley

Friends of AGD – a group made up of representatives from UNHCR, NGOs and academics – came together to support the continued implementation and monitoring of AGD commitments made in GRF pledges.

An interactive event presented several tools that the Friends of AGD have developed to build on the progress made, and to help ensure that new pledges address gaps related to age, gender and diversity. These include a package of tools that stakeholders can use to ensure that their GRF pledges integrate AGD, including a Tip Sheet for pledging entities, a video on AGD and intersectionality, and an AGD matrix tool developed by the University of New South Wales (UNSW). These tools are designed to ensure that the needs of people of different ages, genders and diverse characteristics are met; that affected persons have full, meaningful and equal participation in all decisions that impact their lives; and that their human rights are upheld.

As part of the 2021 HLOM, UNHCR’s Task Team on Meaningful Participation and the Interim Advisory Group of Organizations led by Persons of Concern organized a Side Event on Meaningful Refugee Participation that brought together RLOs, States, NGOs, academia and other stakeholders to take stock of the implementation of GRF pledges made in 2019, share good practices that enhance the effectiveness of refugee responses through meaningful refugee participation, and inspire other stakeholders to take action.

UNHCR continued to play a pivotal role in promoting an AGD approach among key stakeholders and within the United Nations system. This was further corroborated by the findings of the AGD Policy evaluation, and particularly in the areas of child protection and GBV.¹⁸

An important achievement in 2021 was the General Assembly’s call for the development of a United Nations system-wide policy on age, gender, and diversity. More specific reference to it in the 2021 Our Common Agenda Report reads “Building on good models from elsewhere in the system, the United Nations Secretariat will develop a policy that puts people at the centre of all its actions and takes into account the impact of intersecting personal characteristics, such as age, gender and diversity.” UNHCR, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) are co-leading the exercise, with the active participation of other United Nations entities. This is in recognition of the catalytic role that UNHCR has long played in the promotion of the AGD approach globally.

Importantly, advocacy and promotion of an AGD-inclusive approach also occurred through a series of initiatives across all relevant AGD dimensions, as summarized in the following table.

¹⁸ UNHCR, “Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 report” (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html See bullet 1, page ii.

AGD DIMENSION	GLOBAL HIGHLIGHTS 2021
 CHILD PROTECTION	<p>Virtual Roundtable on Children and the Global Compact on Refugees organized jointly with other partners in the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts.</p> <p>Release of the updated version of A Practical Guide: Protecting and Supporting Children through the Global Compact on Refugees ahead of the HLOM of December 2021.</p> <p>UNHCR's contribution to "The Unprotected: Annual Spotlight on Child Protection Funding in Humanitarian Action – 2021", a collaborative report which sets out a series of action points to change the framing and support for child protection and its centrality to humanitarian action, including by mainstreaming and integrating child protection across sectors alongside specialized support</p>
 DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)	<p>UNHCR presented the following gender parity goals at the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring of the age distribution of the workforce and impact of gender; • monitoring of geographical diversity in the United Nations common system and impact of gender; • monitoring of the implementation of existing gender policies and the achievement of gender parity in the United Nations common system. <p>The UNHCR Field Security Service (FSS) is now co-chairing a Working Group for the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) to ensure that security threats/risk based on gender, sexual orientation, and other diversity characteristics such as disability, race and ethnicity are addressed.</p>
 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	<p>UNHCR co-led the development of the Inter-Agency GBV Standard Operating Procedure Toolkit for GBV Interventions in conjunction with the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) for use in all situations of forced displacement. Completed in 2021, the SOPs will be rolled out in 2022.</p> <p>A mapping of the call-to-action internal practices on engagement with women-led organizations was also co-led by UNHCR in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).¹⁹</p> <p>Finally, in the Asia and the Pacific region, UNHCR supported UNFPA and the GBV AoR to roll out the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming.</p>
 LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND QUEER PERSONS	<p>UNHCR and the United Nations Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity convened a roundtable with over 600 participants, including 204 (about 31 per cent) from civil society and 78 (about 12 per cent) from RLOs on protection and solutions for LGBTIQ+ people in forced displacement, and presented a global analysis of the challenges they experience, resulting in 39 recommendations.²⁰</p>
 MINORITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	<p>UNHCR is leading two pillars of the United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities: i) capacity-building and ii) leave no one behind.</p> <p>UNHCR co-facilitated a pilot online training in November 2021 on "Addressing Racial Discrimination and Strengthening the Protection of Minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and other Population Groups in UN Programming Processes" for 12 United Nations country teams.</p>
 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	<p>A new global partnership was launched in 2021 with Humanity & Inclusion (HI) to provide technical support on disability inclusion to the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and national protection clusters. Stocktake (achievements, challenges and way-forward²¹) of the first-year strategic collaboration with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) to involve organizations of persons with disabilities in building links between host communities and forcibly displaced persons with disabilities.</p>
 YOUTH	<p>Official launch of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, supported by the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action where the UNHCR High Commissioner committed to continue supporting spaces and opportunities for youth engagement.²²</p>

¹⁹ UNHCR, "Safe from the start: Quarter 2 report" (2021).

²⁰ UNHCR, "LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement and statelessness: Protection and solutions. Discussion paper" (2021). UNHCR, "2021 Global Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement: Summary conclusions" (2021).

²¹ These are illustrated in a specific [webpage](#) and [introductory document](#). The partnership with the International Disability Alliance was initiated in 2020 to strengthen the collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities in capacity-building, humanitarian coordination, human rights monitoring, and United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) implementation.

²² The guidelines were endorsed by the Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) in 2020, but only officially launched in 2021.

► Methodology and limitations

This report primarily draws on the year-end reporting for 2021 by UNHCR field operations. This covers UNHCR actions and practices in all seven of its regions of operation. Wide-ranging consultations were also held with key stakeholders across the relevant technical units and divisions in UNHCR headquarters to help navigate the wealth of information and provide a more nuanced understanding of the evidence to help shape the content of the 2021 AGD Report. In addition, the expertise and analysis of key representatives from the regional bureaux provided a detailed and contextualized overview of the operations. Finally, findings from the longitudinal evaluation of the 2018 AGD Policy as well as of other evaluations and reports were also used, where relevant, to integrate and complement existing data and to validate the considerations made in this report.

An evidence-based analysis of key trends was produced, with a focus on the areas of engagement included in UNHCR's AGD Policy.

Limitations

As in previous years, systematic gathering and analysis of data and information on AGD continues to be a challenging task. Among the **limitations** encountered are:

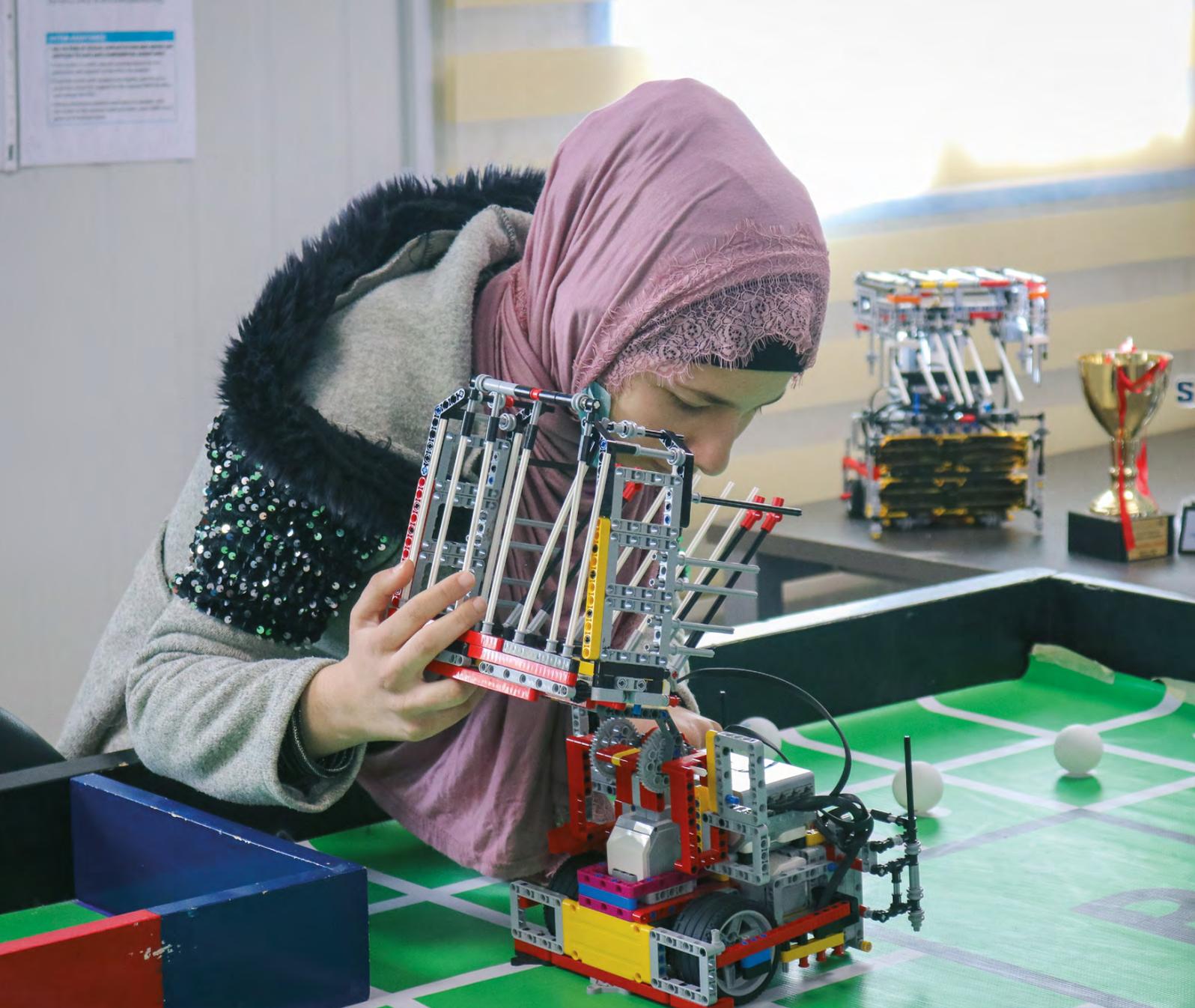
- The quality and breadth of reported data vary greatly from one operation to another and across regions, which made balanced and consistent reflection on practices and undertakings challenging.
- The evidence available from other data sources such as studies and data-gathering exercises specific to women, men, girls and boys of diverse characteristics or to areas of engagement and core actions is mostly fragmented, and highly reliant on specific initiatives, available resources and technical capacities. This also contributed to some inconsistencies in the amount and quality of information reported.
- The report is the last to draw from the Focus system of RBM, as the new COMPASS system has been introduced for 2022 planning and moving forward. In this vein, the AGD Report looked at the standard AGD chapters of the End of Year Report and at specific objectives and output indicators. To complement the standard chapters, the drafters of this report had drawn from qualitative examples gathered directly and separately from operations, regional bureaux and divisions/ technical units.



Syrian cartoonist creates images for UNHCR's first-ever non-fungible token (NFT) fundraising sale in Switzerland
© Hani Abbas

This map represents the selected examples that are used for the purpose of this year's AGD Accountability Report.

*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)



II. Progress on the Implementation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

A Syrian refugee living in Za'atari Camp in Jordan inspects the robot she has built in the Innovation Lab run by UNHCR.
© UNHCR/Shawkat Alharfoush

2021 has been a favourable year for the UNHCR AGD approach; one in which efforts that were under way developed into new policy and strategic frameworks and tools. The five-year accountability to affected people (AAP) strategy, the initial implementation of the Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and the launch of the new corporate planning and RBM system are particularly noteworthy.

Nonetheless, there is still some important work to be done to ensure the 2018 AGD Policy is implemented to its full extent. Among the constraints identified are the lack of a uniformed and harmonized approach to diversity and limited incentives to date to encourage compliance with the policy. These echo some of the findings of the interim report of the ongoing longitudinal evaluation of the AGD Policy.²³

²³ UNHCR, "Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 report" (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html.

▶ AGD-Inclusive Programming

The different capacities, needs, and exposure to protection risks of the women, men, girls, and boys with whom we work must be incorporated into assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.

Core
Action 1

At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming.

Overview

UNHCR continued to make progress in the collection of data disaggregated by age, sex and other diversity considerations for both analysis and programming. **A major innovation introduced in 2021 is UNHCR's new RBM system (COMPASS) for use in 2022 planning and beyond. COMPASS introduced a new way of planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting on results** that should contribute to better reflection on AGD policy commitments and cross-cutting issues (such as disability inclusion and gender equality) in situation analysis, strategic planning and programming. Reference to AGD was included in several guidance materials and capacity-development activities that accompanied the system's roll-out in 2021.²⁴

The Global Results Framework enables regional and global aggregation of financial data and indicators on AGD-related areas of work and AGD policy commitments. More specifically, one of the global impact areas refers to empowering communities and achieving gender equality, while three areas at the outcome level relate to GBV, child protection, and community engagement and women's empowerment.²⁵

At the country level, operations reflect the AGD dimension in their situation analysis and must outline

expected progress and targeted actions to advance the implementation of AGD-inclusive programmes in their country strategies. In addition, operations can develop context-specific AGD results statements, user-defined indicators and markers²⁶ to measure AGD-related results and track cross-cutting issues relevant to their operation. Altogether, these features are believed to contribute to more appropriate and relevant monitoring and reporting on AGD.

Sex, age and country of origin are mandatory fields and therefore collected in all UNHCR operations. In 2021, 18 situations reported having made improvements in the data disaggregation by age and sex, with countries such as **Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Chad and Rwanda** reporting that 100 per cent of refugee population data is disaggregated by age and sex.²⁷ However, the longitudinal evaluation of the AGD Policy indicates that the use of the data available through proGres v4²⁸ by staff is rather limited.²⁹ Other demographic information is also collected as relevant and depending on the level of registration. For example, in emergencies, UNHCR collects only basic information on specific needs. Each year, UNHCR also publishes the Global Trends Report and Mid-Year Trends which provide population-related sex and age disaggregated data for different categories of forcibly displaced and stateless populations.³⁰

²⁴ For example, AGD is a specific requirement in the situation analysis and in the strategic directions.

²⁵ Additional AGD-related core indicators are linked to other global results areas. Disaggregation of core indicators by age, sex and disability is mandatory, where applicable. Furthermore, the organizational marker functionality within COMPASS facilitates a high-level global overview of results on gender equality and disability inclusion.

²⁶ For example, the disability marker function is meant to identify efforts that contribute to disability inclusion.

²⁷ In the case of IDPs, UNHCR follows inter-agency consensus and available data, for example those from population task forces.

²⁸ In 2002, UNHCR developed its enterprise registration tool, proGres (Profile Global Registration System), which is still in use. "ProGres in Partnership" or proGres v4 is the fourth version of the tool. It supports operational functions and processes that are additional to the registration of individuals, including a wide range of UNHCR case management functions from assistance to protection case management, protection interventions and the provision of documentation and assistance, including cash-based assistance. For more information, please visit www.unhcr.org/registration-guidance/chapter3/registration-tools/.

²⁹ UNHCR, "Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 report" (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html.

³⁰ UNHCR, "Global trends report 2020" (2021). Available from www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/.

UNHCR's health information system tools continued to collect information on health and nutrition access, utilization, coverage and status disaggregated by age and sex. Primary-health-care information for refugees living in camps/settlements was collected in **155 camps/settlements sites in 22 countries**. Standardized Expanded Nutrition Surveys to assess malnutrition levels were carried out in 93 sites across 13 countries. Biometrics data are now also an integral part of UNHCR registration data and processed in **79 operations** globally.³¹

Another notable innovation in 2021 is the release of a set of tools by the Division of International Protection (DIP), the Division of Resilience and Solution (DRS) and the Global Data Service (GDS) in August 2021 to support the systematic identification of persons with disabilities at registration and in other data-collection efforts.³² More specifically, **UNHCR integrated the Washington Group questions on disability statistics into its registration system across all refugee operations worldwide**. This is in line with a commitment that UNHCR made at the Global Disability Summit 2018 to improve the identification and recording of persons with disabilities during continuous registration, which is now a reality.

Finally, in mid-2021 the **Digital Identity and Registration Section of the Global Data Service launched its inaugural Global Survey on Registration, Biometrics, and Digital Identity across more than 100 UNHCR operations**. The objective was to provide key baseline operational-level data on registration systems, biometrics, identity credentials, host-State identity systems, authentication, access to services, and AGD considerations. Preliminary findings describe AGD-related dimensions of registration processes and documentation issuance, including where women and children are issued with individual protection documentation (Core Action 6B); where LGBTIQ+ people have access to documentation that affirms their gender identity; where facilities or remote registration methods are accessible to persons with disabilities; and where an AGD-informed approach has yet to be mainstreamed throughout registration processes, for example where challenges with birth registration may persist. As data are collected at an operational level, results will support a greater understanding of policy- or procedural-related gaps and promote AGD-informed strategic planning, advocacy, and improved recognition of the need to mainstream AGD characteristics in registration processes.³³

UNHCR and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) was endorsed in 2019 to promote transformative and lasting change for persons with disabilities across the United Nations system.

Its adoption and related accountability framework generated momentum and elevated awareness around disability inclusion across UNHCR, including the creation of concrete steps towards the four core areas of the strategy: 1) leadership, strategic planning, and management; 2) inclusiveness; 3) programming; and 4) organizational culture. These commitments were outlined in UNHCR's five-year Action Plan for Disability Inclusion in 2020, which provides a roadmap for UNHCR's operations and workforce to meet the UNDIS requirements by 2024. The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (AHC-P) is UNHCR's champion for disability inclusion and provides organizational leadership on UNHCR's commitments.

The 2021 report against the 15 UNDIS indicators reflected steady progress, with UNHCR meeting or exceeding most of the requirements set out in the strategy.³⁴

UNHCR practices on AGD-Inclusive Programming

Despite the progress made in recent years in the collection and use of data disaggregated by age, sex and other diversity characteristics, coverage remains unreliable in 2021, with forcibly displaced and stateless persons often unaccounted for in UNHCR's system PRIMES, which is designed for refugees, and not registered by any government or agency.³⁵ Moreover, the capacity to collect and analyse data disaggregated by age and sex and other diversity factors continued to vary greatly among regions.

Data disaggregation in UNHCR operations is used to inform the programme management cycle and to provide tailor-made solutions, including individual case management. The following examples illustrate how AGD considerations were effectively integrated across various phases of the programme cycle.

³¹ UNHCR, "Biometrics" (n.d.). Available from https://help.unhcr.org/jordan/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2022/04/Biometrics-EN_Final_APRIL2022.pdf.

³² These included the revision of the Disability sub-categories under the Specific Needs entity in PRIMES, as well as the development of related guidance. For an overview of UNHCR's work on disability inclusion in 2021, please refer to the relevant spotlight [here](#).

³³ Final data are expected in August 2022.

³⁴ Notably, UNHCR "exceeded" in half of the indicators: Leadership, Disability-specific policy/Strategy, Institutional set-up, Consultation with persons with disabilities, Country programme documents, Joint initiatives, and Communications.

³⁵ Division of Programme Support and Management Report.

Data disaggregation by AGD was used in the context of Registration, needs assessment and profiling. Overall, it is important to note that **proGres v4 is deployed to 117 operations** and sex and age are mandatory fields for all individual records in the system. All UNHCR operations using proGres also collect data on specific needs, including disabilities, with the exception of emergencies contexts where collecting data on sub-categories of disabilities and the use of the Washington Group Questions remain challenging. Five operations specifically reported collecting data by sexual orientation and gender identity, namely **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Indonesia and the Dominican Republic.**

More specific country-level examples include **Argentina**, which based on official data as at December 2021 had disaggregated all population data by age and gender in all five countries covered by its office. Following expansion in the use of proGres v4 from two to four partners in 2021 covering **Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay**, the quality of data on registration and assistance improved significantly and resulted in an increase of 82 per cent (from 25,000 to 45,500) active individual cases registered, of which 19,135 are female, 26,257 male, and 58 others.

In addition, some operations such as **Bulgaria, Honduras, Kenya, Morocco and Uganda** reported **using the KoBoToolbox**, a free toolkit for collecting and managing data,³⁶ which is widely used in humanitarian settings.

More particularly in **Uganda**, a series of efforts were made to address challenges in AGD data disaggregation. These included an individual profiling exercise (IPE) and verification exercise initiated in October 2021 to update registration data including information on specific needs (for example through integration of the Washington Group questions on disability) and socioeconomic information. The Standard Operating Procedures on Identification, Verification and Assistance to Persons at Heightened Risk were finalized and roll-out among colleagues and partners began. A KoBoToolbox-based tool for collection of information on specific needs was also developed and rolled out for use by health and protection partners who did not have access to proGres. These efforts combined to update and improve the quality of AGD data.

In **Yemen**, UNHCR socio-vulnerability and protection assessment tools used in IDP programmes include disaggregation of data by age, sex, disability and other specific needs. The inclusion of AGD elements was central in the negotiation undertaken with authorities in north Yemen to improve the quality and details of

the assessment tool as well as the targeting system to determine eligibility for cash assistance. With their ample coverage (more than 237,000 households in 2021), these assessments directly informed the Humanitarian Needs Overview of the UNHCR-led Protection Cluster. AGD elements were also included in the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster tools, such as site-monitoring tools,³⁷ with more efforts ongoing to better capture age and gender elements.

AGD considerations were used for the purpose of planning and prioritization. Among the operations that used disaggregated data to inform planning and programming, some specifically mentioned doing so in view of developing targeted activities for women and girls. For example, in **Argentina** and **Uruguay** data were used to implement the L'Oréal-funded livelihoods project whose beneficiaries were 100 per cent women. In **Sudan**, the proGres database has been instrumental in implementing targeted activities such as the distribution of dignity kits to women and girls of reproductive age, cash-based initiatives (CBI) to people with specific needs, and individual documentation to women and girls as primary recipients and to increase their access to services.

Meanwhile, **Mozambique** used a list generated through proGres to inform the distribution of core relief items to girls and women in the Maratane Refugee Settlement. An example of an operation that used data disaggregation to capture the needs of people identified at heightened risk was **Mauritania**. In Nouakchott, data disaggregated by age, gender and ethnic group captured during Malians' first contact with UNHCR's partner office allowed registration to be prioritized and individuals at heightened risks of refoulement (single men from certain ethnic groups) to be registered and documented in a timely manner. Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons were prioritized for refugee status determination and timely and effective protection and assistance.

Other examples include **Spain**, where dedicated attention and resources for information management helped better systematize the collection of disaggregated data and contributed to improved programming. For example, data on sea and land arrivals informed the development of UNHCR factsheets with information for newly arrived persons at the Andalusian coast implemented by the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR), and the design of two projects for interpretation services and legal aid, which will be implemented in 2022. Similarly, in **Ecuador** more-accurate population data enabled UNHCR staff to identify that 60 per cent of the population is under 30 years of age and adjust

³⁶ For example, in Uganda the KoBoToolbox is used to collect socioeconomic information for the individual profiling exercise.

³⁷ UNHCR, Operation Data Portal. "CCCM Yemen IDP Hosting Sites – April 2022" (2022). See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/192?sv=27&geo=0>.

the approach to youth, who are often left out of the traditional assistance scheme.

The response to COVID-19 also benefited from high levels of data disaggregation. In **Malaysia** and **Yemen**, AGD-disaggregated data were useful in identifying priority groups to be enrolled in the national COVID-19 immunization programme, particularly those living with disabilities, older people and those with serious medical conditions.

Among the examples of how **AGD-disaggregated data allowed access to programmes and activities**, according to the findings of the Global Survey on Registration, Biometrics, and Digital Identity, in **Iraq** AGD-friendly registration processes are fully mainstreamed across all registration locations and facilities to accommodate groups at heightened risk, child-friendly spaces exist, access is facilitated for those using wheelchairs, and UNHCR staff are trained to consider AGD dimensions. In **Borno State, Nigeria**, women, girls, older persons, female heads of households, caregivers, and persons with disabilities

were screened to assess their vulnerabilities and needs in order to decide on the provision of protection and life-saving assistance. Targeting the most vulnerable IDPs using the vulnerability screening tool challenged the pre-existing socially constructed inequalities based on the roles of women, girls, men and boys. In addition, all the eligible beneficiaries were targeted equally concerning cultural sensitivities.³⁸

Among the countries that reported **collecting and using disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation purposes** are **Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Ecuador, Hungary Multi-Country Office (MCO), India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Spain** and the **MCO for the United States and the Caribbean**. In **Croatia**, data disaggregation was used for monitoring: the 24/7 Statistical Snapshot used data from the project on the provision of initial legal asylum information disaggregated by various AGD categories (such as children, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), pregnant women, older persons), which enabled trends to be monitored among new arrivals.



UNHCR in partnership with ProFuturo Foundation provides over 185 computers, 1,680 tablets, and other equipment to the Rwanda Basic Education Board to enhance access to equitable quality education in 15 schools hosting refugees and host community students in Rwanda.
© UNHCR/Eric Didier Karinganire

³⁸ UNHCR, “AGD Report 2021 case study examples: Shelter and settlement” (2022).



Working with Persons with Disabilities

Overview

2021 marked an important turning point in UNHCR's work on persons with disabilities. Training and guidance were developed to support staff and partners in collecting and using data on disability: in 2021 alone, the capacities of around **1,400 UNHCR and partner staff** were built on making best use of the Washington Group's questions for programming.

Enhanced reporting by operations allowed UNHCR to better capture the support provided to persons with disabilities. Cumulatively, UNHCR operations supported **479,815** persons with disabilities worldwide, including at least 7,615 children.

UNHCR acknowledges the fundamental role that organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) play in identifying solutions and has continuously involved them in shaping the way forward through consultations and collaboration at both the global and field levels.

In partnership with the International Disability Alliance (IDA),³⁹ UNHCR developed a facilitator's guide to working with persons with disabilities in forced displacement. In collaboration with IDA, seven regional consultations, one global workshop on youth with disabilities and one consultation with the World Federation of the Deaf identified concerns and priorities around including forcibly displaced and stateless persons with disabilities and some ideas on how to address them in the context of the UNHCR-IDA partnerships.⁴⁰

Finally, for the first time in 2021, a team of six refugees with disabilities (one woman and five men) competed in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. This broke new ground in international sport competitions by promoting inclusion across various identities and setting the stage for enhanced social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Field-Level Practices

In 2020, UNHCR developed a methodology to analyse the extent of disability inclusion in its country programme documents.⁴¹ Findings reveal that 34 of the 35 operation plans (97 per cent) that were analysed for disability inclusion included analysis and programming on disability inclusion.

Meaningful participation

In 2021, considerable efforts by UNHCR operations went into strengthening work with persons with disabilities, including **partnerships with OPDs**.

In **Mexico**, partnerships with the Mexican Coalition of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COAMEX) and the NGO Libre Acceso resulted in improved accessibility of shelters and strengthened disability inclusion through workshops and new assistance protocols.

At least **30 UNHCR operations** reported undertaking consultations with persons with disabilities, ensuring the participation of refugees with disabilities in community groups and as volunteers. This includes **Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Turkey and Venezuela**, where women with disabilities took part in the Empowering Refugee Women project. In addition, in **Nigeria** 1,807 persons with disabilities were integrated in the CCCM response. Among them, 452 benefited from dignity kits, 20 were engaged as CCCM Community Volunteers, and 985 were referred to other agencies for services. In **Peru**, 20 community outreach volunteers were trained on how to obtain governmental disability certificates, and two videos were developed by UNHCR and the Ministry of Education on how to enrol children with disabilities in the public system.



A Colombian refugee with a disability talks with another woman with a disability at the municipal market in Ecuador. As a community leader, he knows first-hand the needs of people with disabilities, especially those who have been forced to flee violence and persecution. He now works with an association of people with disabilities and a network of volunteers to create more opportunities in their community. C UNHCR/Jaime Giménez

³⁹ IDA is a network of 14 global and regional organizations of persons with disabilities, with about 1,400 members. For more information, please see www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/.

⁴⁰ IDA and UNHCR, "IDA-UNHCR strategic collaboration in 2021: Achievements, challenges and way-forward" (n.d.). Available from www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/summary_of_activities_and_achievements_ida-unhcr_collaboration_2021_07feb20223.pdf. Further information on advocacy and collaboration at the global level can be found in the Championing AGD section above.

⁴¹ The analysis included the four elements listed in the UNDIS Technical Notes (pages 90–91), and the criteria for the selection of a representative sample of programme documents, which are detailed below. This same methodology was applied to analyse 2021 year-end reports against these criteria.

Capacity-building

Building the capacity of staff, partners and persons of concern to UNHCR on disability inclusion was another key effort in 2021. Trainings were conducted in **Malawi** and **Jordan**, where 18 disability and age inclusion focal points were appointed. Trainings were also organized in **Algeria, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Myanmar, Romania, Rwanda, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda**.

In **Honduras**, UNHCR supported the National Deaf Association and the Honduras Union of the Blind to develop training on forced displacement. Working jointly with Save the Children and the National Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Honduras, UNHCR also launched a dictionary of Honduran Sign Language with new signs for protection concepts, pre-recorded training material in inclusive channels, and awareness-raising materials.

Another initiative to enhance UNHCR's understanding of and capacity on disability inclusion was an assessment of the context, barriers and protection risks faced by persons with disabilities conducted by the **Latin America** Regional Bureau in coordination with the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS) in the framework of ongoing collaboration.

One notable example of an innovative approach to disability inclusion was the virtual **Disability Inclusion and Digital Innovation Bootcamp** organized in November 2021 by the UNHCR Innovation Service's Digital Inclusion programme (which is targeted at refugees)⁴² and Amref Health Africa, with the support of the Division of International Protection. The bootcamp provided participants with the skills to support and develop innovative projects for the digital inclusion of refugees with disabilities and their host communities. It was specifically targeted at community-based organizations, OPDs and social enterprises working with persons with disabilities and refugees, and welcomed participants from **Kenya, Malawi, Somalia** and **Uganda**.

Operational assistance

UNHCR's assistance to persons with disabilities encompasses a range of interventions. For example, rehabilitation support, home-based care and assistive appliances⁴³ were provided in **Azerbaijan, Burundi, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda** and, to a lesser extent, in **Ethiopia** due to limited resources. Psychological support and psychosocial services were provided in **Afghanistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Burundi, Cyprus, Kenya, Jordan, Iraq** and **Rwanda**.

Cash support was provided in **Burundi** together with medical care and assistance in terms of school kits and fees for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities were targeted in **Ethiopia** and **Kenya**, with inclusive play, psychoeducation for their caregivers, and education services.

Livelihood opportunities were provided in the **Republic of the Congo, Cyprus, Greece** and in **Peru** where in partnership with community leaders, opportunities such as workshops were offered to 15 entrepreneurs living with disabilities, ten women and five men, on digital marketing, brand positioning, sales strategies, accounting, and excel management.

Finally, in **Egypt** a digital educational platform for children with disabilities was established. The platform included educational videos on the Sudanese curriculum, psychosocial support sessions for parents of children with disabilities, and a training of trainers for teachers. In **Algeria**, UNHCR organized a workshop for adolescents with disabilities to promote meaningful participation and learning opportunities, while in **South Sudan** the recruitment of mentor teachers for students living with disabilities and distribution of assistive devices has boosted the enrolment and attendance of children with disabilities.



UNHCR works with advocates among forcibly displaced people, like Afghan refugee Jamil who supports other persons with disabilities in his community.
© UNHCR/Saiyna Bashir

⁴² Please see www.unhcr.org/innovation/digital-inclusion/.

⁴³ These include a wide range of appliances depending on the disability such as orthopaedic appliances, wheelchairs and crutches.



Helplines have been a critical tool in UNHCR's accountability to affected people. In Jordan, this helpline is dedicated to healthcare for refugees in Amman, Jordan. © UNHCR/Mohammad Hawari

► UNHCR Commitment to Accountability to Affected People

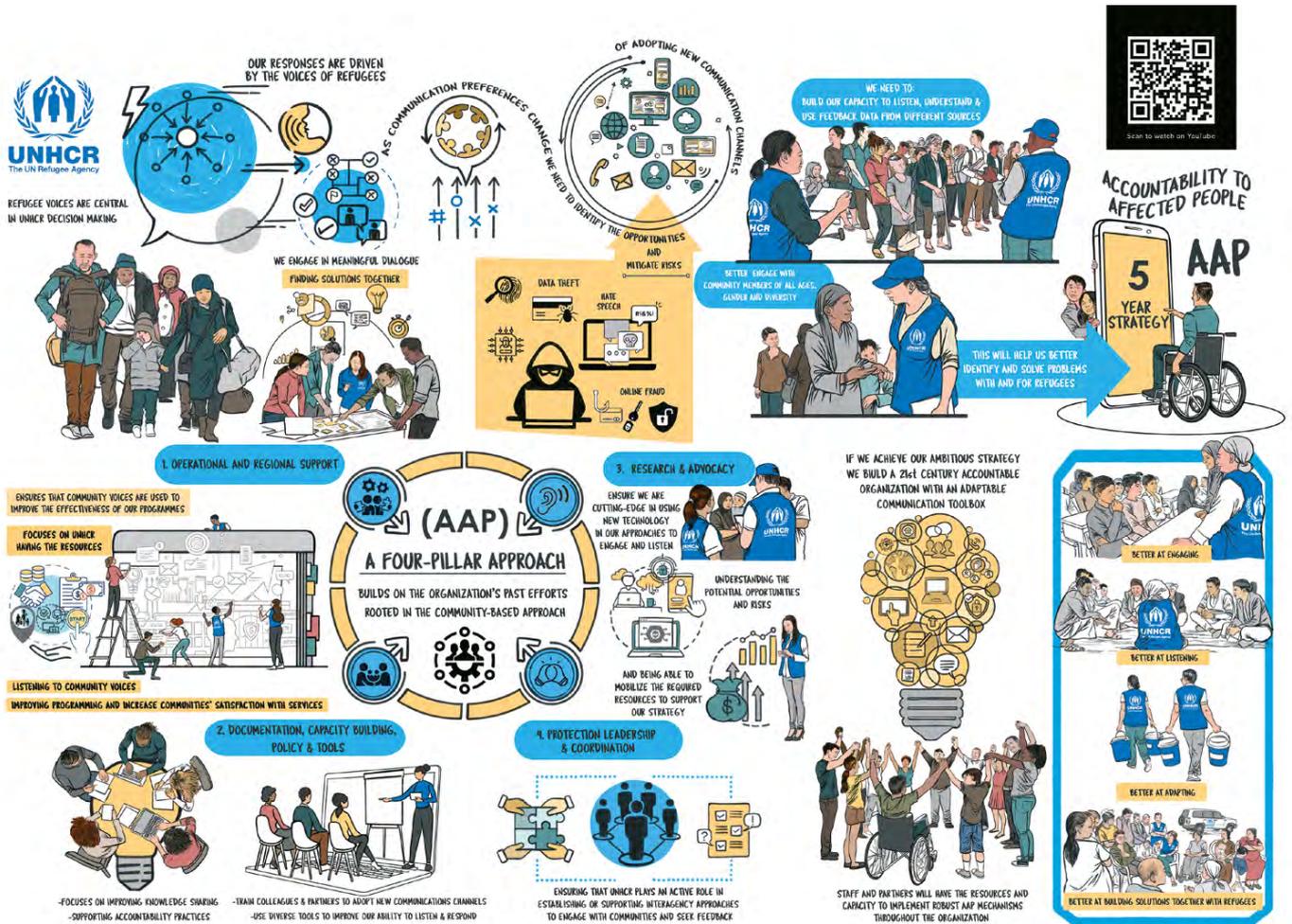
UNHCR's commitment to Accountability to Affected People is outlined by four key areas of the AGD policy: Participation & Inclusion, Communication & Transparency, Feedback & Response, and Organizational Learning. Progress against these commitments are outlined in the following sections.

UNHCR's accountability to affected people (AAP) is a commitment to i) the intentional and systematic inclusion of the expressed needs, concerns, capacities and views of persons of concern to UNHCR in their

diversity; and ii) being answerable for organizational decisions and staff actions in all protection, assistance and solutions, interventions and programmes.⁴⁴ Among the key highlights in these areas of engagement, **the development of a five-year plan to strengthen AAP merits specific mention.** The plan resulted from a broad-range consultative process that involved operations, the seven regional bureaux and various units and divisions in headquarters and led to the identification of existing challenges, resources, and capacity gaps, as well as ways to address them.

⁴⁴ UNHCR, "Operational guidance on accountability to affected people (AAP)" (2020). Available from www.unhcr.org/handbooks/aap/.

Figure 2. Accountability to affected people: a four-pillar approach



The plan is articulated around four pillars that define the major areas of work on AAP, from operational support to capacity-building; research and advocacy to leadership and coordination (see Figure 2).⁴⁵

UNHCR also recognized the need to reinforce engagement in collective AAP approaches with other agencies and partners and to take a lead coordination role on AAP in refugee emergencies.

The AAP plan is in line with the new UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022–2026, and specifically Focus Area 2 which reads, “Strengthen accountability to the people we serve, especially women and children.”

Establishing and maintaining accessible and effective communication mechanisms with persons of concern to UNHCR and continuously adapting to communities’ preferred and trusted communication channels and methods remained a priority for UNHCR in 2021.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this has required investment in creative alternative solutions and innovative new approaches. Overall, efforts have focused on sustaining the organization’s capacity to listen, engage, adapt and build solutions together with refugees.

One example is the UNHCR project **Telling the Real Story** (TRS).⁴⁶ This project puts accountability to affected people at the heart of its approach by communicating with communities about the dangers of irregular onward movement, as part of UNHCR’s protection mandate. The main objective is to provide communication to communities that can save lives and to engage communities in understanding the dangers and the protection services available and options for regular movement. Given the project’s multi-country approach and the cross-cutting nature of its activities, encompassing several areas of engagement of UNHCR’s AGD Policy, This project will be variously referred accordingly.

⁴⁵ A summary of what each pillar entails in practice in UNHCR’s work is provided in the following illustrative video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSpSkSijJ6w.

⁴⁶ For further information, please see www.tellingtherealstory.org/en/.

Participation and Inclusion

Women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully and are consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions.

Core
Action 2

At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes.

Overview

Meaningful participation is rooted in UNHCR's community-based protection approach and the AGD Policy, and calls for UNHCR to put all persons of concern to UNHCR at the centre of its operations and activities, engage them meaningfully and incorporate their capacities and priorities into programmes and solutions.

To coordinate and align internal efforts towards engagement and partnership with organizations led by persons of concern to UNHCR, in 2021 UNHCR established a **cross-divisional Task Team and an Interim Advisory Group** comprising 26 members from organizations of persons with and for whom UNHCR works. Taken together, these two mechanisms advanced UNHCR's work on meaningful participation through several activities, including an innovative **grant agreement tool**⁴⁷ to support these organizations in realizing their own projects and accessing small funding directly. In 2021, the grant agreement was piloted in eight country operations (**Argentina, Greece, Malawi, Mali, Uganda, Chile, Uruguay** and **Switzerland**).

Globally, UNHCR engaged with and supported **3,672 community structures** to improve outreach and address key concerns in the community through community-led interventions. It carried out **898 participatory assessments** across all regions, including through online means that address COVID-19-related restrictions.

UNHCR practices on Participation and Inclusion

Sixty-two operations reported using some type of participatory methodology in 2021. Despite COVID-19-related restrictions, the majority reported being able to carry out participatory assessments in 2021. For example, **Nepal** reported 97 focus group discussions with different population groups as part of their participatory assessment activities, while **Kenya** reported 75 and **Somalia** 29. Other types of participatory activities mentioned include profiling interviews, home visits, other forms of consultations, group counselling sessions, awareness-raising campaigns, recreational activities, and workshops with communities, both online and in-person.

Some operations reported not being able to apply participatory methodologies due to COVID-19-related restrictions or access-constrained environments, while others resorted to **digital tools** such as phone surveys or online video conferencing software. For example, **Azerbaijan** and **South Africa** used the Microsoft Teams online application and **Indonesia** used Zoom to consult with persons and communities during the pandemic.

In **Costa Rica**, UNHCR implemented the High-Frequency Survey (HFS), a system to receive information from hundreds of persons on a regular basis. In 2021, 647 HFS surveys were conducted in the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM) and 230 surveys in Upala.

⁴⁷ The idea is to provide grant funding to organizations led by refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people, IDPs, women, youth and other community-based organizations as a way to treat them as equal partners. More information on the grant agreements can be found at www.unhcr.org/61b28c784.

Throughout 2021, specific efforts were made to maintain an adequate representation of different age, gender and nationality groups, as relevant in the context where the participatory initiatives were undertaken. Many operations also reported engaging with persons with specific needs and diverse characteristics such as persons with disabilities, older persons and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Examples include **Bolivia, Honduras, Hungary** (which specifically mentioned engaging persons with low literacy levels), **Peru, South Africa** and **Spain**.

Many of those that reported **conducting participatory assessments** also highlighted the importance of engaging with children. The **Argentina MCO** reported targeting adolescents in the assessments and adjusting its programmes in **Uruguay** and **Bolivia** to accommodate them. A participatory assessment with parents of children from the host community playing in a Los Astros baseball club was reported in **Peru**, with the aim of understanding the degree of sociocultural integration of refugee children and perceptions among the host population.

Community outreach volunteer networks comprising volunteers with diverse nationalities, genders and profiles from the communities continued to be another effective way to engage with the people UNHCR works with and for in different countries in **MENA**, including **Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan**, and **Algeria**, where the volunteers serve as an interface between communities and UNHCR. In **Lebanon**, 534 outreach volunteers (58% women) reached 878,020 persons (54% women and girls) through 31,935 information sessions and 10,997 household visits on topics such as COVID-19, residency, civil documentation, GBV and fraud/exploitation. In **Syria**, 2,807 IDP, returnee, refugee and host-community outreach volunteers reached around 900,000 people through awareness-raising and information dissemination on COVID-19 and protection-related topics.

In addition, community outreach volunteers continued to play a central role in many operations. In **Cyprus** for example, the expanded Refugee Outreach Volunteer Programme coupled with a Protection Associate, cultural mediators and roving partners ensured a continuous communication loop with refugees.

Significant work was also conducted with **community structures**. In **Venezuela**, UNHCR trained 81 community networks on protection-related matters, such as GBV, child protection and referral pathways. The 1,473 members (1,088 women and 385 men) – including 16 LGBTIQ+ persons, 180 indigenous people, 73 older persons, and 34 persons living with a disability – organized information sessions and implemented community projects in their own communities, reaching a total of 34,576 persons of concern to UNHCR. Meanwhile, in **Chad**, 511 self-management structures made up of 2,283 people in 218 sites were supported through capacity-building, which enabled them to

raise the awareness of over 320,000 people on social cohesion, community mobilization, COVID-19, GBV and fire prevention. In **El Salvador**, UNHCR engaged with 1,005 leaders and members of community groups through leadership school programmes where they received training in conflict resolution, GBV prevention, psychological first aid and identification of people at heightened risk. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, UNHCR trained 52 community structures on IDP protection issues, reviewed their community protection plans and provided them with technical and financial support for their operations.

Other interesting examples include **Bangladesh**, where UNHCR – through refugee volunteers – engaged communities to identify their most urgent needs, prioritize them and support the design, implementation and monitoring of small projects (including through a participatory budgeting process) to be handed over to the community. In **Yemen**, UNHCR – through its partners – supported 157 Community-Based Protection Networks (CBPNs), composed of IDPs and members of host communities, including marginalized group such as the *Muhamasheen* and with 36 per cent female representation. CBPNs also conducted awareness-raising activities for more than 17,000 individuals, informing communities about services, the importance of civil documentation, and avenues for complaints and feedback, and addressing various protection topics and COVID-19-related precautionary measures.

Working with RLOs remains a key priority for UNHCR. In 2021, **strengthened partnerships with RLOs** has enabled UNHCR to continue operating in the midst of very challenging environments and circumstances and to ensure interventions are appropriate, relevant and adapted to the evolving needs of people. In the **Regional Bureau for Southern Africa**, 100 RLOs were promoted in Dzaleka camp (Malawi) and two organizations received grants through UNHCR partnerships with RLOs. The **Regional Bureau for Europe** and the **Regional Bureau for Asia Pacific** reported involving RLOs in the Regional NGO Consultations, with the objective being to further build their capacity and foster partnerships.

In **Uganda**, five RLOs were supported with grants to enhance refugee participation and implement initiatives to address priority issues identified by the community. RLOs were also included in collaboration activities in **Peru** (28) and the **Philippines**.

As a fundamental link between UNHCR and persons of concern to UNHCR, RLOs are a useful target for capacity-building and development. In Mogadishu and Galkayo in **Somalia**, in a bid to strengthen their technical capacity, the operation offered RLOs training on UNHCR's programme cycle and protection mandate. In the **South Africa MCO**, 27 information sheets were sent by mail to refugee leaders and RLOs on topics including



UNHCR and La Caixa Foundation partner to reduce child mortality and improving the state of nutrition of children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in refugee camps in Melkadida Refugee Camp, Ethiopia. © UNHCR/Petterik Wiggers

COVID-19 vaccines, education, rights and responsibilities of persons with whom and for whom UNHCR works, job opportunities and voluntary repatriation. These mailers reached close to 10,000 refugees, and likely thousands more through online forwarding as well as oral sharing among communities, including in-person through community leaders and mosques.

RLOs also act as catalysts in advancing gender equality. In **Malaysia**, where 229 women are part of community committees, multi-ethnic and multinational women-led refugee organizations were instrumental in identifying women's protection concerns and initiating responses to provide safe placement for women at risk. Additional capacity-building for these organizations was provided in a project that connected them with a local organization operating safe shelters for women and children. Similar initiatives with women RLOs were carried out in Chile (**Argentina MCO**), where UNHCR supported two organizations carrying out projects focused on women with scarce resources and adolescents on cultural integration and in **Kenya**, where UNHCR funded a refugee women-led organization to carry out capacity-building sessions for women in Nairobi.

Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between forcibly displaced people and host-community members is a core area of UNHCR interventions. Participatory methods are known for fostering cooperation, trust and inclusion and therefore to positively contribute to societal peace and stability. Some examples from UNHCR operations include programmes to support the economic recovery and promote the reintegration of returnees in **Mali**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **South Sudan**; programmes to mitigate,

prevent and respond to discrimination and xenophobia against refugees and asylum-seekers in **Brazil, South Africa and the Caribbean (Aruba and Curaçao)**; as well as initiatives for women's participation in peaceful coexistence programmes in **Bangladesh** and **Western Cape, South Africa**.

In addition, creative and innovative approaches to peaceful coexistence through art were reported in **Colombia, Ecuador, Panama** and **Costa Rica**. Finally, to target youth as agents of peaceful coexistence, UNHCR implemented sport programmes between refugees and host communities in **Greece, India** and **Mauritania**, while in Lusenda camp in South Kivu, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, Burundian refugees and host-community members continued the youth sports committees, games and tournaments set up by the International Olympic Committee programme to promote peaceful coexistence.

In **Switzerland and Liechtenstein**, UNHCR together with its refugee-led NGO partner the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) established the first refugee parliament in Switzerland. The recommendations that the parliament adopted provide a good insight into refugees' priorities and further endorsed UNHCR's strategy.

The above-mentioned TRS project enabled target audiences to make informed decisions about their future through face-to-face activities in both urban and camp settings through traditional and digital channels in **Somalia, Ethiopia** and **Sudan**.⁴⁸ By bringing RLOs into this broader discussion, TRS has empowered communities to lead their narrative around displacement and articulate relevant solutions.

⁴⁸ TRS has a reach of 6.8 million on dedicated social media channels.



Working with Youth

Overview

Youth make up 15 per cent of the world population,⁴⁹ and together with children and adolescents more than 50 per cent of the population in need.⁵⁰

2021 was a year of consolidation and further development of UNHCR's work on youth. UNHCR has made significant progress in promoting youth engagement and empowerment within the framework of the Executive Committee Conclusion on Youth (No. 113) and the UN Youth Strategy 2030. UNHCR's commitment to programming with and for youth has been articulated in the 2016 seven "Core Actions for Refugee Youth", which ensure that programming for youth adopts an inclusive and holistic approach.

Moreover, UNHCR transformed the **Youth Initiative Fund (YIF)**⁵¹ and the **Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC)**⁵² by adopting a new approach focused on strengthening the capacities of UNHCR and its partners to engage youth as active agents of change and strengthening youth programming within the existing operational response. This new focus on strengthening capacity and programming on youth led to efforts and focus shifting from the global to local level, and to expanded and diversified partnerships.

In 2021, the GYAC completed its transformation into a **field-based capacity-development initiative** aimed at supporting youth to lead actions to improve the protection and well-being of their communities.

To ensure that youth are properly involved in the GRF, and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) processes, in spring 2021 a group of youth-led organizations, together with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), UNHCR and the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action,⁵³ decided to create the initiatives "Youth Dialogues" and "Stocktaking Event on GRF Youth Pledges".⁵⁴ The stocktaking event focused on the inclusion of young people, on investment in building the capacity of both persons of concern to UNHCR and of humanitarian actors on youth-related issues, and on supporting youth at the grass-roots level.

Following the creation of these initiatives, **10 regional youth dialogues** took place in November 2021 with the participation of youth from about **40 different countries** across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Latin America. At the centre of the discussion were the challenges facing youth and proposed solutions and recommendations for their meaningful participation to achieve the goals of the GCR, such as youth mentorship programmes to support peer-to-peer activities for and with refugee and host-community youth.⁵⁵

In 2021, the focus remained on capacity-building of members of youth-led organizations through workshops and webinars, the promotion of networks and the establishment of new partnerships among youth-led organizations. Overall, this resulted in the GYAC members engaging in over **60 initiatives** at the local, regional and global levels.



Refugee youth playing in the Sunday Football League in India.
© Zonunmawia

Field-Level Practices

Field- and global-level practices reported here fall under the framework of the **Raising UNHCR Capacities for Youth Programme**, an initiative launched in 2020 to support field-level multisectoral youth programming and to build capacity for meaningful and inclusive youth engagement. Overall, in 2021 UNHCR supported 80 youth-led projects.

The first cohort of seven operations (**Cameroon, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, Ecuador, Colombia and Honduras**) and their respective regional bureaux successfully completed the programme in 2021. Two main workstreams were identified in the implementation:

⁴⁹ United Nations, "2019 revision of world population prospects" (2019). Available from <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

⁵⁰ UNFPA, "Compact for young people in humanitarian action: Igniting hope" (2018). Available from www.unfpa.org/publications/compact-young-people-humanitarian-action.

⁵¹ For further information on the Youth Initiative Fund, please see UNHCR, "On their own terms". UNHCR's Youth Initiative Fund: Supporting youth-led protection. Summary report" (2018). Available from www.refworld.org/docid/5b7297e74.html.

⁵² For more information, please see Women's Refugee Commission, GYAC and UNHCR, "GYAC 2020: Strengthening refugee and internally displaced youth leadership & responding to the COVID-19 pandemic" (n.d.). Available from www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GYAC-2020-Annual-Report.pdf.

⁵³ To learn more about the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, please see www.youthcompact.org/about.

⁵⁴ Danish Refugee Council. "Launch events: Youth dialogues and pledges" (n.d.). See www.drc.ngo/our-work/what-we-do/youth-and-participation/youth-participation/youth-dialogues-and-pledges/.

⁵⁵ Danish Refugee Council, "We believe in youth! Do you?" (2021). Available from www.drc.ngo/media/uxlfjp4i/webelieveinyouth_call-to-action_final_web_14122021.pdf.

1. Strategy development and guidance

A priority in 2021 was to support regional bureaux to establish youth strategies. The **Americas Bureau and the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Bureau** have made progress in drafting regional youth strategies.

Remote technical support to field-based youth advisers remained the norm in 2021, who were mostly provided through webinars and online training. Examples include a webinar on youth engagement organized in the **Americas** with participants from **Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador** and **Peru** to identify opportunities, obstacles, challenges and ways to engage youth at the community level. A training on UNHCR policies and frameworks on youth was offered to support the implementation of youth-led initiatives in the **East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Bureau**, with a webinar held with 20 staff from **Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda** to identify lessons learned and best practices.

2. Support for networking of youth-led organizations

Another priority in 2021 has been strengthening and expanding the links among youth networks at both the local and national levels. While COVID-19 and related mobility restrictions made networking and direct engagement particularly challenging, they also provided opportunities to harness technology and promote youth digitalization. More investment on this is needed going forward.

The YIF provided financial support to specific country-level initiatives led by youth. In **Colombia, Honduras** and **Ecuador**, youth initiatives aimed to promote community dialogue,



A young female refugee student in France, participating in a speaking competition for World Refugee Day 2021, hosted by UNHCR. © UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

social cohesion and actions to tackle xenophobia and discrimination. In **Honduras**, support went to one of the few LGBTIQ+ youth-led organizations. Other initiatives focused on GBV and empowerment. In **Malawi**, a radio station supported women- and girl-led organizations to disseminate GBV-related messages. In **Ecuador, Rwanda** and **Zambia**, activities were mainly focused on youth volunteers and their capacity to plan, implement and report on initiatives.

Related initiatives were supported across all seven operations targeted under the Raising UNHCR Capacities for Youth Programme. Among them, **Ecuador** supported youth on how to utilize new technologies to create awareness about protection and how to best share information across youth networks, paying attention to particularly sensitive topics such as those related to sexual orientation and identity.



A refugee from South Sudan says goodbye to his family and friends in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya as he leaves to pursue higher education. © UNHCR/Loduye Ghaisen

Communication and Transparency

Women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds in all operations have access to timely, accurate, and relevant information on (i) their rights and entitlements, and (ii) UNHCR and its partners' programmes

Core Action 3

At a minimum, all country-level protection and solution strategies will detail the operation's approach to communicating with women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds, through means that are appropriate and accessible to all groups in a community.

Overview

Due to the effects of COVID-19 and the continuous limits on in-person contact, UNHCR was required to improve the accessibility and usability of all its communication channels, including the help.unhcr.org pages, and continue to find innovative ways to reach out to persons of concern to UNHCR. In addition, helplines remained a critical tool to ensure two-way communication, maintain contact with persons of concern to UNHCR and share information about key protection concerns.

The use of social media expanded quickly and significantly, requiring guidelines for best use while respecting a "do-no-harm" approach. For this purpose, UNHCR, through an initiative led by its Innovation Service, developed the tool "[Using social media in community-based protection: A guide](#)" to support personnel and other stakeholders in using social media most effectively to enhance protection outcomes, while also avoiding exclusion, security and privacy risks that may endanger persons of concern to UNHCR, such as barriers to access and use related to age, gender and literacy levels, as well as addressing risks of misinformation and sensitive content. The guide was further developed into a [microsite](#) with additional tools and guidance.

In relation to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, **89 per cent of 140 countries** indicated that areas inhabited by refugees, IDPs and others of concern to UNHCR were reached by information campaigns about COVID-19 pandemic risks.

To counter hostile narratives and toxic sentiments against refugees online, and mitigate the effects this has on acceptance by host communities and countries at large, UNHCR's Innovation Service, under the Digital Inclusion programme, initiated a partnership with [BuildUp](#), a global non-profit organization with extensive expertise on digital peacebuilding, for the development of podcasts to tackle online hate speeches against refugees.⁵⁶

UNHCR practices on Communication and Transparency

In 2021, 14 new help pages were set up to share information with refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. Some were established in [Afghanistan](#), [Iran](#) and [Pakistan](#) in the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. They immediately provided Afghans with safe, trusted and relevant information on procedures, available assistance and services. Pages have also been developed with child-friendly content. The [Iran](#) help page, for instance, contains a list of frequently asked questions in a simple and straightforward language of relevance to forcibly displaced children and youth, supported by culturally appropriate and child-friendly visuals.⁵⁷

Leveraging the extensive use of WhatsApp among refugees and migrants in the [Americas](#),⁵⁸ a pilot initiative aimed at engaging with communities through a WhatsApp platform named [Turn.io](#) was launched in 2020 by the

⁵⁶ More information in UNHCR, "Digital protection and combating hate speech against refugees" (2021). Available from <https://medium.com/unhcr-innovation-service/digital-protection-and-combating-hate-speech-against-refugees-4145d82b5038>.

⁵⁷ See the help page for more details: <https://help.unhcr.org/iran/en/young-people/>.

⁵⁸ R4V, "Regional information and communication needs assessment" (2019). Available from www.r4v.info/en/document/r4v-information-and-communication-needs-assessment. More information on the Americas can be found in the following video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOx3b9M6QtI.



A UNHCR staff member assists displaced families waiting to receive cash assistance in Kabul, Afghanistan.
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

UNHCR operations in **Brazil, Ecuador, Indonesia, Mexico** and **Sudan**, with the first phase completed in 2021. The content was adapted to the needs and concerns of refugees and migrants in each given context, and ranged from first aid information on their arrival, to access to the asylum procedure and guidance on dedicated services, among others. Drawing on the positive feedback and lessons learned, a second phase was initiated to run until the end of 2022, with the additional participation of **Chile, Iran, Lebanon, South Africa** and **Uganda**.

To date, evidence suggests that over 38,000 unique refugees and migrants in **Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico**,⁵⁹ **Sudan** and **Indonesia** have accessed vital information about their rights, entitlements, and services through UNHCR WhatsApp lines. Life-saving information on COVID-19 risks, vaccination access, and protection information was also shared through the WhatsApp pilot initiative mentioned earlier, or through websites created by UNHCR and other protection services.

In line with the aim to support accountability practices to scale, a regional WhatsApp information line serving the north of Central America countries is also under discussion,⁶⁰ while new WhatsApp lines are imminently being launched in **Iran, Uganda** and **Hungary**.

Efforts to counter rumours and to manage misinformation were also scaled up in 2021, with operations adopting community-led efforts to ensure timely and accurate information was available – both online and offline.

Examples of this include **Bulgaria**, where the Refugee Advisory Board monitored local rumours and provided accurate information through a dedicated website; and **Costa Rica**, where UNHCR supported 51 hours of community radio broadcasts to share accurate information on COVID-19 prevention measures and vaccination, in support of local emergency committees. Workshops were also held in rural communities to counter vaccine misinformation.

Using the results of the assessment on “Digital access, communication needs and community practices”⁶¹ undertaken in 2020, and in **Cote d’Ivoire, Mali** and **Niger** in 2021, UNHCR and partners were able to launch new digital campaigns using preferred channels of communication, such as short message service (SMS), interactive voice response (IVR) and WhatsApp groups. This in turn ensured enhanced, two-way information-sharing with communities on GBV, child protection, education, statelessness and voluntary repatriation.

UNHCR also played an active role in risk communication and community-engagement structures, in close collaboration with sister UN agencies and NGO partners on the ground. An example was the COVID-19 **West and Central Africa** toolkit owned by the World Health Organization (WHO), which collated tools in various languages and formats – including videos, audio files and posters. Over 30,000 unique visitors have used the website, downloading content for engagement activities across the region.

⁵⁹ In 2021, Mexico’s helpdesk responded to 277,478 inquiries from asylum-seekers and refugees regarding vital information about their rights and services. The helpdesk is integrated with a toll-free number, WhatsApp, email, webchat and Facebook messenger.

⁶⁰ The intent is to facilitate informed decision-making of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs transiting through Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

⁶¹ Regional assessment part of UNHCR’s Connectivity 4 Communication (C4C) with communities, community engagement and consultative processes.



Working with Children

Overview

In situations of crisis and displacement, children, adolescents and youth are at risk of various forms of abuse, separation from their carers, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking and recruitment by armed groups or the military.

The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with ongoing climate and conflict-related challenges, continued to affect the socioeconomic situations of parents and caregivers, and hampered the provision of child-protection services. In 2021, **56 per cent of operations** specifically reported on the multiple negative impacts of the pandemic on child protection. Remote case management and work through community outreach workers and volunteers continued for many operations in 2021.

In the midst of all these challenges, 2021 was a year of learning and stocktaking for UNHCR on child protection. A global child-protection [evaluation](#) was published, complemented by a [thematic audit](#) undertaken to evaluate and review UNHCR global child protection programming.⁶² The findings concluded that effective, adequate and appropriate child-protection responses exist, but are inconsistent across operations, and unpredictable over time. In addition, child protection is not systematically understood beyond child-protection specialists, and the impact of financial and human resource limitations on child protection is acute. These findings will inform the development of a child-protection policy in 2022.

An analysis of the GRF's 1395 pledges also highlighted some important gaps. While **151 pledges were child focused** – mostly concerning education and protection – and **85 were child sensitive** – namely, they explicitly integrated children – the great majority of pledges, **1159 in total, were “child silent”**.

In 2021, UNHCR published a new set of technical guidance on child protection, including the “[Best interests procedure \(BIP\) guidelines: Assessing and determining the best interests of the child](#)”, and its companion the “[BIP toolbox](#)”, as well as technical guidance on “[Child-friendly procedures](#)”, and the “[Guidelines on supervised independent living for unaccompanied children](#)”.

Field-Level Practices

In 2021, a total of **66 operations** reported on child-protection or birth-registration activities.⁶³



No matter where, children will find a way to play, like these boys in the IDP family center in Burkina Faso.
© UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

Meaningful participation

In total, **58 per cent of UNHCR operations** reporting on child-protection or birth-registration in 2021 implemented **community-engagement activities aimed at protecting children**, which included communicating with communities and behaviour-change initiatives, community-based protection and child-friendly spaces. Interesting examples of meaningful participation were reported in [Serbia](#), where UNHCR and partners engaged with children and youth through peer education, workshops on children's rights and obligations, non-violent communication and peaceful conflict resolution. Through the *Ambassadors of children and youth* initiative, unaccompanied and separated children from asylum centres and childcare institutions nominated representatives to voice their challenges, difficulties, and solutions. Peer educators were given the capacity to understand and disseminate knowledge on gender and GBV, substance abuse, LGBTIQ+ persons, discrimination, human trafficking and smuggling, asylum procedure and status determination, irregular migration, COVID-19 and sexually transmitted diseases.

Operational assistance

Overall, **86 per cent of operations** delivered or supported **child-protection-related services**, including the BIP, alternative care, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), birth registration, family tracing and reunification, GBV prevention and response, and targeted support for children with special needs.

⁶² OIOS, “Thematic audit of child protection at the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees” (2021), Report 2021/071.

⁶³ The percentages reported below are measured against this total.

In total, **64 per cent of operations** engaged in 77 activities⁶⁴ to build children's resilience and life skills, including through education, recreation, and peer-to-peer activities.

Birth registration remains a challenge in many contexts, mainly due to the lack of reliable registration systems. However, some positive achievements were found in **MENA**, where the percentage of Syrian refugee children born in the region each year without any form of identity documents decreased from 35 per cent in 2012 to 4 per cent in 2021. UNHCR and partners in Lebanon provided individualized legal counselling on birth registration to around 20,000 families and directly supported the birth registration of more than 5,000 children. Through the "UNHCR/UNICEF blueprint for joint action for refugee children"⁶⁵ efforts were made to strengthen national systems and their birth registration services through the identification and referral of cases and provision of legal aid, capacity-building for authorities and relevant actors.

MHPSS services were provided in **Kenya**, where referrals were made for children with cognitive needs for medical follow-ups and interventions; and self-awareness sessions were carried out with at least 336 children (127 boys and 209 girls) on topics such as self-image, managing emotions, decision-making, loss, grief, behaviour modification and interpersonal skills.

Overall, **44 per cent of operations** engaged in **activities to support families in caring for children**, including through legal counselling, economic strengthening and support for parenting skills. Among them, in **Kenya**, 1,767 children (980 male, 787 female) were identified to be at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation, and thus supported. In addition, 333 children (176 male, 157 female) and their parents and/or caregivers were supported through cash-based intervention, while others were offered emergency social support to access food and non-food items.



Afghan and Pakistani students in Grade 1 wait at the Chichana Primary School for Girls in Pakistan.
© UNHCR/Saiyna Bashir



UNHCR staff interacts with children at the Cristo Peregrino shelter in Ibarra, Ecuador. The shelter is run by UNHCR's partner Misión Scalabriniana and provides assistance to Venezuelans, Colombians and Ecuadorians.
© UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

Capacity-building

Limited capacity was by far the most frequently reported factor hindering child-protection work across UNHCR operations in 2021. The range of reported challenges included: 53 per cent citing lack of government capacity; 52 per cent national administrative barriers; 42 per cent legal and policy frameworks; 39 per cent UNHCR staff capacity or funding.

In response to this, **86 per cent of operations** engaged with local partners, enhanced the capacity of local staff, and developed child-protection standards and procedures, ensuring mainstreaming of child protection across other sectors. Moreover, **92 per cent of operations** worked to strengthen child-protection systems and child-friendly procedures by advocating with national actors, enhancing national child-protection systems and local capacity, and ensuring access to child-friendly procedures.

Activities to enhance the child-protection capacity of national staff were reported in **Peru, Nigeria, Kosovo, and South Sudan. In Mali, Niger, Peru and Venezuela**, progress was made to include refugees and asylum-seekers in national child-protection systems, while inclusion of IDPs made progress in **Nigeria and Yemen**.

Finally, in **Cyprus**, UNHCR advocated with the authorities and the European Union on the expansion of a safe zone for unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children in Pournara, resulting in a two-fold increase in the capacity of the planned safe zone. Following UNHCR's interventions, the number of guardians at reception centres increased and 24/7 caregivers were put in place, while the Deputy Minister of Welfare committed to increasing staffing capacity further.

⁶⁴ These activities include activities related to life skills, education and learning opportunities, recreational, sporting and other structured activities, as well as information on asylum, solutions and services.

⁶⁵ This is a commitment to accelerate joint efforts under a transformational agenda in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, focused on education; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and child protection. UNHCR, "UNHCR-UNICEF blueprint for joint action for refugee children" (n.d.). Available from www.unhcr.org/blueprint-for-joint-action.html

Feedback and Response

Formal and informal feedback from persons of concern to UNHCR is systematically received and responded to, with corrective action taken as appropriate.

Core Action 4

At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.

Overview

In 2021, important efforts were made to maintain or expand opportunities for feedback from the people we serve. The prominent reliance on remote methods and technology continued or increased. Moreover, new initiatives are underway to address the lack of systems and capacity to manage large, unstructured quantities of feedback data, which emerged as a gap during the wide-level consultation that led to the development of the AAP five-year plan.

UNHCR Practices on Feedback and Response

Throughout 2021, UNHCR invested in multiple communication channels to maintain proximity with the people UNHCR works for and with. This included

further development of call centres (or contact centres), both at agency and inter-agency levels. Feedback and response mechanisms were enhanced through the enforcement of guidelines and investment in human resources in **Uganda, Afghanistan** and **Yemen**, while large call centres continued to operate in, for example, **Jordan, Lebanon** and **Turkey**. More specifically, in **Uganda**, the Inter-Agency Feedback Referral and Resolution Mechanism (FRRM), of which UNHCR is part, now has a team of 34 agents speaking as many as 38 different languages, and a referral network of over 750 focal points across 62 different organizations. In 2021, the system received and provided 26,348 queries and feedback overall. The FRRM helpline has been an invaluable tool during COVID-19, as persons UNHCR works for and with sought to access information and support services from their homes.

In **Venezuela**, community-based feedback and complaint mechanisms were implemented in 71 communities. Communication channels include contact lines, information



Rohingya refugees work to repair shelters damaged during severe flooding and heavy rains in July 2021 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.
© UNHCR/Saikat Mojumder



Local people and UNHCR staff and partners taste the culinary delights at a fair in Bolivia where 40 refugees and migrants from Venezuela participated.
© UNHCR/Sara Aliaga

desks, and fixed and mobile suggestion boxes. A total of 1,708 inputs were received in 2021, of which 91 per cent (986) involved comments about UNHCR and partners' programmes, services, facilities, or staff, and 9 per cent (92) of which were complaints, which were duly addressed by UNHCR-led panels at field level.

Regional bureaux played a significant role in supporting the development of feedback and response mechanisms. The **Asia Pacific Bureau** provided technical support to operations in **Afghanistan**, including on how to address challenges to the inclusion of women and girls; and in **Australia, Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand**, with a focus on developing SOPs and tools for diversified communication channels. To support smaller and advocacy-oriented operations, the **Europe Regional Bureau** developed a sample SOP for feedback and response mechanisms, and compiled a repository of country examples then made available to all operations.

About **65 per cent of reporting operations** have multi-channel feedback and response systems, designed based on consultations with communities. For example, in **India** and **Yemen**, emails, messaging, phone calls, complaint boxes, as well as in-person engagement, were all mentioned. In addition, in **Jordan**, community leaders managed WhatsApp trees and reached over 62,000 refugees. Through these tools, leaders were able to

channel refugee feedback directly to UNHCR. To ensure that no one was left behind, community meetings and home visits were organized to guarantee participation and feedback from persons with diverse genders and ages, as well as persons with diverse characteristics who had limited access to digital channels. Among the reported feedback mechanisms, complaint and suggestion boxes were mentioned in 15 out of 51 operations (30 per cent). Remote instruments such as phone lines and email were also used, particularly to overcome some of the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nineteen operations reported using toll-free numbers, nine of which also had hotlines. Thirteen operations reported using email, and five operations used KoBoToolbox to conduct satisfaction surveys. For example, in **Uganda**, efforts are currently underway to systematize recording and tracking of feedback through the use of KoBoToolbox. Online messaging through WhatsApp, Viber, Skype, Facebook, and Zoom were reported in six operations, while in-person visits and consultations in at least eight operations.

Importantly, data on the extent to which feedback and response mechanisms are known are systematically included in cash-based assistance post-distribution monitoring. Available data indicate that, in 2021, 47 per cent of the respondents know how to provide feedback and complaints.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Available from <https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/apps/b18c18b4-0bef-45d1-8e28-52dd7ac1ea0d/reports/2173a71b-8241-4a21-be15-092b89ddaccd/ReportSection?ctid=e5c37981-6664-4134-8a0c-6543d2af80be>.



Working with Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Overview

Evidence of UNHCR's work with minorities and indigenous peoples remained concentrated in specific regions and operations in 2021. UNHCR continued to enhance its work with minorities and indigenous peoples in situations of forced displacement and statelessness, including by strengthening the capacity of UNHCR staff and partners to support in countries where their specific status is not recognized.

Among the operations that are leading the way for their work with minorities and indigenous peoples, evidence from 2021 indicates a strong focus on intersectionality, particularly in relation to gender, gender identity and sexual orientation.

A new feature of 2021 was the introduction of indicators to disaggregate data by ethnicity and indigenous origin, in line with AGD Policy.

Field-Level Practices

Meaningful participation

Operations that reported the meaningful participation of minorities and indigenous peoples in assessments include the **Nordic and Baltic countries, Colombia, Peru, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, and Honduras.**

Volunteers and community-based organizations (CBOs) continue to be pivotal in ensuring the participation of minorities and indigenous peoples and also ensuring that their voices are considered in decision-making processes. Among the operations where meaningful participation was promoted through volunteers are **Serbia, Brazil, and Venezuela.** More specifically, in **Serbia**, a pool of 65 young volunteers was used for the selection of ten **young Roma refugees and asylum-seekers** interested in developing their capacities to influence social and political processes related to social inclusion. The ten identified volunteers (eight male and two female) were then hired as United Nations Volunteers.

By the end of 2021, UNHCR and partners in **Brazil** had an established network of six outreach volunteers (OVs) (three Brazilians and three Venezuelans) in Roraima, 15 in Amazonas, eight indigenous Warao OVs in Pará (three women and five men), and two OVs in Rio Grande do Sul. The main objective of the OVs was to provide accurate information, mobilize communities to respond to their prioritized needs, map existing peaceful coexistence projects, ensure safe identification and referral of individuals from diverse AGD groups and evaluate the impact of the work of UNHCR and partners.



An indigenous leader reports on the humanitarian situation in Antioquia and Chocó, Colombia and the risks of forced displacement and confinement faced by local communities in the region. © UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez

Operations in **Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Ecuador** engaged with persons of concern to UNHCR through various channels, including organizations led by or representing minorities and indigenous peoples. In **Brazil**, through the project Corte Solidário in Manaus, UNHCR supported community work with adolescents, women, men, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons, including indigenous peoples, to strengthen integration and promote dialogue on gender, masculinity and GBV.

In **Colombia**, UNHCR has a long history of working with women-led organizations – which in 2021 represent 70 per cent of its partners – with youth organizations and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons. These also include Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations. In addition, the project Protective Environments for Children, implemented in Buenaventura and Litoral del San Juan, was coordinated and implemented with the indigenous and Afro-Colombian authorities of the collective territories.

In 2021, UNHCR strengthened a nascent alliance with the Miskito community from Nicaragua in **Costa Rica** to ensure access to rights and inclusion.

In **Ecuador**, in 2021, UNHCR and partner NGO Foro de Mujeres por la Vida assessed and produced a report on violence against women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons, farmers, indigenous and women of African descent, in the context of forced displacement. The report was developed following consultations with communities and aimed to assess the impact of violence on their lives and on the associated displacement risks.

Capacity-building

In **Serbia**, a total of **350** registrars,⁶⁷ from 65 municipalities participated in seminars organized by UNHCR in support of the **Roma population**.

In **Colombia**, 1,552 persons of concern to UNHCR and 54 CBOs, many from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, were provided with community empowerment training on self-governance, community participation and advocacy.

Advocacy work for the inclusion of persons of concern to UNHCR, including minorities and indigenous peoples, was reported in **Japan, Serbia, and the Thailand MCO**. These operations successfully advocated for the inclusion of stateless persons, who are also recognized as members of ethnic minorities, in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks developed for Thailand, Vietnam and Lao People's Democratic Republic during 2021.



A Malian refugee from the Taureg minority group, is from a family of blacksmiths, and he believes that women with craft skills should be supported and promoted.
© UNHCR/Malika Diagana

Operational assistance

In **Serbia**, UNHCR conducted over 50 field visits to Roma informal settlements to identify cases and provide free legal aid to persons at risk of statelessness. Also, a COVID-19 immunization campaign in Roma settlements was conducted in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). During the campaign, Roma at risk of statelessness were also identified and supported. UNHCR trained 30 COVID-19 mediators, who reached over 11,400 Roma in settlements at risk of virus spread and ensured a supply of 42,000 protective face masks. UNHCR and partners supported Roma communities in obtaining the identification required to access immunization.

In **Colombia**, UNHCR supported the Ethnic Groups' Delegate of the Ombudsperson's Office, which served 13,000 indigenous individuals, including Yukpa, Barí and Awá peoples. Moreover, the Colombian National Indigenous Organization (ONIC), assisted 10,884 indigenous persons, 75 per cent men and 25 per cent women.

In **Guyana (Panama MCO)**, UNHCR resumed community-based classes on English as a second language (ESL) through direct implementation, and enrolled 235 out-of-school indigenous Venezuelan children during the last quarter of 2021. Online ESL classes enabled 378 adults and children to improve their English-language skills.

⁶⁷ Among them police officers, social workers, health workers, municipal free legal aid providers and local trustees (Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration – SCRMI).

Interventions, planning, priority setting, course corrections, and evaluation are informed on an ongoing basis by the views of persons of concern.

Core Action 5

At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from persons of concern to UNHCR, and document this in country Operations plans and annual reporting.

Overview

Consultations for the development of the five-year AAP plan highlighted the need for strengthened knowledge-sharing to support learning and adaptation and the scale-up of innovative approaches. Reporting on this aspect across operations remained quite limited in 2021. While efforts towards the implementation of participatory methodologies for the design and monitoring of activities can serve as a proxy for the extent to which learning and adaptation occurs, findings from the interim report of the longitudinal evaluation of the AGD Policy suggest limited use of feedback from these exercises to inform the adaptation of programme activities. Moreover, siloed ways of working often prevent a more systematic inclusion of feedback and learning.⁶⁸

UNHCR practices on Organizational Learning and Adaptation

Eight of the 51 operations that specifically reported on feedback mechanisms also indicated taking action following feedback. However, the majority of the operations were not effective in illustrating how feedback was responded to or used to inform future planning.

To improve understanding on this aspect, in late 2020 and early 2021, UNHCR conducted internal research into how operations collect, analyse and use feedback data. Findings revealed that feedback is systematically responded to by UNHCR staff and partners. However, this feedback is often not recorded, and hence difficult to track and report. Furthermore, changes are often ad hoc and not assessed within the broader operation programming framework. Finally, learning and adaptation is more likely where staff remain in the same job or position longer, as they are better able to create a trusted relationship with the community. This research led to a pilot for the standardization of accountability procedures in operations in **Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Malaysia, Colombia** and **Iran**.⁶⁹

As for other country-specific examples, following the inputs provided by refugees during participatory assessments in Goma (**the Democratic Republic of the Congo**), the Government started issuing refugee identity cards, replacing the A4-size refugee certificates normally issued to “prima facie” urban refugees in Goma, in order to have the same quality of identification as those urban refugees with plastic refugee cards.

Through continuous engagement with communities over its seven years of implementation, TRS has built up a solid trust base, which has enabled adaptation of strategies and responses. For example, in response to feedback received from Somalian and Eritrean communities in the **East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes and Europe**, TRS expanded its outreach⁷⁰ to include information provision about complementary pathways, such as education, family reunification and labour mobility opportunities.

In **Somalia**, recommendations made by women and girls led to the installation of solar lighting, as well as the distribution of solar lamps to benefit 15,000 Yemeni women and girls living in informal settlements. An additional example resulting from women’s feedback was the construction of a grinding mill in the Tsore refugee camp in **Ethiopia**, where women running and managing the sustainability of the project were empowered, while the risks of GBV to women and girls, who used to walk long distances to access affordable grinding facilities, were mitigated. In the Mahmoudli, Areesheh and Al-Hol camps, **Northeast Syria**, UNHCR made site adjustments following a series of focus group discussions with the camp populations and other stakeholders to improve privacy and reduce GBV-associated risks. These included improved lighting around the camp, and additional latrines and shower units in each block.⁷¹

Finally, in **Yemen**, local knowledge was utilized to adapt emergency shelter design through the incorporation of locally grown materials (Khazaf & Halfa), which in turn led to a more sustainable, environmentally friendly and cooler shelter unit, while also offering a small income opportunity for host community members during its construction.

⁶⁸ UNHCR, “Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 report” (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html.

⁶⁹ UNHCR. Ensuring refugee voices are systematically included in the design, monitoring and evaluation of programming, internal research. *Learning and Adaptation*.

⁷⁰ Telling the Real Story works with over 120 refugee outreach volunteers in three countries: Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

⁷¹ UNHCR, “AGD 2021 Report”, Case Study Examples: Shelter and Settlement.



A woman and her daughter were displaced from their home in the northern province of Takhar, to Kabul, Afghanistan, and receive support from UNHCR.
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

► Advancing Gender Equality

Conflict, climate change and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a particularly negative impact on the rights and safety of refugee, internally displaced and stateless women and girls. The worsening socioeconomic conditions have forced displaced women further into poverty and the risk of exploitation. While the participation of women and girls, particularly in decision-making and leadership roles, remains a challenge, positive trends were recorded in the context of the GRF, where dedicated attention was granted to AGD and gender equity in pledges. The systematic collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex provides UNHCR with unique opportunities for monitoring and reporting on its gender-responsive interventions, and to inform solutions accordingly.⁷² The new COMPASS system gives specific attention to gender, with impact and outcome areas explicitly targeting gender equality. Accompanying the launch of the new system, specific guidance was provided in 2021 to operations to ensure gender sensitivity in programming.

A. Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures, and committees of persons of concern to UNHCR.

**Core
Action 6A**

At a minimum, UNHCR operations will ensure 50 per cent female participants in management and leadership structures under UNHCR's authority, and will advocate the same with partners, including governments.

⁷² See the section on AGD Inclusive Programming for more information on this.

Overview

UNHCR is committed to the principle of meaningful participation of all forcibly displaced and stateless persons, with priority given to women and girls to ensure equal and equitable engagement in protection, assistance and solutions that affect their lives. Participation of displaced and stateless women in community leadership and management structures is a core action of the AGD Policy and a key priority of the newly released AAP Action Plan. A package of tools were designed for all stakeholders in the GRF to ensure that the needs of people of different ages, genders, and diverse characteristics are met and that their pledges integrate AGD.⁷³

UNHCR practices on Women's and girls' Participation

In 2021, UNHCR operations continued to systematically engage women and girls in all decision-making processes and structures in forced-displacement contexts, including through networks of women- and girl-led organizations. To overcome the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR increased the use of remote and virtual methods. Among the efforts to ensure meaningful participation were capacity-



A Burundian athlete who played for Burundi's national basketball team practices near Mahama Refugee Camp in Rwanda
© UNHCR/Anthony Karumba

development interventions, targeting the individual, collective and organizational capacities of women and girls in decision-making, management and leadership.

Despite these efforts, the number of situations reporting that the participation of women in leadership and management structures was improved or maintained decreased from 48 in 2020, to **25 refugee operations and four internal displacement situations** in 2021. Moreover, significant barriers to meaningful participation persisted, including discrimination and exclusion from education and livelihood opportunities, particularly for marginalized persons such as indigenous women and girls, and women and girls with disabilities.

Some positive examples include **Malaysia**, where UNHCR partnered with refugee women and NGOs on the continuation of a social media project to facilitate virtual safe spaces. In **Syria**, partners worked with a network of 91 women committees across 12 governorates to share information on COVID-19 prevention measures. In **Sudan**, efforts to include women in camp leadership also proved fruitful, resulting in 25 per cent of women in leadership roles, compared to only 5 per cent in 2020. In **Yemen**, UNHCR actively participated in the inter-agency advocacy efforts to reverse the practice called *mahram*, which is applied in certain areas of the country and which required female staff, including humanitarian workers, to travel with a male direct family member, hindering access to and participation of IDP women and girls.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, about half of the 1,671 refugee leaders elected in the Nyarugusu camp were women. In **Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions**, the active participation of 71 women in community decision-making and peacebuilding efforts helped UNHCR, in collaboration with these women, to address specific protection needs and formulate solutions for women and girls.

Finally, examples of UNHCR work with women-led organizations include in **Croatia**, where UNHCR supported the Winter Bazaar, organized by the women-led Women to Women NGO from Zagreb. All proceeds from the bazaar went to the women who produced the items on sale, including refugees, to promote their financial empowerment. In **Malta**, UNHCR initiated a partnership with Tama, a women-led RLO focusing on raising awareness of sexual and reproductive health and female genital mutilation (FGM). Meanwhile, in **Kenya**, UNHCR funded a refugee-women-led organization to carry out capacity-building sessions for women in Nairobi on leadership roles, in order to increase the number of women engaging in decision-making and to enhance their role in GBV prevention.

⁷³ UNHCR, "Age, Gender and Diversity: Ending discrimination in refugee responses" (2021). For more information, please see <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/age-gender-and-diversity-ending-discrimination-refugee-responses>.



Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Persons

Overview

In 2021, UNHCR continued its work on protection and solutions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+)⁷⁴ forcibly displaced and stateless people, with a focus on training staff and partners, creating safe spaces and inclusive services, supporting frontline LGBTIQ+ organizations and expanding the coalition of actors through advocacy and dialogue at both local and global levels. This included UNHCR leadership in co-convening a Global Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ Persons in Forced Displacement, with over 600 participants including civil society and RLOs.

Despite these efforts, major challenges remain, with 69 countries around the world that continue to criminalize LGBTIQ+ persons and retain discriminatory laws, allowing institutional and public hostility and impunity for acts of exploitation and violence against them.⁷⁵

Among the key achievements in 2021, UNHCR updated its “Need to know guidance: Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons in forced displacement”; and produced a tip sheet on implementing its AGD Policy in work with LGBTIQ+ persons. In addition, an updated sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) training package was developed jointly with IOM, covering a wide variety of topics: terminology, international law, communication, protection, voluntary return and reintegration, and refugee status determination, with a focus on practical guidance for UNHCR and IOM offices and partner organizations. A UNHCR-specific e-learning course on working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons in forced displacement was also released in September 2021 and was completed by a total of **148 staff** by the end of 2021. Finally, another **110 UNHCR staff** benefited from four learning programmes organized by UNHCR’s Global Development and Learning Centre (GLDC) and the Division of International Protection (DIP) on working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement, including two training of trainers (ToT).

Field-Level Practices

Some interesting practices emerged at both regional and country levels. Overall, **17 operations** reported having provided targeted services to known LGBTIQ+ persons of concern to UNHCR. Notably, five operations in Africa and the Americas reported having provided **targeted support to a total of 1,980** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons in 2021.

Meaningful participation

In **Italy**, UNHCR helped LGBTIQ+ organizations access funds to set up anti-discrimination centres. In collaboration with Il Grande Colibri, an LGBTIQ+-refugee-led organization, UNHCR launched an information campaign for LGBTIQ+ people and male survivors of gender-based violence.

In addition, the LGBTIQ+ “Need to know guidance” and the “GBV pocket guide” were made available in Italian and disseminated widely among institutional and non-institutional actors, including reception centres and CBOs.

Capacity-building

In **El Salvador**, UNHCR’s partner COMCAVIS engaged in a series of initiatives, which included awareness-raising on the experiences of the transgender community; creation of support networks; and sensitization of transgender persons on fundamental rights. COMCAVIS also supported legislation to strengthen lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons’ rights and defended incarcerated transgender individuals.

In **Kenya**, UNHCR worked in partnership with four national LGBTIQ+ organizations to sensitize lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons on the legal context and security environment, and supported their access to legal aid and information on their rights.

In **Tunisia**, in partnership with the Tunisian Council for Refugees (CTR), and the NGO Mawjoudin (We Exist), legal counselling, health support services, as well as life-skills training and livelihood opportunities were provided by UNHCR to refugees and asylum-seekers facing persecution on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Operational assistance

In the **Americas**, UNHCR supported the regional LGBTIQ+ Human Mobility Network’s efforts to create inclusive services and safe referral pathways, which resulted in increased access by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer forcibly displaced people to the 206 support spaces established in eight countries across the region and benefiting approximately **250,000 people in 2021**, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons. Among the specialized services provided by over 20 organizations across the region were information, orientation, wireless connectivity, psychological first aid, health assistance and safe access to water, sanitation and hygiene services.

In **Turkey**, UNHCR partners offered LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers legal advice on asylum applications, psychosocial support and confidential referrals.

In **Serbia**, UNHCR and partners contributed to ILGA-Europe’s “LGBTI Enlargement Review 2021”, sharing insights on working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons in forced displacement in Serbia, including their access to rights and services, forms of discrimination, and acceptance in local communities. UNHCR Serbia and partners continued to actively contribute to the ERA-LGBTI (Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey) and organized initiatives to enhance the protective environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer displaced persons.

⁷⁴ UNHCR uses LGBTIQ+ as an umbrella term to include all persons whose SOGIESC is not adequately addressed by the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, in particular persons whose gender identity is fluid or non-binary.

⁷⁵ ILGA, “State-sponsored homophobia: Global legislation overview update” (2020). Available at https://ilga.org/downloads/ILGA_World_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_report_global_legislation_overview_update_December_2020.pdf.

B. Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.

Core Action 6B

At a minimum, UNHCR will provide women and girls of concern with protection documentation on an individual basis, and will advocate the same with partners, including governments.

Overview

In 2021, 106 operations where UNHCR provided support on registration and individual documentation, successfully facilitated individual registration of men, women, girls and boys. Issuance of individual documents was regularly done for both men and women by the majority of these operations. Several operations also facilitated and fast-tracked the individual registration, status determination and resettlement of persons at heightened protection risks, including women at risk; survivors of GBV; unaccompanied or separated children; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons. Despite challenges related to social distancing, almost 1.4 million new registrations were facilitated.

According to the preliminary findings of the Global Survey on Registration, Biometrics and Digital Identity, approximately **85 per cent of operations** reported that women were issued with their own individual identity credentials.

UNHCR practices on Women's and Girls' Registration and Documentation

In 2021, **19 operations** made specific mention in their reports of taking action to provide access for women and girls to non-discriminatory registration and documentation, as well as registration and documentation of women and girls.

In **Bangladesh**, measures are put in place to address protection needs of women and girls at the time of registration particularly in the cases of polygamy and early marriages. Also, specific days were scheduled to register families from ethnic and religious minority groups and facilitate access and inclusion of women and girls within these groups. In **Burkina Faso**, two separate systems ensured the provision of individual documentation to women and girls, namely CONAREF,⁷⁶ for distributing

individual refugee identification cards, and CONASUR,⁷⁷ for the registration of IDPs. As for civil documentation, women and men have the same right to access national ID cards. Finally, in **India**, women and girls continued to be registered individually, and refugees aged 12 or above were issued a refugee card by UNHCR. Fast track procedures are activated for people with specific needs throughout the registration process.

In **Malaysia**, a total of 789 single women or single female-headed households were registered, which represented 19 per cent of all persons of concern to UNHCR registered in 2021.

Box 2. Statelessness

A “Background note on discrimination in nationality laws and statelessness” was published in 2021, which provides an overview of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion, age, disability and SOGIESC in nationality laws, leading to statelessness. Evidence suggests that direct and indirect discrimination persists in the nationality laws of more than 80 countries.

To raise awareness on the right to nationality and discrimination on various grounds as driving statelessness, UNHCR worked together with the Minorities Section at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to organize a high-level event on statelessness and human rights. The event brought together State representatives, United Nations human rights mechanisms, civil society organizations and stateless persons.

UNHCR also worked together with the World Council of Churches on the development of “Affirmations of Belonging for Faith Leaders”. These affirmations were drafted by a small group of religious scholars from different traditions with technical support from UNHCR, and acknowledge that the statelessness of many minorities has been justified by discourses, stereotypes and prejudices perpetuated by religious majorities.⁷⁸

Overall, UNHCR supported 81,000 stateless persons acquire a nationality or have it confirmed in 2021.

⁷⁶ National Commission for Refugees, or Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés (CONAREF). More information available at National Legislative Bodies, «Burkina Faso: Règlement intérieur de la Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés» (1997). Available from www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4da2f.html.

⁷⁷ Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation, or Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation (CONASUR). More information available at <http://www.conasur.gov.bf/>.

⁷⁸ Religions for Peace, “Belonging: Affirmations for faith leaders” (2022). Available from www.rfp.org/belonging-affirmations-for-faith-leaders/.

C. Women and girls have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core relief items, and cash-based interventions.

Core
Action 6C

Depending on the context, UNHCR operations will increase the percentage of women as the primary recipients of assistance within households receiving material and/or cash-based assistance.

Overview

When women are the primary recipients of assistance, they have more opportunities to influence the decision-making process on resource allocation within the household. Direct access and control over assistance contribute to women's empowerment and have the potential to facilitate positive transformations towards more equitable and healthier gender relations, roles and attitudes.

UNHCR global CBI and AAP policies prioritize women as key recipients of cash assistance. Currently, in **46 countries** using UNHCR's cash management system CashAssist, some 52 per cent are female cash recipients.⁷⁹ Globally, most countries prioritize cash for persons with specific needs.

Through the [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#), which aims to alleviate the poverty of 500,000 extremely poor refugee and community households in 35 countries, UNHCR, the World Bank Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI) and 13 NGOs secured over USD 63.2 million in funding to 59,964 households in 2021.

Women heads of households are the main recipients of the graduation programme, which provides a combination of consumption support and asset or cash transfers, followed by two years of training, mentoring and coaching. The programme facilitates financial inclusion, as well as access and referral to social services, including responses to GBV, education and health.

UNHCR practices on Access, Control and Management of food, relief and cash-based interventions

Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, and Kenya reported specific attention to gender equality in access to and control over assistance and relief items. In **Bangladesh**, the operation ensured that female refugees, persons

living with disabilities, and older persons had individuals to help them carry their items in all distribution points.

In **MENA**, in addition to providing cash to persons with specific needs, 70 per cent of the countries include the strengthening of services for them as an operational objective, and of these eight operations intend to do so using cash assistance. In 2021, operations that reported reaching 50 per cent female recipients in some or all of their material or cash-based assistance included **Cuba** and **India**, where specific categories of women at heightened risk (e.g. women heading households) were prioritized in eligibility criteria for CBI.

Examples of operations where women were the primary recipients include **Bangladesh**, where CBIs reached a total of **16,887 refugees, 78 per cent of them women**. Direct implementation, through the bKash pilot,⁸⁰ reached 3,045 households, of which 29 per cent were female-headed, and the COVID-19 CBI Emergency Response benefited 15,038 individuals, of which 29 per cent were female recipients. In **Lebanon**, out of the **112,835 households** receiving multipurpose cash assistance, **52 per cent were women and girls**; while, of the 12,675 persons receiving both emergency and protection cash assistance (ECA and PCAP), 54 per cent were women and girls.

In **Malaysia**, women accounted for **33 per cent of primary recipients of assistance for cash**. Moreover, single female-headed households and women and girls at risk were prioritized in the eligibility assessments to receive cash assistance. In relation to control over the resources received, 96 per cent of CBI post-distribution monitoring (PDM) respondents reported no or little disagreement in the use of cash within the household.

Importantly, CBIPDM best practices require consideration, to collect sufficient responses from a representative number of female-headed households to understand diversity in coping strategies. Therefore, in the PDM tool, the sex of the person registered to receive the cash assistance from UNHCR is explicitly requested.

⁷⁹ UNHCR, "Digital payments to refugees: A pathway towards financial inclusion" (2020).

⁸⁰ Mobile money transfer system pilot initiative.

D. Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, including decent work and quality education and health services.

Core
Action 6D

At a minimum, UNHCR will ensure women and girls have equal access to the livelihood, education, and health programmes it delivers, and will advocate with partners, including governments, for their equal access to public services.

Overview

This area of engagement is multifaceted and covers efforts in education, livelihoods, and health. Reporting on efforts and achievements across these areas of focus varied greatly in 2021, with health being the least reported.

For health-related reporting, the focus has been primarily on acknowledging harmful gender norms, roles and inequalities that impact health-seeking behaviour and access to health services; advocacy on women's and girls' right to make decisions about their health and health care; and integration into health reports of the heightened protection risks and needs of men and women of different age.

Among the various initiatives on education, UNHCR's strenuous advocacy for national data on education access to be disaggregated by sex and education level enabled a better understanding of disparities in access. On average, evidence from reporting countries indicates that refugee girls continued to have lower access to educational opportunities than boys, and that enrolment rates are considerably lower at the secondary and tertiary levels in comparison to primary. These rates were further adversely affected by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the efforts to redress this trend in 2021, a number of operations have benefited from the generous support of **Education Cannot Wait** (ECW), the global fund for education in emergencies,⁸¹ which requires at least 60 per cent of girls to receive this support, and offers specific support to children with disabilities. In line with the AGD Policy, all reporting on

this initiative is disaggregated by age, sex, disability, and protection status.

Furthermore, additional efforts were made in 2021 to increase the female participation rates in scholarship, to prioritize students living with disabilities, and from minority groups and under-represented populations, and to increase the enrolment of young women and men in higher education to 15 per cent by 2030, also known as the 15by30 Roadmap.

UNHCR practices on Access to Opportunities

Education

In 2021, **15 operations**⁸² continued to receive support through the UNHCR Educate a Child (EAC) Programme, a long-standing partnership with the Education Above All Foundation to provide children with access to inclusive primary education services, which covered the period 2020 to 2022. Within this initiative, targeted support was provided to refugee girls, and to children who have been particularly disadvantaged during the pandemic and were at increased risks of protection threats such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, and GBV.⁸³ Assistance included distribution of health, hygiene kits, and assistive devices, counselling and distribution of learning materials, food assistance, the establishment of separate classes, home visits, and other incentives.

Cash-based incentives were provided in 13 out of 58 reporting operations to support girls to return to school and offset the costs associated with education.⁸⁴

⁸¹ See www.educationcannotwait.org/.

⁸² Cameroon, Chad, Iraq, Kenya–Dadaab, Kenya–Kakuma, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and Yemen.

⁸³ UNHCR, "Educate A Child Programme: 2020 annual report" (2021). Available from www.unhcr.org/61eec31b4.

⁸⁴ UNHCR, "Global COVID-19 education response" (2021). Available from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global_Education_COVID-19_response-October_2021.pdf.

UNHCR continued to strengthen strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, international NGOs, States and donors, through the leadership of the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG)⁸⁵ and the Secondary Education Working Group (SEWG), to promote equitable access to formal and non-formal education for older learners and youth. At the field level, this resulted in AEWG developing country reports for **Uganda, South Sudan, Tanzania** and **the Democratic Republic of the Congo**, as well as guidance for Condensing a Curriculum for Accelerated Education to assist ministries and other stakeholders in supporting the acceleration of learning by recommending rights of women and girls as a subject area, and underlying inclusive and age-appropriate approaches, with a view to compensate for the loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, an accelerated education training pack for teachers was piloted in **Somalia** and **Nigeria**.

Finally, some UNHCR interventions aimed at supporting education, such as the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship programme and EAC, continued to yield positive results in 2021, including in relation to gender equality. Through these interventions, the gender success rates in some operations, i.e. the proportion of students who complete their degree, have been converging. Through DAFI, cash assistance was also provided to female students with children.

Overall, 1.9 million boys and girls were enrolled in primary education, and 979,660 refugee children and youth were supported with distance or home-based learning. Data for the academic school year 2020 to 2021 have been compiled and will be featured in our annual education report.⁸⁶

Livelihoods and economic inclusion

Throughout 2021, UNHCR continued to specifically engage women in livelihood and economic interventions, which overall resulted in **54 per cent female participants**⁸⁷. According to the UNHCR annual programme monitoring for self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods, the percentage of female beneficiaries in UNHCR-supported livelihood programmes is 62 per cent. At the same time, the employment rate for women in 2021 is at 71 per cent.

Figure 3. % of female beneficiaries in livelihood programmes, UNHCR 2021

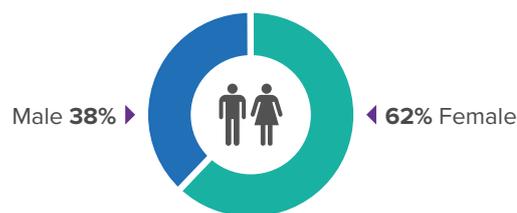


Figure 4. Employment rate by gender, UNHCR (2021)*

	Female	Male
Baseline	52%	52%
Endline	70%	63%
Impact	18%	11%

Additionally, through **MADE51**, UNHCR's global collaborative initiative to connect fair-trade refugee-made products with international markets, in 2021 **30 local social enterprise partners in 23 countries worked directly with refugee artisans**. Approximately 85 per cent of the refugee artisans are women.⁸⁸

In 2021, the retail company UNIQLO commissioned a special bracelet by MADE51 female artisans to celebrate its 10 years of partnership with UNHCR. Priority was given to **East Africa**, and particularly to female refugee artisans in **Egypt, Kenya, South Sudan** and **Ethiopia** using traditional South Sudanese beading techniques. The bracelet was then used in 16 countries as a reward to UNIQLO customers who supported work with refugees. A total of 10,978 bracelets were ordered, with about 50 per cent of the order value being corresponded directly to the artisans in the form of salary. According to the report, this was used for food, medicine and health care, education and support to other family members. Another interesting MADE51 project was the order by the design brand Chloé to UNHCR social enterprise partner Artisan Links in **Pakistan** of 11,822 pieces of traditional Tarshumar embroidery.⁸⁹ To date, this is the largest order to MADE51, with 57 per cent of the order value benefiting the artisans, all women.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ UNHCR, "The education 2030: Framework for action. Accelerated education" (n.d.). Available from [www.unhcr.org/accelerated-education-working-group.html#:~:text=The%20Accelerated%20Education%20Working%20Group%20\(AEWG\)%20is%20made%20up%20of,Network%2C%20and%20War%20Child%20Holland](http://www.unhcr.org/accelerated-education-working-group.html#:~:text=The%20Accelerated%20Education%20Working%20Group%20(AEWG)%20is%20made%20up%20of,Network%2C%20and%20War%20Child%20Holland)

⁸⁶ UNHCR, "Staying the course: The challenges facing refugee education" (2021). Available from www.unhcr.org/612f85d64/unhcr-education-report-2021-staying-course-challenges-facing-refugee-education.

⁸⁷ UNHCR, "Report to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (2022).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Tarshumar embroidery is a fine, precise art of creating geometric, multicoloured patterns on cotton or silk using a thread counting technique. Tarshumar is part of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage and has been practiced for generations by Hazara women.

⁹⁰ More information about both projects can be found at the MADE51 website: www.made51.org/.

* Based on data available from 16 countries.

Health

Operationally, particular emphasis was given to enhancing the number of female medical and nursing staff, to overcome barriers and promote gender equality among health providers, including actions to support more women in management positions.

Among the operations that reported disaggregated data on health-care services dedicated to women and girls were **Albania, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Lebanon, Malaysia, and the Netherlands**.

Operations that ensured equal participation of women in health-care programmes were **Djibouti** and the **Netherlands**, while in **Lebanon** and **Malaysia**, participation exceeded 50 per cent.

In **Bangladesh**, refugee women facing heightened protection risks were provided priority access to health-care facilities and benefited from programmes catering to their specific needs. Focus group discussions were held to ascertain refugees' sanitary material preferences and 100 per cent of females of menstruation age reportedly receive sanitary materials.

Over the past three years, the skilled birth attendance rate – a crucial measure to reduce maternal mortality – remained stable. In 2021, 123,264 deliveries were reported in 22 operations, among which 92.8 per cent were assisted by skilled health workers.

Overall, 1.25 million women and girls accessed sexual and reproductive health care in 2021.

Recognizing the critical role of contraception and family planning in women's health and well-being, 37 operations monitor and support programming to improve service provision and 27 operations reported that contraception was routinely made available to refugees within their operations.

For adolescents in refugee settings, there is an urgent need to continue to promote access to HIV testing, HIV prevention such as expanding cash-based interventions and other initiatives to keep girls in school, and adolescent and gender-responsive services particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in **Uganda**, over 70 local and district staff across 11 refugee settlements were ToT in adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR). Following the ToT and multisectoral workshops, action plans were developed to increase the capacity of key stakeholders to integrate ASRHR in refugee settings and engage meaningfully with youth and adolescent refugees. While in **Tanzania**, male champions (community leaders) were identified to provide reproductive health information, education, and communication in communities, including relating

to family planning/contraception. This contributed to an increase in the contraceptive prevalence in camps in Tanzania from 32.5 per cent to 36.2 per cent (from 2020 to 2021).

To address women's and girls' higher susceptibility to COVID-19, operations continued to engage in a series of activities to ensure strengthening women's and girls' awareness, behavioural and preventive measures. By the end of 2021, in **Lebanon**, 700 volunteers, partners, and UNHCR staff reached a total of 238,498 persons with information on COVID-19 vaccine, half of which were women and girls, through physical and remote outreach. Community volunteers accounted for 53 per cent of the total reach. Although 48 per cent of the total number of refugees reached were supported to register for the vaccine online in 2021, hesitancy due to fear of the vaccine's side effects, fear of contracting the virus, pregnancy and breastfeeding, overconfidence in immunity and doubts over the effectiveness of the vaccine remained prevalent.



By the time she left Venezuela, Elba had already begun to develop the idea for what would later become her company, "Cayenne Pepper". Elba shares her secret to make strawberry jam, a traditional recipe that everyone loves, in a cookbook published by UNHCR.

© UNHCR/Rubén Iparrea



Working with Older Persons

Overview

In 2021, protracted and emerging conflicts, climate change-related events, and COVID-19 have created compounding risks for older persons in displacement situations. The continuous effects of COVID-19 resulted in high levels of isolation and marginalization of older persons. Nonetheless, UNHCR reached out to at least **71,796 forcibly displaced and stateless older persons** with protection and assistance interventions in 2021.

Older persons continue to be resourceful individuals, fully engaged in work, family and community life, and looking after others. Their voices, opinions and leadership are often pivotal in shaping sociocultural norms and values, and in sustaining changes towards more equitable and healthy attitudes and behaviours.

In 2021, UNHCR contributed to raising awareness about the labour rights of older persons, with a particular focus on the issue of lack of documentation and access to pension and financial systems and services. UNHCR global advocacy focused on increasing accessibility to mechanisms for regularization of work-related documentation and work-permit procedures, as a way to protect older persons from labour exploitation.⁹¹

Field-Level Practices

Meaningful participation

Specific efforts to ensure the active and meaningful participation of older persons were reported in **India** and **Indonesia**, where community groups were supported by UNHCR with the aim of providing venues for expressing concerns and enhancing self-reliance and peer-to-peer support among older persons; and in **South Sudan**, where representation in camp leadership structures was ensured as a way to involve older persons in the implementation of local programmes. In **Burundi**, host families were identified for older people living alone in camps as a response to isolation and marginalization.

Engaging displaced older persons in awareness-raising activities, as both beneficiaries and influencers, can have a significant impact in changing mindset and behaviours.

Experiences of this were reported in **Burundi, Bangladesh, and Cameroon**, where older persons were engaged in awareness-raising initiatives on preventing harmful practices such as early marriage and pregnancy; on COVID-19; and on GBV respectively. In **Cameroon**, training on the use of digital means was also provided to older persons.

Capacity-building and development

A variety of capacity-building activities on working with older persons, targeted at both staff and persons of concern to UNHCR, were reported across operations.

Paucity of data on older forcibly displaced persons continued to be a major challenge in 2021. To address this, UNHCR Latin America bureau, in collaboration with [HelpAge International](#), conducted an assessment covering **El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru**, which for the first time provided a comprehensive analysis of the intersections between human mobility and ageing. In addition, training materials on the protection of forcibly displaced older persons were developed for piloting in the above-mentioned countries in 2022.

Also, improved capacity to collect, analyse and report data was observed in **28 operations** out of 75 that reported interventions targeted at older persons in 2021, coupled with a detailed description of the activities carried out.⁹²

In **Syria**, 70 partner staff were trained on providing support to older persons and their caregivers, equipping them with knowledge and skills to address the needs of older people, while strengthening the communication with and empowerment of older people. In **Jordan** the focus of the national disability task force, now the Disability and Age Task Force, co-chaired by UNHCR, was expanded to incorporate age, to ensure enhanced capacity and a more systematic inclusion of older people in the response.

Operational assistance

Assistance by UNHCR to older persons includes health care, psychological support, and physical rehabilitation, cash and in-kind support, and skills development.

Health assistance was provided in **Indonesia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan, and Tanzania**. More specifically, in **Jordan**, age-specific services were provided to 2,373 older people in urban areas, including rehabilitation, assistive devices, home-based care, shelter, psychosocial support, social activities, and access to hygiene items. In **Ethiopia**, support care services were provided to 1,238 older persons with disabilities in camps in the Gambela Region, and mobility aids such as crutches and wheelchairs were provided to 329 older persons with disabilities. Provision of psychological support for older persons was reported in **Kenya, Lebanon, Rwanda, Tanzania**.

Rehabilitation services were provided in **Bangladesh** and in **Syria**, where home-based rehabilitation and training programmes targeted 6,265 older persons and their caregivers.

In **South Sudan**, 4,597 older persons received in-kind support and mobility devices. UNHCR provided cash assistance targeted to older persons in **India, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Congo, Lebanon, Morocco, South Africa, and Tanzania**.

⁹¹ UNHCR inputs on these issues were examined at the eleventh session of the General Assembly open-ended working group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons (March to April 2021).

⁹² These are Algeria, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon MCO, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Congo, DRC, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tanzania, Thailand MCO, Venezuela, Western Sahara, and Zambia. Country Plans Analysis 2020-2021.

E. Women and girls have access to comprehensive GBV prevention and response services.

Core
Action 6E

At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adopt and implement GBV standard operating procedures, operationalizing the four main referral pathways for all survivors (safety/security, legal, medical, and psychosocial), and will promote the same with partners, including governments.

Overview

In 2021, **74 per cent of reporting operations** (96 out of 130) reported that GBV services were available to survivors in the context of COVID-19. Operations expanded mobile and remote service provision (including 24/7 hotlines) and updated referral pathways. Survivors were supported with psychosocial, health, safety/security and legal services, as well as cash assistance. Overall, 89,742 survivors received psychosocial counselling, 4,066 received legal assistance and 3,845 received medical assistance provided by UNHCR. Operations reported to have improved or maintained support to known GBV survivors in **83 displacement situations** (including refugee, IDP and returnee situations). Communities were involved in gender-based violence prevention and response activities in **42 displacement situations**.¹¹ UNHCR also strengthened its engagement with displaced-women-led organizations working on GBV, and launched the UNHCR NGO Innovation Award dedicated to women- and girl-led organizations (WLOs) across all regions, garnering interest from over **480** eligible organizations.

UNHCR rolled out its Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation, and Response to Gender-Based Violence (2020) globally through learning initiatives such as online courses and in-person training. A provisional monitoring framework was also released.

In UNHCR's new RBM system, COMPASS, GBV has been identified as a specific outcome area. During the 2021 programming cycle, **60 per cent of UNHCR operations** worldwide selected this outcome area as

part of the 2022 country operations strategies and result framework for the year 2022.

The UNHCR deployment scheme, funded by the Safe from the Start initiative in 2021, had a positive impact on GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response interventions in emergencies. In 2021, emphasis was on capacity-building efforts, with 162 hours of GBV training provided by roving GBV experts to displaced persons, UNHCR partners and government staff in 13 emergency operations including **Chad, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Sudan, Mali, Pakistan, Iran** and **Syria**. Six new GBV sub-working groups were established and nine new GBV referral pathways were developed. Deployments also led to 92 senior officials being briefed on GBV risks and funding needs. Furthermore, the impact of deployments has positively influenced UNHCR programming, with five new partnerships being established for GBV prevention and response activities, including two with national NGOs and one with a refugee-women-led organization.

Community-based approaches to GBV prevention and mitigation in 2021 included a partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) globally to increase the institutional capacity of implementing the Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP) initiative. In addition, through partnership with Raising Voices, a Uganda-based organization that developed the SASA! Together model,⁹³ participants from **Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Bangladesh** were enrolled in two technical adviser cohorts that supported real-time capacity-development and the implementation of the model.

⁹³ SASA! Together is an activist approach aimed at preventing violence against women. See <https://raisingvoices.org/women/the-sasa-approach/>.

UNHCR practices on Access to Comprehensive GBV services

In **Zambia**, the operation continued to work with community members, partners and the Government on strengthening GBV programming, including updating and disseminating GBV referral pathways. In Cartagena, **Colombia**, a psycho-legal team continued to provide support to survivors and women at risk of GBV through a number of workshops, including two on sexual and reproductive rights for 117 teenagers and youth, and a cycle of 14 workshops on new masculinities titled, “Less machos, more men”. Moreover, in Riohacha, a vocational training scheme for survivors in the safe house was initiated.⁹⁴

Safe spaces for women and girls in **India, Greece, Sudan** and 14 countries in the **Americas** helped to establish trust and empower forcibly displaced women and girls.⁹⁵ As a result, more survivors sought help, while timely awareness and support contributed to reducing risks of further violence, such as child marriage and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In Greece, UNHCR conducted a baseline survey on the perception of gender roles and stereotypes among the women targeted by the activities of the women’s space centre supported by UNHCR, and community-based action plans to advance gender equality were developed; the impact of this intervention will be assessed and analysed in 2022. Economic empowerment activities provided to women at risk and GBV survivors, including in **Lebanon, Mali, Peru,** and **Venezuela**, were reported as essential to ensure self-reliance and decrease further risks of violence.

In collaboration with Plan International, UNHCR started a project aiming to provide technical support and learning

opportunities to UNHCR and partners on prevention, risk mitigation and response to child marriage in refugee settings, including in **Asia and the Pacific and West Africa**. During the last quarter of 2021, the first phase of the project focused on conducting context analysis in **Niger, Bangladesh,** and **Indonesia** to identify planning gaps and opportunities for improvement.

GBV risk mitigation remained an institutional priority and continued to be effectively integrated into all aspects of emergency response. UNHCR’s efforts to mainstream GBV risk mitigation across sectors included safety audits (for example in **Mozambique**). Practical interventions based upon recommendations from women and girls were implemented, including solar lighting in **Somalia** and the distribution of solar lamps to 15,000 women and girls living in informal IDP settlements in **Yemen**. In **Sudan**, UNHCR introduced clean cooking ethanol stoves, contributing important benefits to the environment and to the safety of women and girls who were responsible for gathering firewood for cooking.⁹⁶

Finally, as a standard practice, a vast number of UNHCR operations supported the “16 Days” of activism against GBV campaign, in collaboration with communities and partners. Among them, the UNHCR office in Kakuma, **Kenya** created a [TikTok video](#) that was viewed more than 51,000 times and counting – the biggest number of views ever recorded among UNHCR posts. The Global Shelter Cluster also conducted a social media campaign for the duration of the 16 Days Campaign, amplifying key messages and highlighting important risk mitigation work being undertaken by cluster members and partners as part of their shelter programmes. [The Global Shelter Cluster Coordinator](#) also joined the [#EndGBVTogether](#) 90-second video campaign for the 16 Days.



A forcibly displaced woman from Venezuela, now runs a car repair workshop in Argentina, supported by a UNHCR project to help refugee start-ups get off the ground. © UNHCR/Gianni Bulacio

⁹⁴ UNHCR, “Safe from the start: Quarter 4 report” (2021).

⁹⁵ For further information, please visit the Regional Safe Space Network: <https://rssn-america.org/about/about-the-rssn>.

⁹⁶ UNHCR, “Refugees in Sudan reap benefits of clean cooking energy” (2021). Available from www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2021/2/6038cc6b4/refugees-sudan-reap-benefits-clean-cooking-energy.html.



III. Organizational Accountability

Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Gillian Triggs speaks to community leaders supported by UNHCR and partner World Vision in El Salvador. © UNHCR/Tito Herrera

► Strengthening the environment for an effective AGD approach

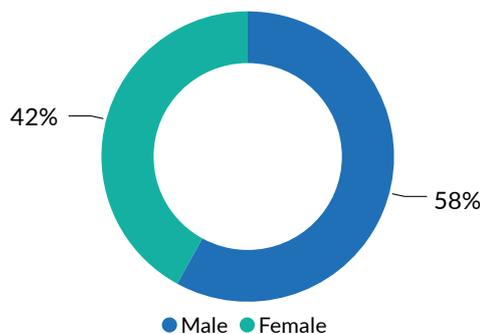
Diversity in UNHCR workforce

UNHCR fully understands its responsibility to act in the interests of greater equality, inclusion, and representation, both institutionally and through its programmes, and to apply a whole- organization approach to AGD to foster a diverse, inclusive, and enabling work environment.

Such diversity is needed for everyone to find fulfilment and a sense of belonging, and for different perspectives to contribute to an effective and efficient organizational culture and people-centric management. Diversity of capacities, background, and expertise is also required for UNHCR personnel to fulfil the commitments of the AGD approach internally. While understanding the need for staff to wear multiple hats to promote integration and intersectional approaches across programmes, evidence also shows that results have

been best where dedicated attention and expertise were provided.

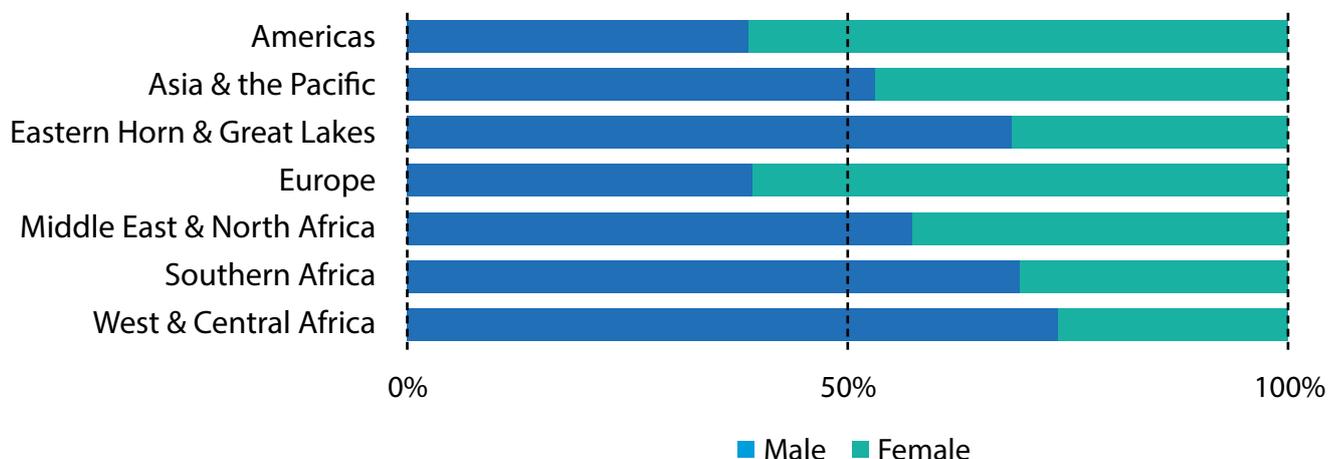
Figure 5 Workforce distribution by gender in 2021 (UNHCR data)



Finally, UNHCR’s continuous efforts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in its workforce is reflected in the below chart.

Figure 6 Regional representation of UNHCR workforce in 2021 (UNHCR data)

Diversity within the UNHCR workforce (includes only primary nationality)



In line with UNHCR strategic directions to advance progress for the achievement of gender parity across all levels by 2028, the DEI Section within the Division of Human Resources regularly tracks and analyses gender and other diversity indicators across levels for advocacy and accountability purposes. Specific actions across UNHCR and divisions have been undertaken to address issues related to race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability equality, and work is underway to establish DEI plans at the country level.

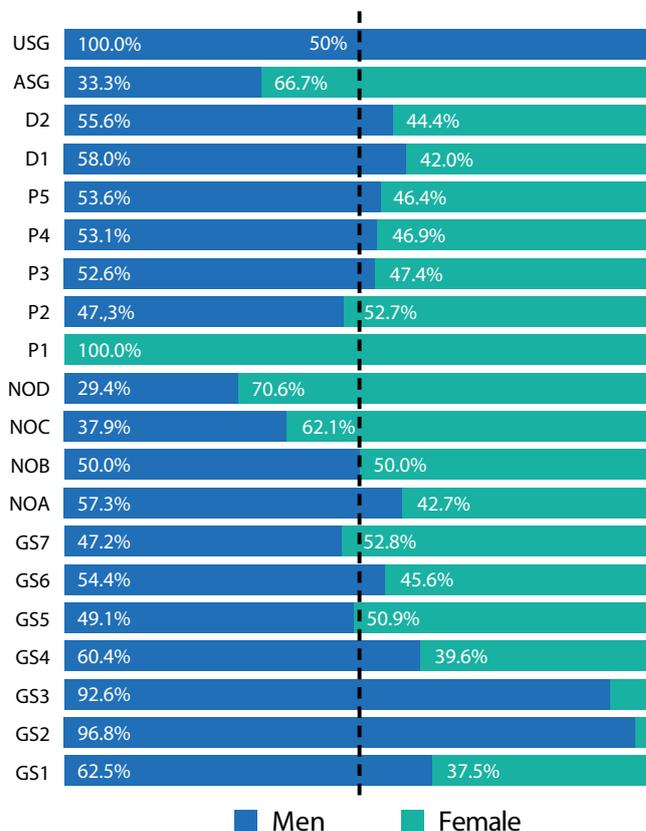
To date, action plans include outreach, leadership development and organizational change, support for management skill development, targeted approaches for increased representation, accountability and monitoring. In addition, outreach and dialogue sessions are regularly organized with employee resource groups across UNHCR. DEI collaborates with Division of Human Resources (DHR) colleagues to support their overview of gender and geographical distribution in their regions and for outreach to under-represented groups.

DEI and UNHCR leaderships

Data in the graph below indicate that attaining parity in the uppermost levels remains challenging, particularly at the representative and head-of-office levels, from P5 to D2. UNHCR strives to attain 50-50 gender parity by 2028. In 2021, UNHCR continued conducting a women’s humanitarian leadership forum for women colleagues at the P5 to D2 levels. The objectives of the forum included: peer-to-peer coaching; mentoring among senior women leaders; strategy-building and

leadership humanitarian contexts for organizational gender equality; and building networks of women leaders for greater inclusion and diversity.

Figure 7. Representation by gender and grade (as of year-end 2021)⁹⁶



⁹⁷ Data from UNHCR as provided to the UN Women System-wide Gender Parity dashboard for all UN agencies.

Sessions on ‘gender in the workplace’ were conducted to engage UNHCR management in the discussion of gender norms, roles, and identities that shape decision-making, behaviours, and relationships in the workplace. Women leaders identified strategies and actions to promote attitudinal and behavioural change for a more gender-equitable work environment. Sessions also took place on disability inclusion, LGBTIQ+, gossiping, harassment, and bullying. A new performance management system was designed to focus on diversity-responsive performance and accountability, including for managers. Finally, UNHCR has partnered with INSEAD⁹⁸ on a new leadership development programme, to support women colleagues across all levels and future leaders.

Progress on other AGD dimensions

UNHCR concluded an independent review of workplace race, equality and equity considerations, an internal stocktaking exercise that provided qualitative and quantitative data to inform UNHCR on the extent to which systemic, cultural, and behavioural race discrimination exists in the organization and impacts on the workforce well-being and performance. Evidence from the review indicated that racial discrimination is still ingrained in global communities and political systems and affects the lives of people we serve and colleagues around the world. This resulted in the development of the 2022-2024 Race Equality, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, which provides a strategic, dynamic, and intersectional approach, considering different aspects of diversity, to address the barriers to equitable opportunities within the organization, ensuring that the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination are fully realized in our workplace.

The implementation of the UNHCR five-year Action Plan for Disability Inclusion continued in 2021, in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy for more effective disability inclusion and organizational culture change. Career fairs and outreach to persons with disabilities from under-represented areas, policies for workplace accommodation, increased communications about working with disabilities, updating digital platforms for digital accessibility, and working with the Disability Inclusion Resource Group continued in 2021, as outlined in the action plan. Specifically, colleagues with disabilities and colleague-caregivers participate in the Disability Inclusion Resource Group to help UNHCR identify and remove barriers, while addressing challenges in relation to disabilities within the organization. UNHCR launched a digital accessibility assessment to assess its internal digital platforms for accessibility and the digital strategy, which includes mainstreaming live captioning and/or sign language for communications and the High Commissioner’s townhalls.

► Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

UNHCR’s work on PSEA is set within broader organizational efforts to address all forms of sexual misconduct, as per the “2020-2022 Strategy and Action Plan” on tackling sexual misconduct. This work is led and coordinated by UNHCR’s Senior Coordinator on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment, in close collaboration with a multifunctional working group. In 2021, UNHCR continued to build on the progress made in previous years and to maintain a leadership role in the fight against sexual misconduct, in line with a victim-centred approach.

Capacity-building

In 2021, UNHCR placed great emphasis on capacity-building and development of colleagues and partners on prevention, identification and response to all forms of sexual misconduct, and to ensure that they are equipped to relay and communicate this to partners and communities. Recognizing COVID-19 restrictions, virtual learning activities were delivered to 587 UNHCR personnel, and 268 staff were reached through targeted PSEA/sexual harassment learning activities in addition to 319 staff reached through PSEA and sexual harassment learning content integrated into other learning programmes. AGD considerations were built into all learning activities.

The **UNHCR internal sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment learning package** was finalized in 2021 for roll-out by field operations. This package provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on what they can do to prevent sexual misconduct and how to respond if it does happen, taking into account the age, gender and other diversity characteristics of those affected. The package was adapted for both virtual and face-to-face delivery and is consistent with the style and approach of the IASC “Saying No to Sexual Misconduct” package for UN partners, launched in 2020. By the end of 2021, 40 UNHCR staff from **25 operations** and HQ participated in the facilitators’ webinar that was developed to support the effective roll-out of the learning package.

An interactive webinar tool was developed to facilitate peer-to-peer exchange among the over 400 PSEA focal points, to unpack and better understand concepts, standards, and best practices around sexual misconduct. The tool was rolled out in a series of 14 online sessions across UNHCR’s **seven regions**, reaching a total of 119 PSEA focal points from **50 operations**, representing over **89 office locations**.

⁹⁸ INSEAD: The Business School for the World. For further information, please visit www.insead.edu/.



Women from the indigenous Warao community all dressed in traditional Warao clothes, prepare to perform a traditional Warao dance in Trinidad and Tabago. © UNHCR/Carla Bridglal

The e-learning course on investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse for partners was also finalized and launched in 2021 on [DisasterReady.org](https://www.disasterready.org). The course, a deliverable of the High Commissioner's 2020 IASC Championship on PSEA and SH, was developed in response to specific requests from United Nations partners to strengthen their capacity to conduct high-quality investigations of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The tool is being translated into French, Arabic, and Spanish.

Meaningful participation: Prevention, communication and community engagement

The [PSEA Community Outreach and Communications Fund](#), an initiative jointly launched with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) under the High Commissioner's 2020 IASC Championship on PSEA and SH, continued into 2021 with a second round of applications. With financial support from the German Federal Foreign Office, grants were made to 15 NGOs to raise awareness and engage with communities on PSEA. Projects focused on key groups such as adolescent girls, language minorities, persons with disabilities, persons of diverse SOGIESC, people in geographically isolated areas and communities at high risks of transactional sex. All selected projects incorporated dedicated attention to SEA risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Community-engagement materials was developed in 30 languages, tailored to reach over 20 different AGD profiles through 40 types of materials, and made available to all PSEA stakeholders through the development of a [database](#).

In an effort to work with new partners, the Office of the Senior Coordinator for PSEA and Sexual Harassment teamed up with students from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva to

explore solutions for addressing SEA in urban settings, as part of an innovation challenge run by the Collaboration for Social Impact project. The challenge brought together student researchers and UNHCR field practitioners to think creatively around practical solutions for challenges commonly faced when responding to SEA in urban and peri-urban contexts in the field.

Assistance: Promotion of a survivor-centred approach

In 2021 UNHCR started implementation of the Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach in UNHCR's Response to Sexual Misconduct, which outlines key principles around prioritizing well-being, protection, and security of victims, offering assistance and support, non-discrimination, an end-to-end comprehensive approach, and giving (back) a measure of control to victims to the extent feasible. Experience pointed to the need for each victim to be seen as an individual with unique characteristics and for tailored support and response.

To support the operationalization of the policy, a series of focus group discussions, facilitated by the Office of the Senior Coordinator and the Division of International Protection, in close collaboration with the PSEA focal points, were held with eight country operations between October and December 2021. Discussions focused on practices and support needs to enhance the practical application of the policy and ensure that survivors of SEA receive holistic support.

Finally, workshops were also held with the members of the Working Group on Prevention and Response to Sexual Misconduct,⁹⁹ to promote understanding of the victim-centred approach policy and integration into processes and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

99 This working group consists of headquarters entities involved in the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual misconduct.



IV. Ways Forward

A refugee from Venezuela receives her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in Ecuador.
© UNHCR/Santiago Arcos Veintimilla

The 2018 AGD Policy and the annual AGD reports demonstrate UNHCR's motivation to keep on improving its performance on age, gender and diversity across its operations, continuing to advance in promoting inclusive programming, participation, communication and feedback, as well as gender equality. The examples reflected in this report illustrate the continued progress made towards the commitment to inclusion and participation of all persons UNHCR serves and represent – a valuable base for continued learning and adaptation.

Over the years, the AGD accountability reports have consistently reflected the achievements made and have drawn attention to the areas that need further attention. This has recently been enriched by the initial results of the longitudinal evaluation, with its suggested actions at regional, headquarters, country and individual levels, as well as suggestions to promote accountability and knowledge exchange, and improve systems and tools.¹⁰⁰

Areas that would benefit from attention and further discussion include the standard corporate monitoring and reporting system, which needs improvement in capturing the complex reality of the AGD approach¹⁰¹

and in better portraying analysis of trends and progress. This in turn will have a positive impact on accountability for the AGD Policy and can reward those operations that champion the AGD approach. Moving forward, it is hoped that the roll of the new RBM system (COMPASS) will facilitate more standardized and comparable analysis on the implementation of the AGD approach throughout programme phases.

A strengthened capacity to report and measure the achievements at institutional level would help greatly in telling the story of the AGD approach and providing a full account of UNHCR's significant contributions over the years of implementing the AGD Policy. It will also better support UNHCR's contribution to the institutionalization of the AGD approach into the wider international community

The following general considerations are aimed at stimulating a further institutional reflection on the implementation of the AGD Policy and to guide future actions. They should also be read in conjunction with the initial suggested actions of the recent longitudinal evaluation.

¹⁰⁰ UNHCR, "Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy – Year 1 report" (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/628ce4d7158b/es202202-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-diversity.html.

¹⁰¹ Similar concerns were raised for example by the 2021 evaluation of UNHCR child protection work. UNHCR, "Evaluation of UNHCR's child protection programming 2017-2019" (2021). Available from www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/61f1441c4/evaluation-unhcrs-child-protection-programming-2017-2019.html.

- I. Build upon existing initiatives, and, recalling the dedicated focus of the 2020 AGD Report, continue to reinforce a more integrated and intersectional approach to working with people of all age, gender and other diverse characteristics.¹⁰²
- II. Further embrace the localization agenda and continue to consult, support and invest in the capacity of grass-root organizations, particularly organizations of forcibly displaced and stateless people, including those that are led by women, persons with disabilities, youth, older people and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons.
- III. Continue to promote and support the identification, development and exchange of promising practices in the implementation of the AGD approach across regions and areas of UNHCR and partners' interventions.¹⁰³
- IV. Strengthen the existing accountability system related to the AGD Policy through the inclusion of specific responsibilities at regional and country office levels, as part of a sharpened and more targeted monitoring and reporting system.
- V. Continue to emphasize the importance of monitoring and evaluation of AGD at all levels and invest in the annual AGD accountability reporting process to showcase the work of UNHCR across operations. This can be facilitated by (1) following the existing COMPASS guidelines of planning and selecting indicators relevant to AGD, and (2) promoting existing global tools,¹⁰⁴ already prepared to facilitate operations to report on the implementation of the AGD Policy.
- VI. Continue leveraging new technologies and creative approaches to incorporate non-traditional AGD sources of information for analysis and reporting, including big data sources such as social media and media outlets, as well as qualitative surveys and reports, recordings, and photographic evidence.
- VII. Build on UNHCR's experience over the last decade of implementing and promoting the AGD approach through its AGD Policy to encourage the United Nations system and other stakeholders to adopt similar approaches and policy instruments.



A Sama Bajau woman received a birth certificate as part of UNHCR and UNICEF's efforts to end statelessness among the nomadic Sama Bajau people in the Philippines. © UNHCR/Martin San Diego

¹⁰² UNHCR, "People at the centre: The intersection of age, gender and diversity: Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2020" (2021).

¹⁰³ See promising practices on AGD: www.unhcr.org/search?comid=60db22434cid=49aea9390&scid=49aea939b&tid=49e5ee440&tags=CBP-PromisingPractices

¹⁰⁴ See internal guidance on UNHCR Intranet.



Advancing Participation and Inclusion

Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report
2021