

NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

GENDER POLICY



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AN INTEGRATED GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The Norwegian Refugee Council's mandate is to promote and protect the rights of all people who have been forced to flee their countries, or their homes within their countries because of conflict, regardless of their status.

This mandate can only be implemented by acknowledging the impact of gender on the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Therefore, NRC is committed to integrate a gender perspective in all aspects of its work in order to respond appropriately to the needs of refugees and internally displaced people and to advocate for their rights.

Armed conflict and displacement affect men, women, girls and boys differently and all NRC's policies, programmes and projects will strive to take into account these differences.

The scope

NRC's focus is on gender, rather than exclusively on women. NRC understands gender in its broad context as the culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behaviour of women and men and the relationship between them.

Gender is not the same as sex, which refers to the biological differences between women and men. Gender refers not simply to women or men, but to the relationship between them, and the way it is socially constructed. Because it is a relational term, gender must include women and men.

Like the concepts of class, race and ethnicity, gender is an analytical tool for understanding social processes. A gender perspective entails recognising and addressing men's and women's specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities.¹

Our objectives

With regard to gender issues, NRC is committed

- to contributing to the protection of and respect for the human rights of all internally displaced persons and refugees
- to ensuring that all NRC programmes benefit men, women, girls and boys according to their different needs
- to involving both internally displaced persons and refugee men and women in the planning of their assistance and protection
- to taking steps to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated in all NRC's actions, including programmes, advocacy, reporting and policy documents
- to promoting equal opportunities for men and women at all staff levels within the organisation
- to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse in the framework of NRC operations

Our approach

NRC will work towards the incorporation of a gender perspective at the policy level and in relation to all NRC core programmes. NRC's country offices and headquarters will take the necessary steps towards the achievement of these goals by recognising in particular that

- Gender sensitive programming has been shown to mitigate the negative impacts of conflict and displacement on both men and women. For example, greater involvement of internally displaced persons and refugees in the planning, design and monitoring of programmes will lead to a reduction in abuse and exploitation of both women and men.
- Girls and boys might be exposed to recruitment to armed forces. Enrolment in the NRC educational programmes can contribute to preventing such recruitment, or in the reconciliation process and reintegration of children whom have been involved in armed conflicts.
- Displaced and refugee women and girls may have protection and assistance needs which necessitate special attention. While all conflict-affected populations are at risk, displaced and refugee women and girls are often at greater levels of risk. They are less likely to have access to their basic rights, such as food, health care, shelter and documentation. Displacement and armed conflict may serve to exacerbate discrimination and violence against women, including rape, sexual exploitation and other forms of gender based violence.
- Displacement often leads to changes in family and community structures and distortion of traditional socio-economic (gender included) roles and patterns, (i.e. women becoming primary bread-winners and men either end up as fighters or in passivity). Activities and participation should take these aspects into account.

- A gender perspective can help to better identify, monitor and advocate the protection needs of vulnerable groups, including women, men, boys, girls and elderly persons. A gender perspective is not equivalent to addressing the needs of women only. Neither does it mean setting up individual projects for women only. The integration of a gender perspective is a step towards improving the effectiveness of NRC's programmes and advocacy on behalf of IDPs and refugees, nevertheless recognising that women and girls constitute a majority of the vulnerable among a displaced population.
- The primary goal of NRC is to contribute to the protection of and respect for the human rights of all internally displaced persons and refugees. However, given the different impact of displacement on women and men, NRC may also implement particular programmes to assist special groups of women or men depending on the local context.
- NRC works in consultation with refugees and internally displaced persons, and promotes the full participation of both men and women in all areas of our work based on the principles of participatory assessment.
- NRC works in different cultural contexts. Therefore, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in NRC's programmes will need to be adapted with sensitivity to each country context without compromising the guiding principles of this policy.
- NRC will not tolerate sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel and the misuse of humanitarian assistance for sexual purposes. Sexual exploitation and abuse arise in many environments. However, in humanitarian crises, the reliance of affected populations on humanitarian organisations for their basic needs creates a special duty of care on the part of humanitarian workers.
- NRC's GEN CAP stand-by roster recruits and seconds senior level gender experts to UN agencies and other humanitarian missions where gender experts are required. The GEN CAP should be promoted where and when relevant.

The legal framework, policies and guidelines

NRC's programmes and activities will be planned and carried out in line with international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law and standards, including UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The following legal and policy instruments in particular will serve as a normative frame of reference:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- The Beijing Platform for Action (In particular, Chapter E on Women and Armed Conflict)
- The Agenda for Protection
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols

These instruments also represent advocacy tools to promote greater respect for the rights of displaced and refugee women and girls.

NRC furthermore recognises and supports as guidance and practical tools the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Executive Committee's conclusions and guidelines, including:

- IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action
- IASC guidance relating to sexual exploitation by humanitarian workers, developed by the IASC Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises.
- UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations
- UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women
- UNHCR Sexual and Gender-based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidance for Prevention and Response
- UNHCR, Refugee Children: Protection and Care
- UN Security Council Resolutions on Children in Armed Conflict

Reference is also made to:

- NRC's Code of Conduct
- International regulations and legal instruments prohibiting smuggling and trafficking

¹ Definitions in this section are quoted from "Gender-based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making (revised edition, 1998), Policy Analysis and Development Directorate, Status of Women Canada. Throughout this document, references to women and men include girls and boys, as appropriate.

Areas of action

In order to achieve its goals, NRC has identified the following areas of action:

- Ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all policies and programme activities (through a participative approach, consultations with affected populations; internal discussions in the organisation; training and capacity building of staff).
- Advocate the gender rights of displaced persons (for example ensuring that data on NRC's beneficiaries is disaggregated by gender and age; suggesting appropriate responses to displacement with a focus on the gender dimensions of displacement; developing reporting and accountability mechanisms within the organisation).
- Ensure that gender is mainstreamed into the institutional structure (for example re-evaluating recruitment processes, workshops, training and capacity building of staff; incorporating a gender perspective in reporting mechanisms such as mission reports and field activities; identifying responsibilities at management level).
- Identify priority areas and a corresponding implementation schedule (Identify issues and linking them to programme activities and broader organisational priorities, for example: as UNHCR has put forth five commitments to Refugee Women, NRC could identify the UNSC 1325 as a priority and link it to programmes).
- Increase partnerships with community groups and NGOs working to strengthen women's participation and rights (UNSC 1325).
- Ensure that all NRC's governing documents, policy papers and handbooks contain the gender perspective. The revision of the core activities' handbooks should include a checklist/guideline for project design and the steps for internal approval.
- Ensure that NRC's Strategic plans (including the Annual Plan of Action at Global and field levels) have incorporated the gender perspective with concrete objectives, actions and indicators.
- Include gender mainstreaming elements in the staff performance evaluation, i.e. staff members have to measure their contribution to "mainstreaming" gender, age and diversity in the activities they are in charge of.
- Gender mainstreaming is complex and time consuming and should be seen as a permanent cross cutting issue for the organisation. Therefore, the policy should be followed by practical guidelines, benchmarks and checklists on how to be included in all NRC strategies, activities, monitoring/evaluation and reporting. Additionally, develop a specific document/guideline on how to include gender in the project cycle management.
- Recommend useful training modules (developed by others but in line with the NRC Gender Policy) for use by the CO's and the HQ.
- Increase participation in inter-agency gender networks and support creation of gender networks in humanitarian situations.
- Carry out an annual evaluation/review with the purpose of measuring NRC's ability to implement its gender policy and actions.



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