

Refugee participation



UNHCR/A. Hollman

Afghan refugees in Iran

What is meant by refugee participation?

A definition is: a process whereby refugees assume, and are given, responsibility in managing their lives and their communities, with the goals of individual self-sufficiency and corporate self-management.

Inherent in the principle is the belief that refugees have the right to control their own lives —with due regard to obligations to their host country. Technical assistance should be seen as complementary to, and supportive of, refugee participation.

What forms can refugee participation take?

These are a few examples:

- refugee management committees in rural settlements
- refugee partnership in project design and implementation
- the promotion of refugee community development mechanisms
- refugee self-help groups
- leadership and skills training of skilled refugees

How can you help make it a reality?

There are no ready-made recipes. What's called for is an awareness of its importance whenever you're involved in:

- implementing any one of the five phases of assistance
- project planning and design
- creating refugee communities
- applying the multi-sectoral approach

Refugee women



UNHCR/A Diamond

Afghan refugees in Pakistan

The majority of refugees worldwide are women. In certain localities, refugee women and children constitute 80–85%, or more, of the entire refugee population.

One *misconception* you should avoid is to systematically classify refugee women as a “vulnerable group”. This may be true in certain circumstances, for example, the case of single mothers in hardship, of disabled or isolated women. More frequently, however, refugee women constitute a vital element in the process towards self-sufficiency.



The role of women is essential:

Women are the traditional guardians of culture, educators of the family, and, in refugee situations, often the sole provider for the family.

One *golden rule* to remember is that efforts to meet the needs of refugee women should be “*mainstreamed*”. They must form an integral part of activities and not be treated as separate projects or programmes.

With this in mind, your main *objectives* can be defined as follows:

- to analyze their needs (see below)
- to encourage their participation in programmes and projects designed to benefit them

What practical measures are taken?

The increasing awareness of the special needs of refugee women and the contributions they can offer has led to the following measures.

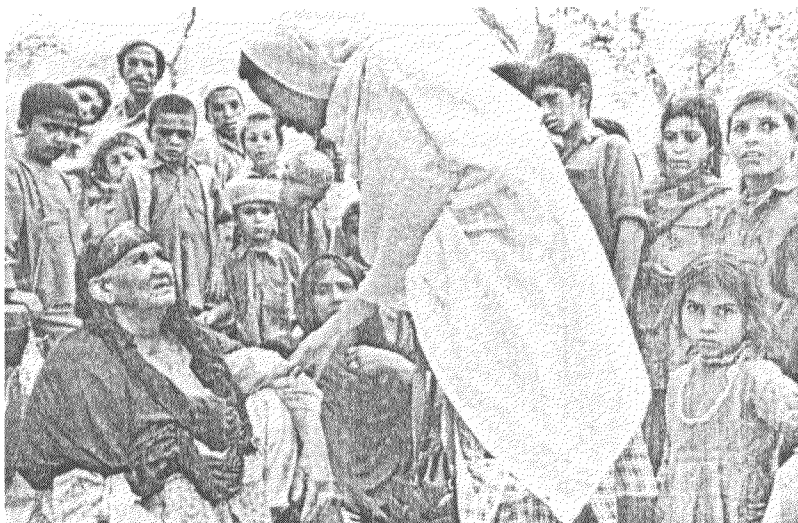
1. The issue of specific guidelines and instructions as part of annual reporting requirements. Besides defining objectives, they cover the following topics:
 - information for planning
 - issues of protection and security
 - project design
 - guidance on international protection (IOM 4/87—FOM 4/87)
 - distribution of documents
2. The development of an analytical framework for assessing the situation of refugee women, using the case study approach. These materials form the basis of a “Gender Impact Course” developed in co-operation with the Harvard Institute for Education. Further details of these materials can be obtained from the Training Service
3. The creation of a structure (Steering Committee on Refugee Women) within UNHCR Headquarters. Its purpose is to ensure that the issue of refugee women is addressed at all stages and in all areas of UNHCR activities.

What can you do to share in this effort?

There are several ways to help ensure that the specific needs of refugee women are met:

- by sharing in efforts to encourage an awareness of these needs and of their potential contributions
- by careful implementation of the guidelines on programming
- by giving specific importance to the identification, planning and design stages of projects. In the case of local settlement projects, you may wish to use the format developed by the Harvard Institute. It appears in Annex 4; use it as a checklist. Its major headings are as follows:
 - Women's dimension in project identification (assessing needs, defining project objectives, identifying possible negative effects)
 - Women's dimension in project design (impact on their activities, on their access and control)
 - Women's dimension in project implementation (personnel, organizational structures, operations and logistics, finances, flexibility)
 - Women's dimension in project evaluation (data requirements, data collection and analysis)

Refugee children



UNHCR/A Hollman

Mozambican refugees in Malawi

About one half of the world's refugees are children. UNHCR considers a person under 18 years of age, or below the legal age of "majority" if this is lower in a given country as a refugee child. They have special needs of various kinds. Examples of these needs are given below. It is important for you to be aware of them. Remember that refugee children are likely to bear deep traces of their experience throughout their adult lives. Neglecting these needs may result in far-reaching consequences for the individual.

What are the special needs?

These inevitably vary from group to group and location to location. What follows are general needs, which you are most likely to encounter:

Protection

Special needs arise when it comes to the determination of refugee status, physical security and legal protection, registration and statelessness.

Assistance

Assistance includes the provision of shelter, health, nutrition, education, individual care, social and psychological development, and the prevention and rehabilitation of disabilities. Remember that a refugee child has a double dependence: he depends for life, nourishment and sustenance on parents and other adults, who in turn need protection and assistance. Children separated from their parents need particular attention and care.

Beyond general needs such as these, there are certain groups of children requiring even closer attention.

Which are the vulnerable groups?

The following are at special risk:

Unaccompanied children—accidentally separated from parents or guardians, orphaned or abducted. They may have run away, or been abandoned. Their needs, both material and affective, will be all the more dramatic.

Children living with families other than their own — this frequently occurs when children become separated from their own parents.

Children staying for extended periods in camps — an artificial environment, where their normal processes of development may be blocked.

What you can do

Always remember that:

- Action on behalf of refugee children must be *in the best interest of the child*, and of *family unity*.
- The *refugee communities themselves* offer the major resources to meeting the needs of refugee children.

A number of specific actions you can take are listed below. They are given as examples. For a broader view you should consult the following reference text:

UNHCR Guidelines on Refugee Children (IOM/91 – FOM/85/88). It defines the fundamental principles, and provides standards against which needs and services can be assessed.

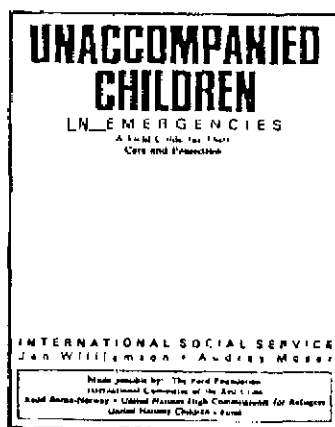
A few examples of actions

1. Begin with a careful assessment of needs. This is an essential stage, in which you must take account of a broad variety of background factors (demographic, social and cultural), as well as specific aspects which relate to the situation you are facing (the children's' physical security, health, nutrition and education). For this exercise you will find it useful to refer to the following texts.

Unaccompanied Children in Emergencies. This book, written by Jan Williamson and Audrey Moser, contains useful guidance on needs assessment, care, protection and training.

UNHCR Guidelines on Interviewing Unaccompanied Minors (currently in draft form). These will help you to know how to proceed in order to identify the numbers and status of refugee children, assess their background and present situation.

Assisting in Emergencies, a handbook issued by UNICEF.



2. Ensure *proper registration and care* of unaccompanied children. For this you will need to consult the following:
 - *Training Module on the Determination of Eligibility for Refugee Status* (RLD 2).
 - *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* which provides a registration form for the purpose.

3. Arrange for the *tracing and family reunification* of unaccompanied and separated children. Precise instructions on how to do this are contained in the memorandum on the reunification of refugee families (IOM/52/83 – FOM/49/83).
4. Ensure effective primary health care, food and nutrition programmes, and education services.

Refugees with special needs



UNHCR/M Vanappelghem

Rwandese refugees in Burundi

There are a number of groups, besides refugee women and refugee children, who have special needs. Some of these groups can be qualified as “vulnerable”, requiring special attention on your part. Their basic welfare—even existence—may be at risk. Such groups include:

- physically and mentally disabled persons
- some single parent families
- isolated persons
- some elderly persons
- victims of physical abuse or violence



This does not mean that all refugees falling into one of any of these categories are necessarily in need of special assistance. Much will depend upon individual circumstances. It is important for you to remember that such refugees are *at risk*.

What you can do

You can find explicit guidance on how to approach such groups in a number of guidelines. Those you should read are as follows:

Assistance to Disabled Refugees (IOM/17/83–BOM/15/83).
Guidelines for Medical Referrals (IOM/15/86–FOM/18/86).
World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons
 (UN decade for disabled persons 1983-92).

Some examples of specific actions



For disabled refugees

- A needs assessment, screening or survey to identify and assess specific needs. For this you should use the case assessment/review form and/or assessment form for a person who is disabled or chronically ill, which you will find in the *UNHCR Handbook for Social Services* (Annex 4).
- Arrange for medical care as required. In the case of refugees with particularly serious medical problems, individual medical evacuation may be needed. A project administered by TSS exists for this purpose. Its reference is AP/VAR/LS/401/OV/HD (*Assistance for Integration and Self-sufficiency of Refugee Individuals and Groups with Special Needs*).
- Emphasize community-based rehabilitation, so that care and treatment are conducted by refugees themselves in their own communities, rather than by institution-based professionals (see *Training Disabled People in the Community*, issued by WHO).
- Promote skills training and employment aimed at enabling the refugee concerned to perform a normal social role leading to self-sufficiency.

For elderly and isolated refugees and single-parent families

- Promote and assist self-help initiatives within the community. Guidance on this can be found in the *UNHCR Handbook for Social Services*, sections 8, 8.2 and 8.3.

For victims of physical abuse or violence

- Seek advice within the refugee community, and from health and mental health workers with an understanding of the cultural background of the victims.
- Inform Headquarters what the problems are and what measures you may be suggesting. This will also allow:
 - co-ordination with other organizations having dealt with victims of torture and trauma;
 - arrangements, if required, of a mission by an experienced expert whose advice and assistance would be helpful;
 - a possible request for funds from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

Review



1. *Three actions (each with technical components) can help you prepare for an emergency. What are they?*

2. *You are called upon to help respond to an emergency and to begin by assessing needs and available resources. Which planning tool will be given priority?*

_____ budget submission
_____ directory of UN agencies
_____ Gap Identification Worksheet
_____ map of the area

3. *Define the purpose of an Operations Plan.*

4. *What are the three types of refugee groups for whom local settlement assistance is given?*

5. How would you define the essential role of refugee women?

6. Refugee children are particularly vulnerable in certain circumstances. Name three.

7. True or False: The refugee community offers the majority of the resources needed by and for refugee children.

_____ True
_____ False

8. What other refugee groups have needs requiring special actions?

Answer Key



1. *Three actions (each with technical components) can help you prepare for an emergency. What are they?*

1. Establish an emergency alert system.
2. Develop a refugee contingency plan.
3. Follow emergency management preparedness training.

2. *You are called upon to help respond to an emergency and to begin by assessing needs and available resources. Which planning tool will be given priority?*

- _____ budget submission
- _____ directory of UN agencies
- ☒ _____ Gap Identification Worksheet
- _____ map of the area

3. *Define the purpose of an Operations Plan.*

An Operations Plan serves to define the roles, responsibilities, procedures and actions required in organizing an effective response to an emergency situation.

4. *What are the three types of refugee groups for whom local settlement assistance is given?*

1. refugees in organized settlements
2. spontaneously settled refugees
3. urban refugees

5. *How would you define the essential role of refugee women?*

The essential role of refugee women is as traditional guardians of culture, educators of the family, and (frequently) the sole provider for the family.

6. *Refugee children are particularly vulnerable in certain circumstances. Name three.*

When they are

1. unaccompanied
2. living with families other than their own
3. living for extended periods in camps

7. *True or False: The refugee community offers the majority of the resources needed by and for refugee children.*

True

8. *What other refugee groups have needs requiring special actions?*

- physically and mentally disabled persons
- single parent families
- isolated persons
- elderly persons
- victims of physical abuse or violence