



Consortium on  
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**One Mandate, Many Policies: Lessons on  
Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Office of the  
High Commissioner for Refugees,  
the World Food Programme, and the  
Department of Peacekeeping Operations**

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# **One Mandate, Many Policies: Lessons on Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations**

**Ramina Johal**

**Ramina Johal:** Tonight I'm going to talk about gender mainstreaming in three organizations in the UN system: the World Food Programme (WFP), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I will argue that each of these organizations has a different understanding of what gender mainstreaming is, that they have different institutional approaches to mainstreaming, and that the differences between their approaches impede the UN's capacity for implementation and impact on gender mainstreaming.

The flow of my presentation will take the following form: discuss what is gender mainstreaming; why it is relevant to the UN's work at the policy and program levels; and, how the WFP, DPKO and UNHCR mainstream. I will conclude by reflecting a little about what are some of the gaps, challenges and opportunities for implementing gender mainstreaming.

My presentation is drawn from three main sources. The first is work the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC, or the "Women's Commission") did with UNHCR as an implementing partner and external advocate on gender, women's rights and refugee protection during my employment (1998-2006). Since its establishment in 1989, the Women's Commission has contributed to the development and assessment of policies on the rights and protection of displaced women, children and adolescents. As a non-governmental organization it has served as an implementing partner with UNHCR in its gender (and related) mainstreaming strategy and as an outside advocate on the needs and rights of the displaced, developing tools and making recommendations for use by the UN and the international community at international and national levels.

To start with a bit of background, UNHCR was established over 50 years ago to support the well-being of refugee and displaced populations. The mandate for UNHCR includes giving *assistance* to refugees (i.e., food, shelter, and clothing, and some programs such as skills building), but also *protection* (this means a range of things, from processing refugee cases for asylum to ensuring that refugees are not forcibly returned back to their countries and working with governments to ensure that they protect refugees).

So, the Women's Commission does quite a bit of work with UNHCR. In working with them on how they were approaching gender mainstreaming, we thought that it would be useful to learn from the experience of other agencies. So we did two desk studies – on the World Food Programme and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations – and these constitute the second main source for this presentation. The desk studies were done primarily to support UNHCR's work. The goal was to help UNHCR improve their field work and better understand areas for mutual learning across agencies regarding refugees and displacement; if you understand what different agencies are doing, you can create better ways of working with them. We chose the WFP and DPKO after examining their roles (real and potential) in providing humanitarian

assistance to refugees and ‘displaced persons’ (those who haven’t crossed an international border). These desk studies are available on the Women’s Commission website (<http://www.womenscommission.org/>).

The DPKO Desk Study is called *Room to Maneuver: Lessons from Gender Mainstreaming in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations* and it really is a ‘desk study,’ just based on paper information. We did not do interviews with persons working in the field. Instead, we looked at some of the policy frameworks and compared them at the policy level, but also in terms of their broader linkages to the UN system. For example, and I will explain this in greater detail later, the DPKO gender policy exists both internally and in multidimensional peacekeeping operations where they are responsible for managing more of the UN’s work. We also looked at the linkages of multidimensional and other peacekeeping operations to protecting refugees and the displaced, so clearly we selected DPKO because it has some relevance to refugees.

DPKO’s mandate is to plan, prepare, manage and direct UN peacekeeping operations. According to their website – I’ll leave you to decide what’s on paper and what’s in reality – these peacekeeping operations and DPKO itself are mandated to alleviate human suffering and to build institutions for self-sustaining peace. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is considerably more complex than the World Food Programme and UNHCR. On the one hand, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations does what’s called ‘traditional’ missions where it acts as a buffer between warring factions and monitors ceasefires. DPKO is also increasingly involved in other military security programmes, such as demobilizing soldiers, which is very different from just monitoring a ceasefire. At the same time, one of the issues that the Women’s Commission’s research has been pushing is that DPKO is increasingly being responsible for non-military components in the transition to peace, such as responsibility for police, rule of law, reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. DPKO is managing all of these components that the UN now sees as fundamental to establishing peace and security, and these responsibilities are called multidimensional peacekeeping operations. So we selected DPKO in the study for its role in multidimensional operations. I’m not going to be talking about ‘traditional’ missions, but rather I’m going to discuss what DPKO does in terms of the management of peacekeeping operations. Where does humanitarian assistance fit into that?

We also did a desk study on the World Food Programme, called *Moving Up the Food Chain*. The World Food Programme was selected because it is the UN agency that distributes food. You’ve seen the WFP-stamped burlap bags on TV, with hundreds of people scrambling to get those sacks of grain. But overall, the agency is dedicated to eradicating hunger. So, in addition to food assistance, it also has programs that are designed for nutrition, e.g., Food for Work, School Feeding. In 2005, the World Food Programme reached 2.1 million refugees, 8.3 displaced persons, and 1.3 million returning refugees. The WFP has quite a bit of a linkage to displaced populations and so, one would think, to the work of the refugee agency, UNHCR.

Finally, the third place that information in this presentation is drawn from is participation in fora such as UN task forces. The Women’s Commission has participated, and I have participated, in several task forces on gender mainstreaming and other decision making fora, such as policy meetings of governments and various discussions in the Security Council on issues of relevance for gender, peace and security.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING DEFINED: WHAT *IS* IT?**

Okay, first big step: What is gender mainstreaming? It is a strategy defined by the agreed conclusions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997 as

“... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. **The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.**” [emphasis added]

It’s a globally accepted strategy to achieve gender equality by looking at the needs and contributions of both women and men. The UN is to structure its work around the different experiences of women and men so that they benefit equally from the UN’s work – it is not restricted to ‘women’s programmes’ or ‘women’s agency’ and, as I mentioned, the policies and programmes should not perpetuate inequality. Gender mainstreaming is therefore required in all of the UN’s policies and programme work. In 1997, also through this resolution, the UN established the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI). Now OSAGI is charged to monitor and coordinate mainstreaming in the UN system. The website [www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch) has more information on the work of OSAGI and other entities.

## **UN’S MANDATE: WHAT GENDER MAINSTREAMING *IS NOT***

Gender mainstreaming is not women only. The policy does not clarify its reach regarding age – this leaves it open to interpretation on whether mainstreaming approaches should apply to all stages in the life cycle or be limited to ‘adulthood’ or other stages. It’s not limited to one setting or sector. Gender mainstreaming applies to armed conflict, natural disaster, long-term development, humanitarian relief, human rights, etc.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING: WHY IS IT NEEDED?**

So, for a little bit of a reflection, I’ll just give you a couple of examples in terms of the work of the UN agencies and gender mainstreaming. In the World Food Programme, food distribution used to go to men automatically. They would just say, “Okay, head of household – man – here’s your ration of food for the week. See you later.” But they found that this approach wasn’t very appropriate because there were, for example, women who were the heads of households, and these households were not directly getting grain. What did this mean? It meant that the women, unfortunately, were vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from the men. In such situations, sex is exchanged for food quite a lot. Goods are withheld and used for bargaining, so it can be

disempowering if you don't put it in the right hands. Access is an important issue. Many people would not think that food is such an important commodity, but it is. I mean, it happens sometimes in our own communities. But there are many other examples, such as going to school, getting adequate shelter and other elements.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has been responsible for the disarmament of combatants and what they have found in some post-conflict environments – Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, for example – is that combatants find that a gun is very empowering. “Here's my weapon. Do what I say.” Fighting in combat has certain implications, and this could be for men or for women, but we're really talking about the majority of combatants that are men. So ex-combatants hand in their guns, and they're idle; they don't have a job and they're not making an income to prove they're men. They're completely shattered and in a completely different phase of their lives after the conflict. What happened as a result of this situation was that there was an increase in alcohol and drug abuse by men, and an increase in domestic violence against women and children. So DPKO needed, as a result of looking at their demobilization programs, to rethink the implications of their demobilization work because there was a rise in violence in the communities, for example.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS**

In addition to the Economic and Social Council, gender mainstreaming is reinforced and defined in other parts of the UN system, including in UN Security Council resolutions. UN Security Council resolutions carry major weight for agencies, for states, for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and for the UN's peace and security obligations overall. So what Security Council resolutions come to mind where gender mainstreaming is reinforced? There's one that's probably shouting out at you.

The Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. As you know, this resolution calls for the very broad integration of women in peace negotiations and programs. It includes a call for gender sensitive training and for protecting women and girls from gender-based violence. It talks about the rights and participation of women in four major sectors: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs; addressing gender-based violence; negotiation of peace agreements; and the implementation of peace agreements, such as in post-conflict elections. Reference to gender – rather than to women – is really only mentioned in terms of increasing member states' financial, technical or logistical support for gendered approaches.

There are also thematic resolutions. Three resolutions deal with the protection of civilians (POC) in armed conflict; the most recent is Resolution 1674, passed just this last April (2007). That resolution references gender, women and displacement (which is useful for our study). Broad resolutions, such as ones that deal with women, peace and security, or ones that deal with HIV/AIDS, are what we call thematic.

There are other Security Council resolutions that establish peacekeeping missions, which is important to understanding gender mainstreaming mandates. The Security Council decides: “Okay, we’re going to go into Sudan.” What are we going to do in Sudan? What are the parameters? Is it going to be traditional or multidimensional? Say it’s going to be a multidimensional peacekeeping mission. Well, these resolutions also reference gender or women’s issues. For example, Resolution 1545 on Burundi established the United Nations Operations in Burundi (ONUB) which requests that personnel give special attention to issues related to gender equality. It’s in the policy document which means it’s required to be implemented. The resolution also looks at the particular needs of girls and women vis-à-vis demobilization of soldiers.

These resolutions establishing peacekeeping missions and on the protection of civilians are other resources to further reinforce gender mainstreaming at the policy level and have implications for UN operations.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND OTHER RELEVANT FORA**

Besides ECOSOC and the Security Council, there are ‘women-specific’ fora working on gender mainstreaming. I mentioned OSAGI already. The Commission on the Status of Women is linked to the General Assembly. It is a place to review policies and approaches on an annual basis through various themes. UNIFEM (the United Nations Development Fund for Women), as part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is also very involved in implementing and looking at the implementation of 1325.

### ***‘Delivering as One’***

When we’re looking at the policy level more broadly, we often refer to ‘Delivering as One,’ the report of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment which was released last November by a panel set up by Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General at the time. A lot of people around the UN have been buzzing about this document because it proposes ten major areas for reform of the United Nations system, including a recommendation to bring the UN’s work on gender equality together into one entity. The Division for the Advancement of Women was mentioned. UNIFEM was mentioned. OSAGI was mentioned. INSTRAW (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) is another one. This report really sets forth some major changes and major reforms in the UN system.

### ***Integrated Missions***

So, getting back to how is gender mainstreamed, I’ll give the framework for UN gender mainstreaming and discuss who does what because we need to understand that in order to really move forward on ‘Delivering as One.’ It’s also important to understand that there is an informal

process of integrated missions, which are similar to multidimensional peacekeeping operations because they try to integrate the work of the UN across the multidimensional aspects at the field level. So ‘Delivering as One’ and integrated missions kind of parallel each other in that concept of bringing together the different components of UN work at the field level under more coherent leadership lines. What was happening is that they were finding that security – as we narrowly, initially defined it under DPKO’s mandate – was doing quite well. The management was removing weapons in order to have a secure environment which is the first pillar. The UN needed to set up a second pillar to look at legal issues and human rights and a third pillar on humanitarian assistance as they were finding that not enough attention was being given to humanitarian assistance under the UN (often DPKO) leadership. As I demonstrated in the example of how food is given, humanitarian assistance has a lot of relevance to the well-being of the people that the UN should be serving.

So this integrated mission concept is another evolution that is coming out of the way the UN is doing its work. It’s similar to bringing all this together, as we really should be looking at how gender is mainstreamed in this kind of an integrated mission environment. Just to confuse you a little bit more, there is an overlap between multidimensional peacekeeping operations (managed by DPKO) and integrated missions. I’m just going to say two things on this point because there are so many parallel processes happening within the UN. There doesn’t seem to be much synergy between them, but just taking peacekeeping missions, not all multidimensional peacekeeping missions are integrated missions.

At the time of writing ‘Delivering as One’ last November, out of the eight peacekeeping missions that were multidimensional, two were integrated missions: Liberia, which is referred to as UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia), and Cote d’Ivoire. And if you look back at the Security Council resolutions that established these peacekeeping missions, you’ll see that there’s reference to humanitarian assistance among other components. So I would argue that the peacekeeping missions are evolving; they’re increasing in number, they’re more multidimensional and there are efforts to make them more integrated. The problem is that it’s not really apparent how we’re making sure that the gender mainstreaming is going to continue across these more complex mandates—who will be responsible and how we will know what is happening inside the agencies. There are a lot of challenges.

## **UN SYSTEM-WIDE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Most UN field missions – as some of you may know who have been posted in the field – will have working groups or task forces on gender. Usually, these task forces are places for information sharing. It’s more along the lines of each task force representative agency saying, “Here’s what we’re doing” and another representative saying, “Here’s what we’re doing.” There’s not really that much in terms of actual coordination or working collaboratively. It depends on the countries, I think. There could be much more analysis done as to what’s working well and what isn’t working well, but you’ve got task forces basically at headquarters and in the field.

And then, as you know, there is bilateral collaboration between agencies. Those can be done informally through projects and saying, “Okay, we’re going to get together and do some joint training on refugee populations and food assistance.” Ideally, that would bring together the refugee agency and the World Food Programme. Collaboration is also to occur through priority areas often outlined in interagency agreements or through the Memoranda of Understanding. I will not get into that tonight, but both of the desk studies look in detail at interagency agreements between DPKO and UNHCR, and WFP and UNHCR. So there’s that element of collaboration and coordination.

Lastly, at the overall level of UN policy, there is some coordination and collaboration on gender mainstreaming. As I mentioned, there are headquarters’ task forces. I participated for a couple of years on a task force on gender and humanitarian action, housed in New York and co-hosted by UN entities. Another task force is on women, peace and security, is housed in OSAGI and allows some representation by NGOs.

## **HOW THEY MAINSTREAM: WFP, DPKO, UNHCR**

Okay, so let’s move away from this general overview and now focus on how the WFP, DPKO and UNHCR actually mainstream gender. In order to understand how a department or program mainstreams gender, you need to look at it at a policy level – what’s their mandate, how do they define gender mainstreaming, and what their mainstreaming policies are – and also at the practical level – what institutional structures, tools, and agreement frameworks they have put into place.

First, looking at the World Food Programme, we have already addressed their mandate, so I’ll talk a little bit about how they mainstream by using very brief examples of what definitions and policies they use, what institutional structures they have, and what tools they have. And again, they should be starting from a common definition: to ensure equal access and opportunity for all. We know this includes men and women, but to what extent does age come into it?

### ***Gender Mainstreaming Policy Frameworks***

The World Food Programme updated its gender policy in 2002 to include eight commitments that focus heavily on women and the policy is called ‘Enhanced Commitments to Women.’ This includes meeting nutritional requirements for expectant mothers, improving school attendance for girls and women’s participation in the control of the distribution of food. This policy framework, unfortunately, is lacking in certain areas. It leaves out attention to the role and engagement of men, it overlooks age (such as the elderly), and though it has programs for adolescent girls, these are not apparent in its overall policy framework, so WFP is doing it sort of through the backdoor.



Like the World Food Programme, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has also revised its gender policy. The DPKO Policy Directive on Gender Equality in Peacekeeping Operations is a very new policy, implemented in November 2006 (if you take a look at the DPKO Desk Study, the policy directive is in the annex). Quoting the policy directive, it ‘defines and describes requirements for ensuring the equal participation of women and men, girls and boys, in all peacekeeping activities.’ This policy is very new, so it’s still unclear how it’s going to be achieved, but DPKO is making strides to ensure that the policy is implemented.

In March of last year, DPKO released a detailed Action Plan on Implementing Resolution 1325. It gives timeframes and benchmarks, which are challenges in implementing policies on gender equality and mainstreaming. It looks at demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration. It looks at gender-based violence (GBV). It looks at elections. But because DPKO’s policy since 2000 was based on Resolution 1325 (rather than the broader Policy Directive), the Action Plan does not necessarily look at all of the other issues. How are they mainstreaming gender into all aspects of multidimensional operations? And this is important because – I sound a little bit like a broken record when I go to various meetings with ambassadors – for example, when the Security Council was preparing to go to Sudan and asked, “What should they be looking at in terms of DDR and GBV?” it’s “Wait a minute, are you looking at some of the root causes of inequality?” Resolution 1325 is not a gender mainstreaming framework. Go back to that Economic and Social Council definition. Resolution 1325 is not comprehensive in reaching the goals as defined by the Economic and Social Council. If you look at the Security Council resolutions that I referenced earlier, 1325 alone is not necessarily meeting those expectations and requirements. So that’s DPKO’s gender policy, in a nutshell.

Unlike WFP and DPKO, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees does not have a policy on gender, but began incorporating gender within an even broader framework starting in 2004 by applying Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM). While the ECOSOC definition includes men and women, UNHCR has decided to include men and women, girls and boys. Actually, age in this AGDM framework is based on recognizing the needs and contributions of an individual, depending on their experience in displacement and their situation. We’re not just talking about men and women, and girls and boys, we’re talking about male, female, child, adolescent, elderly, or from a particular social group. Some would say that UNHCR is way ahead of the curve here. The other thing that you might find interesting about this, looking at the definitions and policy frameworks, is that the World Food Programme and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees were among the UN agencies that first began to look at how to address the needs and rights of women in their work in the mid to late 1980’s. The World Food Programme and the UNHCR have been building and building for decades, but the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is behind the curve in regards to gender mainstreaming because they’re still trying to put together their frameworks and moving from the more narrow definitions under Resolution 1325.

### ***Gender Mainstreaming Institutional Structures***

Okay, what about institutional structures? How do these institutions set up their work in order to do this wonderful thing of mainstreaming gender?

#### *WFP, DPKO: Gender Focal Points*

The World Food Programme and DPKO have staff positions called Gender Focal Points or Advisors that work to implement gender mainstreaming policies. Most UN agencies, in fact, have Gender Focal Points at both headquarters (e.g., New York or Geneva) and the field level (e.g., Khartoum). The idea is that everybody should be doing this, but we need to appoint one or two kind of experts as Gender Focal Points to guide the process.

So these Gender Focal Points are intended to guide the process. At the field level, there's a tendency to rely solely on Focal Points; this marginalizes and sidelines the issues and the work, hence minimizing their impact across the agency. Typically, a Gender Focal Point is a low-level female staff member who is assigned this position on top of all the other work she is supposed to be doing and the activities don't get extra funding. There are now moves to shift all of this, but this has been the experience over the past couple of decades.

#### *DPKO: Gender Units*

I was fortunate to be part of the momentum to actually get Resolution 1325 passed. And, as much as I'm sitting here being quite critical of it, in my introduction we were discussing the fact that we needed this resolution. There has been progress because the Department of Peacekeeping Operations now has gender units in its larger operations. This is useful, and it's important because it is an opportunity to make sure that gender is being mainstreamed across the UN's operations – exactly what we're trying to get at here. It should be happening through those gender units, but these units are often understaffed and have no budget. The gender units are concerned with getting the people within their *own* institutions to understand why this is important and why you need to look at the different needs and contributions, but are not necessarily in the place of saying, "Oh yeah, but we should also be looking at these underlying issues." For example, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has drafted revised terms of reference for their gender advisors and for gender units, but they are not publicly available. And so, as with the focal points, they're trying to press for things such as where you place a unit within a larger mission. If the advisor reports to the head of the mission, and the office is placed in the mission's senior management area, it gives you some clout, sometimes. But, if you are relegated to another part of the mission, such as the human rights division, you're likely to just have some clout within that division and not, for example, across those three pillars that I previously mentioned.

Another necessity is the expertise to properly mainstream gender within complex missions. I think one of the challenges is that if you're in a large mission and you're doing gender mainstreaming, you should be able to grasp aspects broader than elections, gender-based

violence and demobilization. And maybe we're not there yet. I think I'm throwing out some kind of challenges here. I'm not sure what some practitioners would say, but so far, the reactions have been pretty positive to the idea

### *UNHCR: Team Approach*

In contrast to DPKO and WFP, UNHCR does not use Gender Focal Points. Instead, UNHCR uses a team approach. There are no designated persons, but rather it involves sharing responsibilities among staff. The one thing that UNHCR requires is that the UNHCR Country Representative (head of UNHCR) is part of that team.

So, what's better? Focal points? Teams? There are no conclusions.

The UNHCR team approach is relatively new; UNHCR basically came to the conclusion that using focal points wasn't working, so they were going to try something different. Some of the other implications – just looking at this institutional structure – are what happens at the field level. DPKO offers guidance by saying, “Gender advisors should be reaching out to focal points in other agencies,” but UNHCR doesn't have focal points; whom should DPKO reach out to in terms of planning or coordination for the displaced? So, even maybe the language needs to be revised when you get down to these bare bones issues. UNHCR has not given directive as to, if there is a working group on gender, whether or not they will have a person designated to attend the working group on a regular basis. Or will the gender coordination element fall through the cracks under a team approach? So, a lot of questions are coming up here when we're looking at the actual institutionalization: the approach here, what works, what doesn't work, who's talking to whom, what are they talking about?

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) has a Gender Advisor at headquarters. In the field, I don't even know, because OCHA is not supposed to be operational, but rather coordinating. There is some development to set up Gender Focal Points in humanitarian missions – there's actually recruitment for those positions, but I don't know where they're going to be placed (e.g., with UNOCHA or with another agency). Their role and responsibilities within the broader framework of the UN and gender work is also unclear at this point.

### ***Gender Mainstreaming Tools and Training***

What tools do they use to mainstream gender? Well, those also vary depending on the agency.

### *UNHCR: Participatory Assessment*

The first tool is the participatory assessment tool, employed by UNHCR, which seeks to identify the root cause of an issue. And perhaps it's my bias, having worked closely with UNHCR for quite a while, but I think that there might be a tendency for this agency and the World Food

Programme to really look more concretely at who are the people in front of them and engage them in a different way, as to how they design their programs and how they evaluate their programs. For UNHCR, the participatory assessment is a way of gathering information in a refugee setting. For example, I was in Sierra Leone in a refugee camp with Liberians a couple of years ago and I went in with a couple of UNHCR officers to work on a participatory assessment. From a non-government side, an advocacy side, and as outsiders, it would be like, “Okay, let’s gather a few people together.” We would ask open-ended questions: “What are your main concerns? What are the main issues for people in the camp? How do the issues differ depending on your age? Depending on what kind of a household you come from? Depending on your ethnic background?” Using open-ended questions was new for some of these UNHCR staff, rather than saying to refugees, “Okay, I’m here to set up a project, so I want five people to line up and do x, y, and z.” This is not a very participatory approach.

UNHCR’s participatory approach for refugees is unique in three ways. First, it’s a mind-shift looking at participatory ways of methodologies for research. The second interesting thing about participatory assessment is that it really seeks to look at solutions from the community; the community can identify the issue, what the community does about it and what the community could do about it. You can get, I think, into some complex issues here. What is the responsibility of this external agency to assist and protect the community? What should the community be doing more of themselves? – we’re trying to get at self-reliance, ultimately. The third thing that’s interesting about participatory assessment is that the findings plug into the strategic planning of the UN agency. If you go on the UNHCR website ([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)), there’s more information on this.

The participatory assessment tries to look at root causes, and I’ll use the issue of school as an example. In a group of Liberian girls – some went to school and some didn’t – many of them said, “Well, we can’t go to school because we can’t afford it.” They had to pay for uniforms, fees and supplies. A few girls said, “Well, we can go to school because we have sugar daddies.” Literally – ‘sugar daddies’ – that’s the phrase. When asked how a sugar daddy helps them go to school, they said, “Well, you know, you do a couple things and then, you know, he gives you shoes, money for supplies.” It wasn’t a matter of some girls wanting to go to school and some girls not wanting to go to school. It was: to what extent did they really want to go to school and so turned to or were subject to exploitation by men from their own community, in the refugee camp or in the local community. Similarly, you could meet with young boys who don’t go because they’re afraid that the school is going to be raided and they’re going to be forcibly conscripted. Participatory assessments open our minds to really hear the perspectives of the people that we’re supposed to be working with – the people that we are supposed to be supporting. It also plugs in a very important idea of the agency of individuals. As the outsider we have some ideas, but so do the people that are in these environments.

### *WFP: Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping System*

A second tool is Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping System which is relevant to the World Food Programme. The World Food Programme deals with food aid and they call it “food

security” or “food insecurity.” So the tool is used for mapping who is in the community and who is more vulnerable; mapping it out is a way to better understand how the agency might design their policies or programs.

### *DPKO: Gender Resource Package*

Lastly, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has a Gender Resource Package that comes in a nice, big, bright, blue booklet. The resource package, I think, has an interesting couple of chapters, including one on using the media. Part of gender mainstreaming is looking at the rights of women and men, so the Resource Package is useful in exploring how to use the media to promote action and awareness of women’s rights across communities and decision makers.

**Carol Cohn:** Taking your point that they have these different kinds of tools, I’m struck that nobody uses the Gender Resource Package at DPKO. It sits on the shelf. People literally haven’t opened it. Is this less true with the other agencies’ tools?

**RJ:** The World Food Programme, I don’t know for sure, although I think that the vulnerability assessment mapping is used because it’s a ‘technical approach’ to the agency’s work and a required tool for assessment while the Resource Package is broad and seems optional for application.

For UNHCR, the team approach is a requirement. In 2004, we worked with them to pilot this approach, which led to the requirement. Compared to Gender Focal Points, the team approach is more difficult to loop back into accountability and action. If you have a mixture of people on a team, you need to pay attention to who is doing what. Is the representative really taking responsibility for what needs to be done? It’s on paper, but is it being done?

The last thing is that UNHCR’s team approach looks at bringing in other partners. For example, the team approach in Sierra Leone included their gender group, AGDM (multifunctional teams), and representatives from the government of Sierra Leone – that was useful and important. Once again, it depends on the context, but incorporating a government that is not seen as a threat to the refugees can be a way of bolstering what you’re trying to do and engaging them in the overall plan.

Also, the Women’s Commission website has a report on UNHCR operations in Turkey (2006). I was there in 2001 and we looked at what was then a team focused on women and children. We went back five years later to assess it and to see to what extent was this really having an impact on UNHCR’s work on gender and age. So when I said not much is known, a little bit is known, and this report touches on it a little bit.

## **GAPS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES**

Here are some of the key conclusions. First, it is critical that UN entities share learning and standardize approaches. That should include policies, institutional structures, tools for implementation and assessment, and interagency agreements. How are we defining gender? How are we implementing it? What are the agreements between agencies? Is gender really coming up in the way it should be and could be? Even at the level of tools, you can see the agencies can really learn from each other. If the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is looking at gender-based violence, maybe they should be using participatory assessments.

This conclusion reinforces those of the Secretary-General's report that came out in November 2006. That report looked at the UN system-wide action plan on implementing 1325 by canvassing all the different UN agencies. The report's major conclusion was the call for greater synergy across approaches; there needs to be more synergy, more lessons and more coordination. However, that report looked only at 1325, while this presentation is about gender mainstreaming more broadly.

Our second conclusion is that there is a need to clarify leadership and accountability for mainstreaming in integrated and multidimensional missions. This is needed given shifts in the UN's gender work in different areas and developments in reform. The new Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has stated that he endorses the plan to implement the gender component of 'Delivering as One.' Instead of calling it 'gender mainstreaming' in 'Delivering as One,' they are calling it 'gender equality,' which is perhaps more appropriate. Also, International Women's Day is March 8<sup>th</sup> and every year the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is held around this date. For two weeks, member states get together and send their gender experts to New York. UN agencies have a series of panels, presentations, and discussions on the theme of the session. There is one today and tomorrow [March 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007] at the General Assembly that is looking at the gender elements of the reforms in 'Delivering as One.' The Commission on the Status of Women is sponsoring a panel on Resolution 1325. There's momentum in each arena on advancing gender work, but – the other issue that I hope this presentation demonstrated is – to what extent are these discussions bringing together the 'development side' from the General Assembly forum, peace and security from the Security Council forum, and the humanitarian and human rights sides. I think there is a big gap because of the lack of debates, definitions and strategies across these actors. Discussions that bring together the gender work of these three areas are needed in order to advance 'Delivering as One' and better realize gender mainstreaming across integrated and multidimensional missions. This is also reflected in the danger of using only Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security as the sole mechanism for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions.

And, we need to stand back and look at context for what we mean by 'gender.' Where does age fit in this? Should it fit in this? There is a whole other system in terms of policy development and implementation that is dealing with children's issues and children's rights. Meanwhile, agencies such as UNHCR are addressing age (including the elderly), and WFP is addressing adolescent girls, while DPKO's Policy Directive is stated to ensure attention to women, men, girls and boys. Does DPKO have particular programs in this regard? I don't have the answer

here, but are we moving in some direction to include age in gender approaches at the policy level, and perhaps at the operational level too.

Our third conclusion is more of a plea: UN agencies need to be on the same page in order to work with partners, including governments and international and local NGOs who are developing their own approaches. This comes from work that I was doing for the Women's Commission where I visited refugee settings and met with representatives of UN agencies, local women's organizations, youth organizations, refugee communities, and governments. I found a tremendous lack of communication and unevenness in what they were doing regarding gender. If UN agencies were themselves on the same page about gender mainstreaming, they would not only be able to improve their own work, they would also be able to better work with their partners and share knowledge, which would also help international nongovernmental organizations develop their own policies on gender mainstreaming.

### **Questions and Discussion:**

**Q:** Seven years ago, where did you hope we would be today with gender mainstreaming?

**RJ:** Personally, I thought that at the Security Council level there would be more understanding of what women have to contribute. Related to that, I had hoped that permanent and rotating member states could recognize that women and girls are vulnerable in conflict and that the UN has a responsibility to protect them; but also, that women and girls can be agents of change. Women and girls should be at the forefront of discussions, monitoring and assessing initiatives to promote their own rights and needs. We pushed for the UN to spell out women's participation and rights on issues of demobilization, gender-based violence, peace agreements, and women in refugee camps. Part of that process was getting DPKO to hire gender advisors in peacekeeping missions, which was part of the NGO recommendations in the first meeting in the Security Council in 2000. By last year's anniversary in October 2006, we had people comparing the impact of mainstreaming approaches in existing gender units in the Security Council meeting. That is progress.

**CC:** On the one hand, I didn't expect huge amounts of change in understanding, but having said that 'women must be included,' I had hoped there would be some form of accountability in the country-specific resolutions. That, in and of itself, has taken a phenomenal amount of work to make happen. I had hoped that, once brought out into the open, the more obvious reasons for thinking about gender would have some impact. One problem is that people tend to think that gender mainstreaming is 'man-hating.' Also, the high turnover in the UN makes it hard for the institution to be oriented toward gender mainstreaming. Fast turnover and little transmission of knowledge is an institutional issue, separate from the issue of gender mainstreaming.

**Q:** What do you think about the fact that there is this confusion between the terms 'women' and 'gender?' What impact has this confusion had on trying to influence gender mainstreaming? How does this hinder implementation? Should we include boys and men in gender mainstreaming, or is this just something to help women? Gender equality and women's

empowerment are often piggybacked on each other and confused. Should we focus on those who suffer more (i.e., women), or should we include men because we need them as allies? What should the distinction be, if any?

**RJ:** My mindset comes from the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children whose mandate includes only women and children because their voices were not being heard. We had to focus on women in order to bring attention to this lack of equality – it is like a pendulum swinging far to one side and you need to push it the other way. We have to look at men as both perpetrators of violence AND as protectors.

I think that, overall, our approach should be to look at gender. We need to ask the questions: What gets us to equality? Empowerment. Who are the most disempowered? Women and children. Why? They lack access to resources and other things, such as education. It’s women and it’s men who suffer, but more so women. If we just push a gender approach without some specific attention to women’s empowerment, women will get sidelined again. It must be articulated in a much more fundamental way. I like UNHCR’s approach which looks at the people in front of them and their needs. Target those who need it, which are women, children and the elderly, but look at men’s contributions and vulnerabilities as well.

**Q:** I worked for UNIFEM on a gender task force. There are gender profiles, which tell organizations to send someone. But it seems that if there is no political will at a higher level of an agency, nothing will change. Tools like the gender profiles are great, but are people willing to use them?

**RJ:** On one hand, what do we do if there is no political will? But here’s what’s happening on the ground. They are not all dimwits at policy levels. We need to break it down and do better by making our message clearer: How are we defining it? What are we defining? If there is no political will, let’s look at other sources. The problem is that there are new resolutions every year. The UK and Mexico are champions on policy action. Funding is a big part of that accountability. UNHCR is trying to develop new mechanisms. I sound defeatist, but if we could just say that gender issues are women’s issues, it could be more useful. We have to scratch below the surface.

**Q:** I was in South Sudan with WFP on a UN mission, and gender mainstreaming implementation was low. In the spirit of looking at underlying causes for why implementation isn’t happening, what would your list of reasons be? What do we need to change?

**RJ:** An emergency situation is a different context than a development situation. UNOCHA, for example, just came out with a handbook on gender mainstreaming and action. It brought agencies together to make checklists and coordinate their actions. It’s a good idea to say, “These are five things you must do.” I refer you to UNOCHA’s website. It covers health, food, livelihoods, education, institutional culture and how men are perceived differently.

There is a goal of 50/50 gender recruitment in the UN system – ‘gender-balanced’ staffing. I think that we should push for parity, but press to ensure that whoever is in that position is



equipped to know when it might be more appropriate for a woman to do the interviewing, etc. Cultural and gender awareness at the institutional level is important. We can push for more recruitment of women. We need to look at things like, if the International Rescue Committee has a field office in Khartoum, who are they inviting to meetings? Are women included? We need to look at what's going on in field offices.

**Q:** As someone who works with the UN but not as a UN personnel, what do you think helps you get the UN's attention on gender mainstreaming issues?

**RJ:** It depends on who is delivering it and what they're saying. For the first time ever (we think) three years ago, a civil society representative presented openly to the Security Council to talk about issues on the ground from her own experience. Every year since 2000, civil society representatives – women activists from conflict areas – had spoken in closed meetings with the Security Council members, regarding Resolution 1325 and their own experiences, but including a speaker at the Open Debate was another landmark recognition of the ability of women to speak on their own behalf. All of these presentations are powerful when balanced with an accurate report on the situation in the conflict. It gets people's attention, and hopefully action. An Afghan woman, who I know very well, came to speak to the Security Council and started by saying, "Just because I wear a veil does not mean I do not have a voice..." And her voice boomed out like, "Here's the deal." Everyone in the Security Council chamber was not only sitting up, they were listening intently. That's one example of how to get people's attention. We also need to ask: What's the forum and what are we saying? Both formal and informal actions are important.

For example, I mentioned the meetings that take place before a Security Council delegation (sometimes NGOs are invited). What happens is that you will have, for example, UNIFEM there saying, "OK, DDR is the main thing to look at in Darfur. How is demobilization happening? I was just there." And then you have someone from humanitarian assistance looking at gender issues who says, "No, you have to look at GBV more. Attention to gender-based violence is a fundamental issue." And then you have a government representative saying, "We really need to look at how we are paying the salaries of the security forces – the police, and the other contributing forces, such as the African Union." You have competing mandates all pressing to be heard as the priority. Well, these are all important, but we need to step back and ask, "What are the root issues here?" The Women's Commission looked at these things and drew links to other issues. I was able to step into this kind of situation and convey root issues as a non-governmental representative. NGO representatives should not do this in a demeaning way, but should speak up on where the nexus is regarding gender mainstreaming and the key entry points.

At times, we also need to speak to donors, not just UN policymakers. For example, we should bring together a small group of like-minded governments that send their people from the capital of their respective countries to the UN headquarters for the CSW or the anniversary of the passage of Resolution 1325. We should take advantage of these representatives when they are all in New York City to talk about why funding for reproductive health, for example, is so important to what they are trying to accomplish in peace and security. We must ask, "What is it that we're trying to get across, what is the right forum to get action, and who is the appropriate person to say it?"

What's challenging is that we have to be a jack-of-all-trades to figure out the best person and the best form to do it.

**Q:** How much is the debate on sexual abuse by peacekeepers distracting attention from women and girls and the role of women as agents in peacekeeping?

**RJ:** Based on the Desk Study on one hand, at least on the surface, DPKO has attempted to set up gender-based programs on DDR and GBV since passage of Resolution 1325 in 2000. On the other hand, the crap hit the fan in late 2001 when reports came out about peacekeepers' abuse and exploitation of women and girls in West Africa. This implicated not only the UN, but several international assistance organizations as well. There was a huge push to do something. This issue of sexual abuse and exploitation became so important, for good reason, but we're confusing the message here. These two issues are different. Implementing gender-based violence programs is different from peacekeepers' conduct and discipline. Now, DPKO has a conduct and discipline office and they're trying to pull this away from gender-based violence issues in the given country. There is confusion in DPKO because of this. It's also ironic that DPKO is managing these multidimensional missions. Because they have been mismanaged in terms of giving enough priority to humanitarian assistance and gender-sensitive approaches, girls and women are more likely to be abused by peacekeepers. Trafficking and access to services are also two huge problems that are inter-related. We need to treat these issues differently, but look at links between them.

**Q:** Gender advisors at DPKO said that there were many more important issues than just the scandal about the peacekeepers. But the issue of rape by peacekeepers was so sensational that it got played up. How has DPKO responded to this?

**RJ:** I think we can understand DPKO being defensive about it, but you can use the advantage of the spotlight to reduce the problem. The Women's Commission does this. We seek to take advantage of issues to push our message. There has to be a lot more work done to look at what DPKO's role is and to better connect the issues.

**CC:** You've talked about failure to look at root causes ... root causes of what? Is it women's vulnerability? Is it gender inequality? And which root causes are not being addressed?

**RJ:** The root causes are really inequality and a lack of empowerment. For example, a person is safer if they flee and can be mobile. If they have the funds for transportation, they're more likely to be able to leave. The ability to flee requires funding, funding requires employment or income, employment often requires literacy or mobility to markets, etc. Who has access and who doesn't have access? This is tracing back to root causes. We're looking at what we are defining as power and not power. What do we get from looking at these sources of power? For example, we need to link assistance and protection. Look at the Women's Commission website for the report titled "UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women: An Assessment of 10 Years of Implementation." This report has more examples of tools and gaps on refugee protection. Also look at the chapter on protection in the 2006 Inter-Agency Standing Committee Manual, "Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Same Needs, Different Opportunities – Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action."

### Biography

**Ramina Johal** was formerly the Senior Coordinator of the Women's Rights Protection Program and the Project Manager of the Protection and Participation Program at the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Prior to that, she held positions as the Research Officer at the Australian Embassy monitoring trends and policy in US immigration and migration, including human rights. She also served as a consultant with the World Bank on a post-war reconstruction study and on gender and development in the Africa region. Previously she served as Immigration Counsellor Assistant to the Canada Immigration and Employment Commission. She is the author of, among numerous other publications, *Room to Maneuver: Lessons from Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations* (2006), and "Displacement, Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Peacebuilding Commission" (2006).