



GENDER, AGE, AND DIVERSITY POLICY AND GUIDANCE

**ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND
SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR ALL**

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 2018

Colleagues, partners, and friends,

I am pleased to share with you WUSC's refreshed policy statement on gender equality, now presented as a Gender, Age, and Diversity Policy: Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion for All.

WUSC has held an official policy on gender since 1993, but we have been working to improve gender equality and advance the rights of women and girls through our programming for much longer. In 2009 WUSC updated its Gender Equality Policy, adopting gender mainstreaming and gender equity as core tenets of our work.

This current refresh builds on our 2009 policy and is informed by our practice, learning, and rich discussions and reflections across our organization, including with our partners and development agents around the world.

The most significant change in this updated 2018 policy is the recognition that we must take an intersectional approach to achieve gender equality and to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world. This evolution is consistent with our people-centred approach and our values as an organization, particularly on inclusivity, integrity, equity, and sustainability.

We are proud of our many other policies that also enable gender equality and social inclusion, such as our Code of Conduct and Personnel Policy. Our staff, volunteers, and partners are also committed to achieving equality and are important contributors toward an organizational culture that empowers us to do so.

Together, we have already made significant advances toward greater gender equality and the advancement of women's rights. Many of our programs have driven innovations in this regard - from working with girls and young women to become education advocates and role models, to engaging men and boys as champions for gender equality, to using interactive media to drive dialogue and breakdown gender stereotypes around education and employment.

This year, our Student Refugee Program is on track to achieve gender parity in its incoming cohort of scholarship students. This goal has been realized in partnership with many of the program's stakeholders and, in part, through our complementary in-camp equity in education programs that have helped girls overcome the gender-specific barriers to accessing quality education.

As we look ahead, we are eager to continue this progress by leveraging new opportunities and approaches. In particular, we look forward to exploring the role of innovative finance in reducing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and social impact investing for enhancing women's access to economic and leadership opportunities.

Change can, at times, be challenging and uncomfortable. It can also be exciting. As societies continue to evolve and generations continue to change hands, so do the social and cultural norms

which have historically restricted access and agency. We are encouraged by the social and youth movements ushering in so much of this change.

I invite you to join us in our efforts to realize the ambitions outlined in this Gender, Age and Diversity Policy, as a critical part of our work to create a better world for all young people.



Chris Eaton
Executive Director

1 VISION

WUSC's vision is a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world for all young people, especially women and refugees.

1.1 Our Gender, Age, and Diversity Policy Statement and Commitment

WUSC is committed to taking an intersectional approach that includes gender, age, and diversity, to advance gender equality and social inclusion for all young people.

We embrace gender equality and social inclusion for their transformative potential in promoting the equitable enjoyment of rights for all, especially women¹.

We mainstream gender, age, and diversity considerations within our policies, programs, and practices to better understand the opportunities and obstacles in achieving positive outcomes for gender equality and social inclusion. This includes integrating gender equity into all of our work.

We commit to respond meaningfully to those considerations whenever possible², including working to understand the root causes of inequality in order to transform unequal power relations and build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.

1.2 Scope

This Gender, Age, and Diversity Policy is designed to:

1. Make clear our **commitment** to an intersectional approach and advancing gender equality and social inclusion;
2. Provide a **foundation** for communicating this commitment internally to all staff and volunteers and externally to all stakeholders, including partners, youth, and women, and engaging them in collaborative efforts in line with this commitment;
3. Set **standards** of gender equality and social inclusion across policies, programs, and practices to which WUSC will hold itself accountable; and
4. Provide **guidance** for staff and volunteers in the operationalization of the policy, and their roles and responsibilities to advancing gender equality and social inclusion.

The policy applies to WUSC staff and volunteers working at national or international levels, regular and temporary employees and interns, working full-time or part-time, consultants, independent contractors and temporary agency staff providing services to WUSC, whether on or off duty.

References to "WUSC," "we," or "us" in this policy include all of the aforementioned.

¹ WUSC recognises that "gender" is not binary and that identifying with a gendered label along the continuum of possibilities is a personal and often changing part of an individual's identity. This policy refers to women, men, girls, and boys for ease of reading, and we respect and recognize the existence of and importance of working with individuals of all gender identities.

² By "whenever possible" we recognize we may not always be the best placed to respond to a particular need or may duplicate the efforts of others. We strongly consider how our intervention aligns with our mandate, expertise and capacities. Ensuring our interventions will do no harm is of primary concern. Financial resources and human resources are additional considerations.

2 RATIONALE AND APPROACH

WUSC understands that the actual or perceived differences between people can be defining characteristics in a person's life. These characteristics can play a central role in determining or constraining their opportunities, capacities, needs, and vulnerabilities.

In particular, in all communities where we work, we know that girls, young women, and adult women are disproportionately affected by poverty, have lower social status, have less control over their lives, have less decision-making power, are more likely to be victims of violence, and are less likely to have access to educational and economic opportunities and resources. Meaningful interventions to these challenges require addressing the root causes of inequality. Specifically, how it arises, the forms it takes, why it varies in degree across time and place and how institutions and practices contribute to it. Gender equality is therefore central to the creation of a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.



Source: Status of Women Canada. Gender-based Analysis Plus. See more at: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/>

It is crucial to recognize that women and girls experience inequality and discrimination in many different ways, often interconnected with a variety of other identity factors. Intersectionality is therefore central to achieving gender equality. WUSC's commitment to support all young people places respect for differences in age as central to our mission and vision.

In taking an intersectional approach, we are able to better understand the multifaceted realities individuals and communities face, identify the root causes of these challenges and respond more effectively. Our focus on gender, age, and diversity enables us to address the unique practical and strategic needs of individuals and communities as well as the social, cultural, and economic relationships and systems that support and constrain them.

We know that advancing gender equality and social inclusion requires a holistic and strategic approach to programming at multiple levels to transform the laws, policies, attitudes, perceptions, and practices that perpetuate unequal power relations and inequalities, and that particularly disadvantage women and girls. An intersectional approach provides us with the tools to do so. In particular, it allows us to better understand how multiple and intersecting forms of identity can result in deliberate and inadvertent exclusion or harm. Taking an intersectional approach to our work ensures that we have a greater understanding of how inequality and discrimination are experienced and the resources to design responsive interventions.

We know that women, girls, and youth are incredible agents of change in their community. They play an essential role in building a better world, a world that is more equitable and which responds better to the needs of individuals and communities. They must therefore have equitable access to the effects of development, and in this way, reap the benefits of both actions and projects. A participatory approach to development is essential for ensuring that women and youth voices and the voices of other marginalized groups are not only heard but amplified through our partnerships and collaboration. This is why our approach favours strengthening the individual and collective capacities of women and youth.

2.1 International References

Key references for WUSC's Gender Equality, Age and Diversity Policy include:

- 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and follow-up documents
- Commitments of the UN Commission on the Status of Women
- Sustainable Development Goals (2015), particularly SDG 5: achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.
- UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Policy (2011)
- The Government of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (2017)

WUSC is a Canadian-based organization, and is proud to operate in a country that has made clear its commitment to gender equality, the empowerment of women and youth, diversity, and non-discrimination.

2.2 What does this mean for our Canadian and overseas policies, programming and practices?

Gender Equality

Gender: refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between them. Gender roles are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion. This often leads to inequality.

Gender Equality: is achieved when access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender. It refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and needs of all women and men and girls and boys being equally valued and favoured. It is based on the principle of non-discrimination and the rejection of all forms of exclusion based on identity factors.

Achieving gender equality means working to create a world where all people are equally heard and valued; have equal power relations and joint decision-making; and have equitable access to education, economic opportunities, and rest. This also means creating a world that is free from harmful or restrictive gender norms and stereotypes and free from gender-based violence.

Central to gender equality is the notion of **equity**. Equity requires specific measures to eliminate legal, economic, political, social, and cultural barriers which women and other marginalized groups face. This means designing programming to specifically target identified marginalized or excluded groups. Our approach as an organization and in our programming, while not excluding men or other marginalized genders, includes a particular emphasis on women and girls and a careful consideration of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they face.

Inclusion

Social Inclusion is the act of making all groups of people within a society feel valued and important. It is the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are

disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Key components of WUSC's social inclusion approach are respect for **gender, age and diversity**.

Age: At different stages in an individual's life cycle, capacities and needs change. Age can enhance or diminish a person's capacity to exercise their rights. Recognizing how the needs of a young woman differ from those of an adult woman, or an elderly woman, or a young man, is necessary for achieving a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.

Young women in particular make up nearly half of the world's population, yet they are regularly prevented from accessing basic services, education, and decent employment. Unleashing the potential of girls and young women is an absolute must. It is also an effective pathway to improve their rights, address poverty, improve access to health and sanitation and education, make societies more inclusive and reduce violence in communities.

Young people greatly benefit from the support of older generations, who can help ensure their voices are heard and help them become catalysts for positive change. Achieving transformative change also requires engaging young men to challenge harmful gender and social norms that limit their potential and those of young women. By investing in all young people we can transform our societies for a more equal world.

Diversity³: There are many other differences between individuals that must be recognized, understood, and valued to ensure that our programming and practices are inclusive for all people. This means understanding how different ability, refugee status or location, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and other identity factors influence the way in which a person experiences the world around them and their ability to participate in our organization and our programming.

For example, women and men belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities or indigenous groups often experience discrimination and marginalization, factors that are often compounded in displacement situations. Similarly, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual, queer and/or intersex are often exposed to discrimination and abuse linked to one or more of these identities. Likewise, persons with disabilities may face heightened risks, such as exposure to violence and sexual abuse, exploitation, and exclusion or be denied access to education, health services and employment opportunities.

At WUSC, respect for diversity and inclusion means recognizing who is and is not in a position to make decisions, access services, benefit from organizational initiatives or programmatic interventions, and who may be more at risk and in need of additional support. More than intervening at the individual level, WUSC strives to identify and address systemic barriers in order to build a more diverse and inclusive organizational culture and programming.

Inclusion is the only scalable way to build diversity both internally as an organization and externally in our programming. Inclusion is the thoughtful and deliberate act of welcoming diversity and creating an environment where all people can thrive and succeed. While programming may welcome participation without discrimination, inclusivity means taking proactive measures to create an environment that allows all participants to feel equally welcomed, safe, and valued.

³ Please see our "defining diversity for further details". Adapted from the UNHCR AGDM Policy (2011)

3 WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

3.1 Intended Outcomes

- A more equal world where all young people, especially young women, are supported to become agents of change in their community.
- Social acceptance and opportunities for all young people regardless of sex, age, ability, refugee status or location, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and other identity factors.
- Progress in reducing gender inequality and promoting women and youth empowerment.
- The transformation of gender roles and power relations and the structures that sustain and underpin them.
- The positive engagement of men and boys for advancing gender equality, including in the prevention of SGBV;
- More participatory approaches that ensure the voices of women and other marginalized groups are not only heard but amplified through our partnerships and collaboration.
- Thoughtful interventions that do no harm by better understanding the context(s) in which we are working.
- Efforts to mitigate against and establish the appropriate referral pathways to respond to SGBV.
- More empowered staff, volunteers, and partners who feel committed and part of the change we hope to see.

Education, Economic Opportunities, and Empowerment

- An equal number of girls and boys completing education from primary to post-secondary and being equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to pursue their ambitions and goals, free from stereotypes.
- More inclusive opportunities in education and employment for women and all young people.
- More inclusive and sustainable growth that includes the equal participation of women and youth.
- Reduced inequalities in the access to and control over resources (material and financial) and knowledge (training and information) between women and men.
- Strengthened financial independence for women and youth.
- More women with roles in decision-making processes - in their own lives, their families, the development of their community and their society.
- More women taking control of their own lives and being the drivers of sustained improvements in women's rights.

To monitor the implementation of WUSC's Policy on Gender, Age and Diversity, we have developed standards in three areas (policies, programs, and practices) to act as benchmarks against which future processes will build and against which progress will be measured.

3.2 Policies

- WUSC will update all policies, as required, to be consistent with best practices on gender equity, gender equality, respect for diversity, and social inclusion.
- WUSC will ensure all policies are gender-responsive and intersectional. They will recognize and respond to the different needs of individuals, and will assess how gender intersects with age and diversity within their unique policy context.
- WUSC will mainstream equity, when appropriate, throughout all policies.

- WUSC’s policies will follow a “do no harm” approach. They will strive to minimize the harm any interventions may inadvertently cause, as well harm that may be caused by not providing assistance.
- WUSC will not reinforce gender stereotypes in its policies and will use gender-neutral language.

3.3 Programs

- WUSC will design programs that tackle root causes of inequality, alongside actively identifying and mitigating unintended consequences of programming.
- WUSC will take a participatory approach to programming and listen to the needs, priorities, and ideas of a diverse set of voices, particularly women and youth, seeking to elevate those more often excluded in the design and implementation of programs.
- WUSC will mainstream gender, age and diversity in all programming to ensure an intersectional approach is an essential component in the planning, design, selection, implementation, and evaluation of all aspects of WUSC programming and operations.
- WUSC will engage individuals and communities across the gender, age, and diversity spectrum to achieve our mission and vision.
- WUSC will conduct a deep and ongoing analysis about gender, age, and diversity factors rooted in the context in which programs are taking place and use this information to inform our current and future programming.
- WUSC will expect all our programs to be gender-sensitive as a minimum standard and will strive for our work to be gender transformative whenever possible.
- WUSC will mainstream gender equity and social inclusion through all of our programs.
- WUSC will clearly articulate our intended beneficiary group(s) and the change(s) we are seeking to bring about with and for them, including being clear about why we are making certain choices (ie. equity measures).
- WUSC will identify and support measures in response to the specific needs and the strategic interests expressed by women and youth.
- WUSC will include SGBV mitigation and response mechanisms to ensure our programming responds to cases where they may occur and/or are reported.
- WUSC will confront and challenge gender-related discrimination, stereotyping, and unequal power relations.
- WUSC will use innovative methodologies to enable the change we seek, especially as it relates to gender equality and inclusion.
- WUSC will have clear plans and strategies as well as the appropriate technical, human, and financial resources and inputs in place to help us realize our commitment to gender equality and inclusion;
- WUSC will monitor and evaluate our work, disaggregating results by age and gender and, where possible, other diversity factors.
- WUSC will engage in more programs and foster more partnerships that promote respect for diversity, gender equality, and sensitivity to cultural differences.
- WUSC will support our stakeholders and partners to include gender equality, age-based and diversity outcomes in their work in an appropriate and meaningful way.

In Education

- WUSC will invest in programs that improve access to high-quality, gender-responsive, and inclusive education at all levels, in particular for young women, girls, refugees, and persons with disabilities.
- WUSC will devote more resources and consideration specifically to children and young people, particularly girls, refugees, and those living with disabilities in the context of educational institutions.

In Economic Opportunities

- WUSC will invest program resources in the creation of opportunities for young people, in particular young women to enhance their access to and control over productive resources, and develop more inclusive growth opportunities.
- WUSC will foster women's leadership, negotiation power, self-confidence, and communication skills to help women better negotiate conflict and avoid violent situations that can arise in economic empowerment programming.
- WUSC will work with families, communities and businesses to ensure more accessible, safe and inclusive work environments for young people, in particular women.
- WUSC will work to challenge restrictive gender norms and roles which limit the opportunities for young people, in particular young women, to succeed economically.

In Empowerment

- WUSC will invest program resources in the creation of opportunities for women and other marginalized groups to support their personal, political, and social empowerment.
- WUSC will support the increased participation of women and young people in decision-making and leadership programming in an effort to increase the individual capacity and opportunities for access.
- WUSC will increase the investment in and focus on outcomes and outputs specifically relating to gender equality, women's rights, and the empowerment of women and girls.

3.4 Practices

- WUSC will require all personnel to be respectful in communication and interactions with one another when discussing issues related to gender, age, and diversity.
- All staff will be responsible for familiarizing themselves with and adhering to the relevant internal policies, including WUSC's Code of Conduct and Policy on Sexual Harassment, among others, and as new policies or guidelines become available.
- WUSC will convene safe spaces for open dialogue and discussion on this policy and issues related to it.
- WUSC will invest in staff capacity to build the skills required for the realization of this policy.
- WUSC will foster a cross-organizational effort and responsibility for the implementation of this policy, including empowering all staff to integrate the policy into their own personal work plans.
- WUSC will integrate this policy into its organizational tools and practices, including its annual work plan, budget, risk review, and employee engagement survey.
- WUSC will foster an organizational culture that acknowledges and respects differences, including sex, age, ability, refugee or migration status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and other identity factors.

4 GUIDANCE

4.1. Responsibility and Accountability

All staff and volunteers, regardless of position or location, are responsible for the implementation of and adherence to the standards outlined herein. Responsibilities will be consistent with the WUSC Code of Conduct. Directors, coordinators, managers, and supervisors play an important role in monitoring and ensuring the implementation of all policies, including the Gender, Age and Diversity Policy. They, and other identified staff and volunteers, act as integral focal points for the understanding and implementing this policy and others. The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for our commitment to and implementation of this policy.

This policy will be supported by a Gender, Age and Diversity Strategy which will guide WUSC in implementing the commitments made herein and in translating the policy into operational plans linked to concrete targets and results. WUSC will set ambitions, and provide the necessary resources, technical support, and tools to equip staff at all levels of the organization to plan, implement, monitor, adapt and evaluate their work from the perspective of respecting age and diversity, and achieving gender equality and social inclusion in their local and programmatic context.

To support accountability, an ongoing monitoring process will include an annual assessment and reporting on the implementation and adherence to this policy, the results of which will be shared with staff and volunteers in Canada and internationally. This will be part of regular annual planning and review processes. The Executive Director will report on these results annually to the WUSC Board of Directors.

APPENDIX 1: KEY TERMS

Age: Refers to the different stages in one's life cycle. It is important to be aware of where people are in their life cycle as their capacities and needs change over time. Age influences, and can enhance or diminish, a person's capacity to exercise his or her rights.

Gender: refers to the socially constructed roles for women and men, which are often central to the way in which people define themselves and are defined by others. Gender roles are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. Gender often defines the duties, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and privileges of women and men in any context. Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of each gender are respected.

Asylum-seeker: a person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another. It is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed.

Gender Equality: refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

Gender Equity: Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field.

Gender expression: External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender Identity: Gender identity refers to a person's innate, deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth. It includes both the personal sense of the body, which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means, and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms.

Gender Mainstreaming: Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Gender Norms: Gender norms refers to the socially constructed roles for women and men, which are often central to the way in which people define themselves and are defined by others. Gender roles are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. WUSC recognizes that many peoples' preferences and self-expression fall outside commonly understood gender norms and that this will often result in discrimination and abuse.

Diversity: Refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics. While the age and gender dimensions are present in everyone, other characteristics vary from person to person.

Non-discrimination: Non-discrimination is an integral part of the principle of equality that ensures that no one is denied their rights because of factors such as race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth (AWID).

Do No Harm: The principle of “do no harm” is taken from medical ethics. It requires humanitarian and development organizations to strive to minimize the harm they may inadvertently cause through providing aid, as well harm that may be caused by not providing aid (such as adding to tensions with host communities).

Inclusion: The idea that everyone should be able to use the same facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences, including people who have a disability or other disadvantage. Inclusion is the thoughtful and deliberate act of welcoming diversity and creating an environment where all different kinds of people can thrive and succeed. As opposed to integration, inclusion requires structural and systemic changes to recognize and address the different strengths, abilities and needs of individuals.

Intersectionality: the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Internally displaced person: According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons (also known as "IDPs") are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.

Migrant: a migrant is defined as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is (IOM),

Refugee: A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so (UNHCR).

Sex: The physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males and females.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. It can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual in nature, and can take the form of a denial of resources or access to services. It inflicts harm on women, girls, men and boys.

Sexual Orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

Youth: The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. It is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence.

APPENDIX 2: DEFINING DIVERSITY⁴

Women and girls frequently take on important roles in their families and communities. But they often have fewer opportunities and resources, lower socio-economic status, less power and influence and face multiple layers of discrimination. In addition to being everyday challenges in most places that we work, these factors are sharply amplified in cases of climate change, emergency and displacement. This can lead to exposure to numerous protection risks, including exploitation, enslavement, rape and other forms of abuse and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

The roles of **men and boys** often change as a result of interventions or in cases of natural disaster or displacement. This can create challenges and unintended consequences in development programming where men and boys may feel excluded or threatened. In the case of emergency, there are protection risks that need to be detected and addressed. Boys, in particular, can be at high risk of trafficking, forced recruitment and sexual and other forms of violence and abuse in situations of displacement. Promoting and supporting the positive engagement of men and boys in the many issues related to their community, including in the prevention and response to the scourge of SGBV, is a fundamental step towards ensuring access to protection and equality for all.

Children, including adolescents, enjoy comprehensive rights under international law, yet they are often deprived of the most basic ones. Children are at particular risk and require special attention due to their dependence on adults to survive, their vulnerability to physical and psychological trauma, and their needs that must be met to ensure normal growth and development. Participating in education in a safe environment provides children and young people with invaluable opportunities to attain normalcy in their lives. It is also a powerful vehicle for raising awareness of gender equality and teaching children and young people to respect one another and diversity within their communities. Children can often bring unique and valuable perspectives and solutions to the problems confronting them and their communities. Their participation in decisions affecting them, as well as their best interests and a strong focus on their protection and wellbeing, are essential.

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or intersex (LGBTI) are often exposed to discrimination and abuse linked to their sexual orientation and gender identity. These risk factors are often severely compounded in situations of displacement. Their participation in decisions affecting them is central to maximizing their protection, access to rights and the positive contribution they can make to community life.

Older women and men have the same basic needs as others, but may suffer increasing vulnerability due to the aging process. Aging factors alone, or in combination with other individual characteristics, can place older persons at heightened risk of marginalization, exploitation and other forms of abuse. Older

⁴ Taken from UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Policy (2018). See: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/543b922a6/age-gender-diversity-policy.html>

people often serve as community leaders and transmitters of knowledge, culture, skills and crafts. They can give guidance and advice and contribute greatly to the well-being of their families and communities.

Disability may affect every aspect of an individual's life and that of his or her family. People with disabilities may face heightened protection risks in displacement, such as exposure to violence and sexual abuse, exploitation, and exclusion from humanitarian assistance, education, livelihoods and health care. The participation of people with disabilities from a range of backgrounds is essential to identifying and developing appropriate programmatic solutions. The inclusion of children with disabilities in education is a dynamic process that is central to a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society. People with disabilities, like all people, have skills and capacities to offer to their communities. These are to be valued and promoted.

Women and men belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities or indigenous groups often experience discrimination and marginalization. This can be compounded in forced displacement situations. Age, gender and other specific factors may expose them to additional protection risks and discrimination. Working closely with minority and indigenous groups to identify the risks they face as well as strategies to mitigate them, is of fundamental importance. As individuals and groups, their active participation in community life is an enriching ingredient to be promoted.