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Making Gender Matter in Humanitarian Operations

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Making Gender Matter in Humanitarian Operations:

A review of selected UN organisations' awareness and practical implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action

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Contents

Executive summary

The purpose of this review is to assess to what extent UNHCR, WFP, Unicef, and UN-OCHA are aware of and integrate the standards of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action in its programming, and to what extent this Handbook is being used and implemented as a guiding tool in humanitarian operations. The review also briefly assesses the GenCap system and the cluster approach with regard to the implementation processes.

The main body of the data was collected between July and October 2010. I visited Kenya and Haiti to study the operations related to the Somalian refugee camps in Dadaab and post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, respectively.

In addition to personal interviews in the field, I have conducted telephone interviews with selected members of staff and management representatives at headquarters. I have studied relevant documents, including programme and project proposals, training material, progress reports, newsletters and email correspondence. GenCap advisers have been invited to fill out a questionnaire about their work in different humanitarian operations, with different agencies. In addition, I have observed field officers in their daily work, to obtain some understanding of the contextual challenges that affect the way humanitarian assistance is delivered.

The data are solely qualitative, and much of it in narrative style, which means they are challenging to process into 'quick reference' sets of results. My aim has been to capture what is actually taking place, with regard to the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming and targeted actions in humanitarian operations, rather than how the UN organisations or their staff wish to be perceived.

Findings indicate that while none of the reviewed organisations have fully integrated the Handbook in their humanitarian work and responses, all are in the process of implementing standards and principles of similar or comparable quality. Staff relate almost exclusively to their own organisation's gender policies, handbooks and guidelines for capacity building, programme planning and field-level practices, with the Handbook e-learning course and the IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings as notable exceptions. What seem to be missing are functioning systems to ensure coherence and predictability in Gender mainstreaming and targeted actions (GMTA) at all organisational levels, and/or ownership to the Handbook as a common reference.

The clusters represent a systematic approach to ensure a more coherent delivery of gender sensitive emergency support by UN agencies. The Handbook and its standards can as such be seen to represent a common effort to put GMTA on UN's humanitarian agenda, in which all participating agencies – through the IASC and the cluster-based coordination structure – are active stakeholders. Findings suggest, however, that most of the identified

gender mainstreaming and targeted actions originate within the agencies rather than through cluster cooperation and contact.

The GenCap initiative comes across as an effective support in bringing IASC's gender material more actively into the agencies' humanitarian training, planning, and practices. GenCap advisers also appear able to function as 'agents' who understand and know how to bridge IASC material and the agencies' on-going activities in a given emergency operation. The number of GenCap advisers deployed is, however, fairly limited in relation to the scale of humanitarian operations worldwide.

Recommendations include a strengthened focus on 'calibrating' the individual agencies' own policies and guidelines on GMTA – with the Handbook as a common reference, intensified encouragement of inter-agency and agency-partner communication on gender-related issues, further roll-out of the Handbook e-learning course, a possible expansion of the GenCap capacity, and a new common training capacity on gender that provides career-meriting certification on gender-related competence.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AGDM	Age Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (UNHCR)
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process (OCHA)
CCC	Core Commitments to Children (Unicef)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CTW	Commitment to Women (WFP)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMTA	Gender mainstreaming and targeted actions
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally displaced person
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PA	Participatory assessment (UNHCR)
SOP	Standard operational procedure
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

A fully integrated gender perspective is essential to the effectiveness of humanitarian action. Since 2000, when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, there has been growing attention to the issue among UN agencies. However, researchers still report unsystematic and inconsistent UN practices in addressing the different needs and capacities of crisis-affected women, men, girls and boys.

In 2006, the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) launched a comprehensive handbook which outlines some key principles and methods on how to apply a gender perspective in humanitarian work. A wide range of agencies, both within and affiliated to the UN family, have contributed to the development of the IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action – Women, Girls, Boys and Men. Different Needs – Equal Opportunities[1] (hereafter referred to as the Handbook). As a donor, Norway assumes that all UN agencies involved in humanitarian operations make active use of the Handbook and implement its main principles.

The purpose of this review is to assess to what extent the UN agencies which are the main receivers of Norwegian Humanitarian funds, namely UNHCR, WFP, Unicef, and UN-OCHA, have knowledge of and integrate the standards of the Handbook in its programming. The review will assess to what extent the Handbook is used and implemented as a guiding tool, and whether Handbook standards are implemented independently of the actual Handbook itself.

This review does not discuss the quality or applicability of the Handbook, nor what impact humanitarian practices in accordance with its principles may have on the lives of crisis-affected communities. It will, however, to some extent look at handbooks and guidelines of a similar format that have been developed by the agencies themselves. As I will discuss in chapter 4 and 5, agency-specific handbooks and guidelines appear to play a role in how and why the Handbook could have fallen to the side, while there is still awareness of its principles and standards.

As the four agencies studied in this review are quite different in terms of mandate, scope, activities and field presence, the review will not directly compare their awareness and implementation. That would be unfair as well as unfruitful with regard to the purpose of the review.

In previous research, I have found that the implementation of gender-based protection in UN's humanitarian activities can be hampered by the operational, cultural and geographical differences between the various organisational layers in UN agencies. One consequence of such differences is that the information flows between the various levels sometimes fail to carry the relevant types of data with regard to effective implementation

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[1] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsidi-tf_gender-genderH

of gender-sensitive protection. In my data collection for this review, I have therefore chosen to visit field- and sub-field offices, rather than headquarters. And I have focused on how members of staff describe their competence, communication, awareness and practices in personal interviews, rather than in written material produced for inter-level purposes, such as output reports, gender scorecards, and performance statistics.

In addition to personal interviews in the field, I have conducted telephone interviews with selected members of staff and management representatives at headquarters. I have studied relevant documents, including programme and project proposals, training material, progress reports, newsletters and email correspondence. GenCap advisers have been invited to fill out a questionnaire about their work in different humanitarian operations, and with different agencies. In addition, I have observed field officers in their daily work, to obtain some understanding of the contextual challenges that affect the way humanitarian assistance is delivered. As such, all data are qualitative, and in chapter 3 I will discuss the rationale behind my choice and application of qualitative indicators.

The main body of the data was collected between July and October 2010. I visited Kenya and Haiti to study the operations related to the Somalian refugee camps in Dadaab and post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, respectively. Limited to two country visits, the data are impressionistic rather than systematic. Kenya and Haiti do, however, represent humanitarian operations at opposite ends of 't Hart and Boin's crisis typology scale. The Dadaab refugee camps have existed since 1996 and are in many respects what Rosenthal would refer to as a slow-burning crisis, whereas post-earthquake Port-au-Prince represents continued myriad emergencies requiring imminent and large-scale action – a so-called sudden onset/long shadow crisis.[2] Combined, these two operations may therefore represent some of the diversity and complexity that hallmark humanitarian assistance.

Although I have a limited amount of field experience, my main perspective is that of a researcher. Theoretical discussions on humanitarian practice and crisis management will thus influence my perceptions and my analysis. The aim of the analysis is to generate a set of recommendations which can be easily applied in communication and decision-making processes at donor/inter-agency level. My hope is that the qualitative approach of a social scientist will be helpful in this respect.

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[2] 't Hart, P. and Boin, R.A. (2001): "Between Crisis and normalcy: The long shadow and post-crisis politics", in Rosenthal, U., Boin, R. A., & Comfort, L. K. (eds.). *Managing Crises: Threats, Dilemmas, Opportunities*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

2. Coordination and gender in humanitarian action

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), established in 1992, is a coordinating and policy-making forum for humanitarian actors in the UN system. In its work, the IASC also cooperates with non-humanitarian actors within the UN system and non-UN humanitarian actors, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. It is headed by the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who is also head of UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA).

In 2005, the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator commissioned a review of the global humanitarian system.[3] One of the recommendations in the review was to reorganise the coordination of humanitarian operations, in order to ensure a more effective and coherent delivery of UN assistance. This review partly coincided with the report "Delivering as One", commissioned by the Secretary-General, which reviews the entire UN system. "Delivering as one" also recommends some fundamental changes in how UN activities are organised and coordinated, referred to as the UN reform.[4]

In 2006, the IASC Task Force that dealt with gender issues was converted into the more permanent IASC Sub-working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action (hereafter referred to as the Gender SWG). The main task of the Gender SWG is to ensure attention to gender issues throughout and beyond the reorganisation of UN's humanitarian activities.

2.1. The cluster approach

Since 2006, UN's humanitarian operations have gradually moved from a sector-oriented to a cluster-based coordination structure. In essence, this means that UN's humanitarian activities are now organised in accordance with pre-defined clusters, with each cluster normally being managed by one designated agency. The eleven standard clusters are: Food Security (FAO), Camp Coordination/Camp Management (UNHCR/IOM), Early Recovery (UNDP), Education (Unicef/Save the Children), Emergency Shelter (UNHCR/IFRC), Emergency Telecommunications (WFP), Health (WHO), Logistics (WFP), Nutrition (Unicef), Protection (UNHCR), and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (Unicef). The protection cluster includes a set of sub-clusters, one of these being Gender-based Violence. In each humanitarian operation, UN activities are organised in accordance with these eleven clusters and, when relevant, the protection sub-clusters. Additionally, Age, Environment, Gender, HIV/AIDS and Mental Health and Psychosocial upport are designated 'Global Cross-Cutting Issues', coordinated by Focal

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[3] http://oneresponse.info/Coordination/ClusterApproach/Documents/Humanitarian%20Response%20Review.pdf

[4] http://www.un.org/events/panel/resources/pdfs/HLP-SWC-FinalReport.pdf

points seated at various agency headquarters. Gender has five Focal points, who also particpate in the Gender SWG.

Global cluster leads, based at the headquarters of the lead agency, as well as agency representatives coordinating the clusters in the field, focus on avoiding gaps and ensuring quality and effectiveness in assistance delivery within the operational scope of 'their' particular cluster, as well as communication and cooperation with other clusters. For this work, they are equipped with various policies, guidelines, and handbooks, many of which are IASC products. The practical focus of the clusters will of course vary, just as every emergency situation represents a new and often unprecedented combination of operational challenges. The objective of the cluster approach is nonetheless to ensure assistance delivery that is predictable and in accordance with certain humanitarian principles and quality thresholds.

1.1   The IASC Gender Handbook

In late 2006, the IASC launched a Handbook on gender in humanitarian action, entitled 'Women, Girls, Boys and Men. Different Needs – Equal Opportunities'. With contributions from all UN agencies involved in humanitarian activities as well as several non-UN humanitarian actors, the Handbook is designed to help "promote the ultimate goal of protecting and promoting the human rights of women, girls, boys and men in humanitarian action and advancing the goal of gender equality".[5]

Section A of the handbook offers a clarification of different terms and concepts related to gender in humanitarian action, lists which parts of the international legal framework are relevant to gender and protection, and outlines the practical approaches to and implications of gender equality in humanitarian activities. Section B of the handbook suggests tools to mainstream gender equality within many of the IASC-organised coordination clusters.[6]

The handbook is comprehensive in that it speaks both to administrative staff at headquarter level and practitioners in the field. It stresses that 'gender' is not only about ensuring the protection of women as victims of violence. Rather, the term gender encompasses the different needs and capacities of women, girls, boys and men affected by a humanitarian crisis. Gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance in a particular context will therefore be adapted to the "roles, power and resources" of males and females in the culture(s) of that area.[7]

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[5] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/documents/subsidi/tf_gender/IASC%20Gender%20Handbook%20(Feb%202007).pdf

[6] There are not separate chapters on Emergency telecommunications, Logistics, Protection, and Early recovery.

[7] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/documents/subsidi/tf_gender/IASC%20Gender%20Handbook%20(Feb%202007).pdf

In the spring of 2010, an e-learning course based on the Handbook was launched. It is in English, takes about three hours to complete and is offered free of charge. The e-learning course is primarily aimed at humanitarian practitioners stationed at sub-field office level, and it "provides the basic steps a humanitarian worker must take to ensure gender equality in programming".[8]

2.2.   The GenCap project

In order to support UN agencies and the various clusters in implementing the principles of the Handbook, the Gender SWG on Gender in Humanitarian Action has established the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap).

Administered by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), GenCap constitutes a pool of senior gender advisers who are deployed to humanitarian operations for periods of six to twelve months. Their primary tasks are to "provide support to information collection and analysis, programme planning, capacity building, coordination and advocacy on gender equality programming", as well as assist relevant actors in applying the IASC Handbook on Gender in Humanitarian Action.[9] At the time of this review, 11 GenCap advisers were deployed in various humanitarian operations around the world.

The GenCap system is still developing, both in terms of scope and activities. In 2010, the so-called Gender Marker (GM) was introduced as a tool to assess the gender sensitivity of all types of humanitarian projects run by UN agencies in relation to some common standards and indicators, and recruitment of more gender advisers to the NRC pool is underway.[10]

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[8] http://www.interaction.org/iasc-gender-elearning

[9] http://oneresponse.info/crosscutting/GenCap/publicdocuments/GenCap%20Fact%20sheet_2009%20April.pdf

[10] http://oneresponse.info/crosscutting/GenCap/publicdocuments/GenCapUpdate%20April%202011%20final.pdf

3. Methodology

The purpose of this review is to assess to what extent UNHCR, WFP, Unicef, and UN-OCHA are aware of and integrate the standards of the Handbook in its programming, and to what extent the Handbook is being used and implemented as a guiding tool in humanitarian operations.

In my data collection, I have therefore concentrated on generating documentation that can shed light on the ways in which gender awareness and competence influence on the daily practices in these four organisations, and to what extent these practices can be linked to the Handbook or rather to other documents.

Although this review focuses on humanitarian practice, all four organisations include developmental ideas and approaches in much of their work. Apart from the fact that the UNHCR, WFP and Unicef mandates/mission statements encompass much more than humanitarian emergencies, this reflects an on-going discussion among researchers and practitioners, where increasing attention is given to the developmental aspects of humanitarian assistance. I have therefore, in my data collection, not excluded data that are not solely emergency-oriented.

Interviews form the primary source of data. A total of 75 persons have been interviewed either in person or by telephone. Although they represent a cross section of the organisational levels in each of the four agencies, interviews at sub-field level carry the most substantial data, with regard to number and the time spent with each interviewee (see Annex 7.3 for a list of interviewees). At sub-field level, I also spent time with many of the interviewees outside of the actual interview situation.

Document studies are also important sources of data for this review. Each of the studied organisations has provided me with different types of written material. Such material include gender policies and guidelines, programme and project proposals, training material, progress reports, newsletters and email correspondence. The organisations' own gender policies and guidelines proved important to my analysis, as I will discuss further in Chapter 4 and 5. In total, I have studied approximately 2000 pages of written documentation that I have deemed relevant to this review.

My visits to the sub-field offices included some degree of **complete and participant observation**. This approach to data collection was first described by Raymond L. Gold in 1958, and is often seen as part and parcel of all social research. Spending time at a particular location, often together with informants, allowed me to observe and gain some understanding of the contextual circumstances in which they conduct their work. Sitting in on meetings or just spending time in an office with people working around me, also

provided important information. I could observe various cultural and organisational dynamics at play, and relate this to what interviewees told me about their work situation.

3.1.   Implementation indicators

In the Handbook, the proposed way to ensure implementation and targeted actions is through gender analysis that "informs planning, implementation and evaluation". My assumption is that regular and adequate gender analysis depends on the competence, communication, awareness and practices of members of staff. In my data collection and analysis, I have therefore applied four indicators that will function as reference points in assessing to what degree the principles of the Handbook are present in the emergency operations of UNHCR, WFP, Unicef, and UN-OCHA.

Competence

I have asked about the formal and informal gender qualifications of interviewees and staff in general. Such qualifications include previous work experience and educational backgrounds, as well as the training they have been offered by the agency for which they work. I have also asked specifically about any gender-training connected to the Handbook, such as possible workshops, seminars, or the e-learning course.

Communication

I have collected data on how and when gender is discussed in written reports and evaluations, email correspondence, meetings, daily tasks, problem-solving and informal conversations. Relevant communication lines are those that exist between agency colleagues (at the same organisational level and between different organisational levels), between different agencies, cluster partners, and implementing partners, between agency staff/managers and GenCap advisers, and between agency staff and crisis-affected communities.

Awareness

I have asked interviewees about their understanding of various terms and concepts that are included in the Handbook, for instance what they mean by the term gender. Is the term linked solely to women, or is attention paid also to the needs of men and boys? Is gender awareness only about sexual violence, or does it involve everything from the location of latrines to how, when and where food rations are being distributed? Further, I have asked about the interviewees' familiarity with the Handbook and sought their opinions on its relevance and applicability in their line of work.

Practices

The interviewees have been asked about the ways in which they can make or already are making their own work gender sensitive. They have also been invited to reflect on the opportunities and challenges involved in conducting their daily tasks in a more gender-

sensitive manner. This information has been compared with programme and project proposals, evaluations, and responses from other interviewees.

To summarise findings, I have applied a score that is an adjusted version of the Gender Marker and GenCap's Monitoring and Evaluation system:

0 = No use of the Handbook and few signs of its principles and standards being implemented.

1 = Signs of Handbook principles and standards being implemented, but with inadequate systems or coherence.

2a = Handbook principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although with lacking or inconsistent references to the Handbook itself.

2b = The Handbook is used and its principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although with inadequate systems or coherence.

3 = Handbook principles and standards implemented, with Handbook material integrated in training, planning, practices, and reporting.

3.2.   Kenya

I visited Kenya from August 30th to September 6th 2010. Two days were first spent in Nairobi, where I conducted interviews with field office staff at Unicef, WFP and UNHCR. I also met with the Global GenCap adviser, who held a workshop there at the time. In Dadaab, I visited two out the three refugee camps, namely Dagahaley and Ifo. In addition to talking to UN staff, NGO staff and resident representatives in these two camps, I met with UN interviewees at their offices. I also interviewed staff and managers working for Care and NRC.

3.3.   Haiti

I visited Haiti between September 16th and 23rd, and stayed in Port au Prince for most of that time. The majority of interviews took place at UN's so-called Log-base, where I spoke to staff and managers at UNHCR, WFP, Unicef and UN-OCHA. I also spoke to staff at UNFPA and MINUSTAH, the GenCap adviser who had just completed her deployment to Haiti, inter-cluster coordinators, and UN's Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator for the Haiti operation. In addition to interviews, I visited different earthquake camps around Port-au-Prince and spoke with young girls and women in two of these camps. I also participated at meetings, including one with the GBV sub-cluster, which took place at the Ministére des femmes et aux droits feminins.

3.4.   The cluster approach

In order to assess the relevance of the cluster approach in relation to gender mainstreaming and targeted actions (GMTA), I have studied information and training documents as well as evaluations of the cluster implementation process. I have asked interviewees, when appropriate, about their experiences with the cluster approach and GMTA. I have attended cluster meetings to observe the dynamics between the participants and the issues raised. And I have included questions in the GenCap questionnaire (see section 3.5) about the suitability of this coordination structure in relation to their tasks.

3.5.   GenCap questionnaire

In addition to interviewing two GenCap advisers, I distributed a questionnaire to all reachable GenCap advisers currently or recently deployed. Questions focused on their experiences with GMTA during their deployment, who they communicated and cooperated with, and the quality of this contact. Nine GenCap advisers returned a filled-in questionnaire.

4. Findings

In this section, I present the key results of my data collection. In accordance with the wishes of several interviewees, no identities are disclosed.

4.1. UNHCR

UNHCR is mandated to "lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide".[11] The agency is global cluster lead for Camp Coordination and Camp Management (conflict-induced IDPs), Emergency Shelter, and Protection. It employs close to 8,000 persons and have programme activities in well over 120 countries.

4.1.1. UNHCR's gender tools

In 1991, UNHCR launched its first handbook on the prevention of sexual violence in refugee and IDP camps, coined the 'blue book'. In 2008, this handbook was replaced by the updated and more comprehensive UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls. Based on three evaluations on the effectiveness of UNHCR's programme activities, the agency introduced the so-called Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy between 2004 and 2007. With the AGDM strategy, UNHCR strives to ensure "meaningful participation of women, girls, men, and boys of all ages and backgrounds, using a participatory, rights and community-based approach, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNHCR's policies, programmes, and activities".[12] Linked up to the AGDM Action Plan (2007-2009) and the AGDM Accountability Framework, the strategy is today regarded as the main tool for ensuring gender sensitivity in UNHCR's programme activities. Many of the interviewed UNHCR staff consider themselves quite competent on gender thanks to the AGDM, and they see it as the most useful gender tool currently available within the UN system.

4.1.2. Competence

All of UNHCR's interviewed staff at field and sub-field office level who work on protection issues, have undertaken Handbook-related training, such as the e-learning course. All UNHCR staff interviewed for this review see gender as a nuanced and

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[11] http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c2.html

[12] UNHCR Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. Standing Committee 48th meeting, 31st May 2010.

complex issue concerning men and boys as much as women and men, that requires systematic and constant attention. Interviewees claim a considerable focus on the AGDM both during the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of programmes and projects, and that this focus helps ensure gender mainstreaming. One example is the planning and construction of a new Ifo camp in Dadaab. Specific attention is for instance given to the location of wells and latrines, to ensure that women can collect water and go to the toilet in relative safety. The layout of school buildings has also been the subject of gender-sensitive planning, both with regard to boys and girls, and to pupils with disabilities. "Girls and women here feel ashamed to be seen entering or leaving the latrine area. We want to provide fencing so that the girls can enter the school latrines with a great deal of discretion," comments a programme officer at sub-field level. "Of course, this is a long-term challenge with regard to the culture and traditions here. But meanwhile, we must make sure girls don't stay at home or refrain from drinking anything during the day."

4.1.3. Communication

Although there appears to be regular communication among UNHCR staff and between UNHCR and other agencies/implementing partners, gender is predominantly addressed in the context of solving practical issues, and solely with reference to each organisation's own gender tools. I have not found any instances where the Handbook has been the object of or reference for common, inter-organisational discussions. The IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, on the other hand, appear somewhat established as an inter-organisational reference tool, and used as such also by some UNHCR staff. "When there is no SOP (Standing Operational Procedure) in place, the purple one is useful," says a protection adviser at field office level. "When we use a shaved version of it in training, we get in the very basic awareness on GBV at least." [13]

4.1.4. Awareness

Extensive reporting routines linked to the AGDM are quoted as the reason why all interviewees display a high degree of attention to gender in their daily work. That said, staff having undertaken the Handbook e-learning course report that they are now more aware of how GMTA is also about paying attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of men, and that activities must be implemented with a great deal of cultural sensitivity. "We've focused so much on the women, and we left the men out," comments one interviewee. "Also, now I see how empowerment activities that are not adjusted to the culture can sometimes actually make women more vulnerable."

Interviewees point to how the Handbook and the AGDM together encourage continued interaction with crisis-affected communities, and that this also can improve the

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[13] The cover of the IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings is purple.

effectiveness of programme activities. "Many times, we make a decision about how to do something, and then, when we get to the field we realise, oh no, it will not work that way." That said, there is also a tendency among UNHCR staff at field and sub-field level to link implementation problems to factors outside the agency. "To make it work, we need the full participation of field partners and the local communities."

4.1.5. Practices

In UNHCR, I have found a good correlation between what headquarters and field office level staff report as being done on gender, and what actually takes place at sub-field office level. Staff appear committed to the principles in the AGDM action plan in that they pay attention to how women and men, girls and boys may have different requirements in various situations. One example is the re-registration of residents in the Ifo camp near Dadaab. During that process, residents spend considerable time in waiting areas near the registration tents. UNHCR staff explain how they monitor the wellbeing of women and men during that time, and cater for particular needs that may be related to gender, such as sheltering of lactating mothers. I also found that staff were aware of how women and men were able to look after their own needs and made sure they provided support rather than 'impose new rules'. "Women organise childcare between them, so we don't interfere with that, but we make sure they have access to a safe and shaded area during the waiting period," commented one UNHCR registration clerk.

Also, in the actual registration process, female clerks would tend to female individuals or female-headed households, and the actual registration area was organised in a way that provided a certain amount of privacy for those being registered.

In Dadaab, UNHCR staff were also active in trying to curb female genital mutilation (FGM), and their work targets men and women equally. "We realised that it was insufficient to only talk to the women. The men have a strong role in the upholding of these practices, and in particular the male religious leaders," explains a UNHCR protection officer. With support from UNHCR, a men's support group has been established in the Dadaab camps, where also young boys are encouraged to get involved. "The initiative called Youth Against FGM is now self-driven," comments the protection officer. "We give them information material and the rest, they do themselves. They are quite eager to campaign for an end to all FGM practices."

Another UNHCR-supported initiative in Dadaab is the establishment of a gender-desk at the local police office. Although interviewees say that recruiting has been a challenge, the desk is staffed with female police officers, who are involved in ensuring security both in the camps and among newly arrived refugees waiting for camp access.

UNHCR also addresses the empowerment of women in community committees, and interviewees stress that it's not the number of women that counts, but whether or not the female representatives are able to speak, and whether or not their opinions are heard and respected. At sub-field office level, this issue is addressed through training in confidence building and role model programmes.

Several interviewees at sub-field office level refer to cultural traditions as the main challenge in their efforts to implement gender. "It's one step forward on sensitisation, and then a new group of refugees arrive and we're two steps back". Challenges on implementation are sometimes also related to the lack of gender awareness among other agencies and NGOs. "Everything is improvisation and they are just inventing!"

4.1.6.   Summary

UNHCR appears to make excellent progress in terms of implementing the principles of the Handbook. While some staff has received Handbook-related training, the implementation of GMTA in field practice is, however, predominantly due to the well-developed and well-functioning gender tools developed by UNHCR itself. Limited attention is given to the importance of common gender reference materials for agencies working together, either within the same geographical area or the same cluster. This may be a weakness, considering UNHCR has such a strong role in cluster management and coordination.

Score: 2a = Handbook principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although with lacking or inconsistent references to the Handbook itself.

4.2.   World Food Programme

With nearly 15,000 employees[14] assisting more than 100 million persons in 75 countries with 4.6 million metric tonnes of food yearly, WFP is the largest organisation reviewed. In 2008, WFP launched a new five-year strategy in which it changed focus from food aid to food assistance, thereby aiming "to reduce dependency and to support governmental and global efforts to ensure long term solutions to the hunger challenge".[15] Based on a mission statement instead of a mandate, WFP works primarily to provide food to crisis-affected people. Although most of the activities are emergency-related, WFP also provides food support in connection with development projects or activities which cover development aspects of humanitarian operations.[16] WFP is global cluster lead for

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[14] Of which over 12,000 are locally recruited.

[15] http://www.wfp.org/about/mission-statement

[16] http://www.wfp.org/about

Emergency Telecommunications and Logistics, and assists FAO in coordinating the Food Security cluster.

4.2.1. WFP's gender tools

WFP is currently applying its third five-year gender policy document – the first one effective from 1996 with contents reportedly inspired by issues raised at the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. Prior to that, WFP had already in 1987 established gender policy principles for its staff, which "called for taking into account women's and men's different roles in the division of labour and their different access to and control over resources".[17] When asked about their main guiding document on gender in humanitarian emergencies, many WFP interviewees refer to the WFP Gender Policy which ran from 2003 to 2007: Enhanced Commitments to Women (ECW). This policy is by many regarded as groundbreaking in that it pushed gender mainstreaming "beyond rhetoric to require specific, strategic actions at the operational level".[18] Although neither the policy documents nor their global and country level target lists make any specific mention of the Handbook, their contents appear to be in line with the Handbook's principles and standards. In addition, the current gender policy document contains references to and learning points from an evaluation of WFP's work on gender mainstreaming, conducted in 2007. One example is a list of achievements and challenges, in which it states that "issuing ration cards in women's names does not necessarily give them control over household rations because control is determined by the capacity to negotiate and decide the use of food".[19] This reflects a nuanced and qualitative approach to GMTA, and I have found practices at sub-field level of the agency that correspond with the written notion.

Interviewed members of staff appear proud of their efforts to mainstream gender in their activities, and relate this to WFP's gender policies. "WFP has been at the forefront of developing handbooks and tools that pay attention to gender," comments a senior member of staff at field office level. That said, responses also make it evident that the Handbook does not form part of WFP staff's attention to gender. "I think we turn to our own guidance," comments a manager at field office level. "We don't feel the need to add to the complexity of administering a programme by adhering to two guidelines."

4.2.2. Competence

WFP has a high percentage of staff operating at field and sub-field level, and the majority of these have been recruited regionally, nationally or locally. Most of the interviewees

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[17] http://www.wfp.org/sites/default/files/Gender%20Policy%20(2003-2007)%20Enhanced%20Commitments%20to%20Women%20to%20Ensure%20Food%20Security.pdf

[18] http://one.wfp.org/eb/docs/2009/wfp194044~2.pdf , page 5.

[19] http://one.wfp.org/eb/docs/2009/wfp194044~2.pdf, page 7.

have undertaken gender-related training, often at an early stage of their employment with WFP. The training material is reported to be mostly of WFP origin. Very few are aware of the Handbook and none of the interviewees has undertaken the e-learning course. Competence seems, however, good on gender issues and how to mainstream gender in practice at field and sub-field level.

Some staff report knowledge of the IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (hereafter referred to as the IASC GBV Guidelines), saying that it offers a deeper reflection on GBV than other documents and thereby "is the best one around" on this issue.

Despite what a senior member of staff at sub-field level describes as "good checklists for induction of new staff", a certain number of interviewees, mostly local staff recruited for particular projects carried out at sub-field level, refer to GBV when asked about gender. This may reflect that the good quality training material does not necessarily reach all staff, especially not those on local and/or short-term contracts.

4.2.3. Communication

Even in contexts where a crisis is evolving slowly, WFP employees seem to focus their attention on technical and logistical tasks, leaving communication slightly side-lined. My impression is that communication seems directed towards the crisis-affected communities or between individual members of staff on a one-to-one basis rather than organisational and systematic. Discussions in meetings that I attended were practical rather than general or theoretical.

Furthermore, written reports, such as the Situation Report prepared monthly by the Dadaab sub-office, do not adequately reflect the activity level related to GMTA in the camps. A separate headline called 'Gender issues' is mostly a numeric exercise – far from the qualitative approach to, for instance, food distributions, that was conveyed by many of the interviewees and observed in the camps.

The apparent lack of formal, organisational and systematic communication lines at sub-field office level means that some of the most detailed information remains with individuals, or within the WFP sub-field group as ad-hoc information. Knowledge and experience which could have informed analytic processes at organisational levels further up in the system or which could feed into inter-agency discourse at field and sub-field level may therefore go amiss.

4.2.4. Awareness

Interviewees sometimes display profound knowledge on how to implement GMTA in their daily tasks, which includes checking the way different initiatives affect gender dynamics both short and long term. "The extra sugar ration that we give to girls who

attend schools make some boys feeling left out," explains a programme officer at sub-field office level. "We then have to make sure these boys understand that they also count, and that they are not forgotten about." These reflections are, however, limited to practical issues and staff at sub-field level rarely talk about gender in abstract, theoretical terms. To many of the interviewees, gender mainstreaming is a very hands-on, daily exercise that is constantly evolving.

Feeding into WFP staff's awareness is the practice of so-called post-distribution monitoring. Although other agencies including UNHCR take part as well, only WFP staff mention how "going back to check" has often changed their ideas and approaches to how humanitarian support is delivered.

4.2.5.   Practices

Many members of staff observed at sub-field level appear accustomed to practical problem-solving, flexibility and direct interaction with crisis-affected communities. These abilities, combined with good competence on how to mainstream gender in their daily tasks, means that WFP's practices appear to be conducted with a high degree of gender sensitivity. Attention to men's as well as women's needs and capacities, and a constant and sometimes quite technical dialogue with those receiving assistance, means that WFP's efforts to mainstream gender appear systemic and well embedded in daily programme activities.

Examples of how this came across in practices include the organisation of food distribution in the Ifo camp. Continuous negotiations between WFP staff and food recipients appeared necessary to make the distribution process run somewhat smoothly, as there was regularly someone claiming rations they were not entitled to, or someone complaining about unfair treatment. In order to curb attempts to trade food for sexual favours, WFP had ensured only women measured rations. Further, all foodstuffs were weighed again at a separate control station and checked against ration cards and measurement charts, to make sure rations were handed out correctly.

The food advisory committee in the Ifo camp included both men and women. When meeting with the committee, I was told that the women would speak out on issues that concerned them, and that they were listened to by the male committee members. WFP staff linked this to the on-going efforts to empower women through workshops and information campaigns organised in cooperation with other agencies and NGOs.

WFP staff also report that they conduct post-distribution follow-up of food recipients. The reason is that parts of the food rations tend to be sold at the market. "We try to ensure that the food goes to the women," says a WFP programme officer. "And with the post-distribution follow-up we can find out how much of it does." One interviewee explains that food rations are often sold so that families can afford other commodities, such as firewood or school books. "When we uncover such instances, we contact the NGOs

responsible for the distributions of these commodities, to see if we can increase supplies. That is a way of preventing malnutrition, which is already at a high rate here."

When asked about gender-sensitive food-distribution, interviewees in both Dadaab and Haiti mention using the school feeding programme to encourage girls to attend school. In Haiti, girls are given extra food rations to take home to their families, while in Dadaab girls are given a pack of sugar for each month of school attendance. "We know this has a big effect on whether girls are allowed to go to school or whether they are kept at home to help with house chores," says a WFP policy officer.

In connection with school feeding, WFP also runs a programme in cooperation with Oxfam, where women are trained as cooks so that they can provide catering services to schools. "In Haiti, there are very few opportunities for women to find work," explains the policy officer. "So we see this as an income-generating activity that benefits women." Another WFP officer refers to the same programme when stating the 85 per cent of the catering and cleaning staff in UN-assisted schools are women. "Most teachers are men, though," he adds. "So in the long run we need to focus on making sure the girls receive proper education."

4.2.6. Summary

WFP seems to be able to combine a highly technical and logistical focus in their humanitarian activities with a nuanced and qualitatively oriented approach to GMTA. Although WFP may be the organisation out of the four that does the most 'counting', its staff seems to have a genuine interest in "what happens beyond the numbers". This could be linked to a fairly established tradition of paying attention to the gendered aspects of their programme activities and well-developed gender tools that are adapted to problem-solving at field and sub-field level. While very few WFP staff interviewed for this review are familiar with the Handbook or have undertaken any Handbook-related training, their gender competence is generally high, and the Handbook standards and principles appear to be in place. What appear to be inadequate reporting routines in terms of relaying this competence further up through the system or across to other organisation could be a weak point.

Score: 2a = Handbook principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although without references to the Handbook itself.

4.3. Unicef

Unicef is mandated to "to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential".[20] The

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[20] http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html

agency is global cluster lead for Nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, co-leads the Education cluster with Save the Children, and leads the Child Protection and Gender-based Violence sub-clusters. It has a staff of about 1,200 persons and is represented in almost all countries of the World. During 2010, Unicef administered the delivery of humanitarian assistance in 98 countries.[21] The agency has an extensive network of partners that operate on its behalf at field and sub-field office level.

4.3.1.   Unicef's gender tools

The main guiding document for Unicef staff in all planning, practice, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian activities is the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCC), as well as the Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) reporting framework. The CCC is quoted by humanitarian staff as being the primary reference in their daily work on gender-related issues. The CCC outlines the general norms and principles of Unicef's humanitarian activities, the agency's commitments and benchmarks in each of the relevant cluster areas, and guidance on how to achieve these during the preparedness, response and early recovery stages of a humanitarian emergency operation. The guidance section primarily covers tasks linked to strategic planning, coordination, surveillance, and data collection and analysis. While the Handbook is not mentioned anywhere in the document, the CCC appears to promote principles and standards on gender that are similar to those of the Handbook, although with one major exception: All of the listed 'commitments' refer to 'girls, boys and women' and there is very limited guidance on how to involve men or address men's particular needs and capacities.

Following an evaluation in 2008, Unicef drew up the Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls and Women – Working for an Equal Future, which was launched in the spring of 2010. The policy addresses gender equality in all of Unicef's programme areas (not only humanitarian), and replaces the 1994 Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. It is accompanied by a Strategic Action Plan for Gender 2010-2012. While Unicef's participation in the Gender SWG is mentioned in the policy, neither of the two documents contain any references to the Handbook, with one exception which is described below. Gender is thematically treated on a fairly general level, with reference to CEDAW, the MDGs, non-discrimination principles and the equal rights of girls and boys, women and men "as defined in the UN Charter".[22] The Strategic Action Plan outlines eight 'change areas' concerning organisational processes, whereof one is labelled "Capacity knowledge and management". One benchmark in this 'change area' is the "proportion of professional staff who have completed the interagency e-learning," with a reference to 'Gender Equality, UN coherence and you', developed by Unicef in

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[21] Unicef Annual Report 2010

[22] http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Working_for_an_Equal_Future_UNICEF_Gender_Policy_2010.pdf

cooperation with UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women. In the 'planned activities' section under the same benchmark, it says that the IASC e-learning course on gender in humanitarian action will be rolled out to all emergency field staff.[23]

Unicef has also started the process of applying a Gender Marker system, which is identical to that of IASC/GenCap.

4.3.2. Competence

Interviewees at all levels refer to gender as an issue that forms a natural part of their programme activities, since Unicef's programme activities "are aimed at boys and girls and women", for instance through mother-and-child and education activities. "Our activities are naturally gendered," comment several interviewees.

Competence on gender among staff appears to be in a process of radical improvement. "We have no choice but to look beyond the mother," says an interviewee at field office level. This is despite the fact that the policy at headquarters level is to not make mandatory any training material on gender. "The argument here is that if it's mandatory, people don't want to do it," says one interviewee at headquarters level. "There are stories of managers getting their secretaries to complete the mandatory courses and sign on their behalf."

Some Unicef staff report having undertaken the Handbook e-learning course and some have read sections of the printed version. They say that they focused on the sections in the Handbook which are directly relevant to Unicef's programme activities, and did not pay particular attention to the other sections.

Several of the interviewees reveal a lack of knowledge about the practical aspects of how to implement GMTA at sub-field office level. This can probably be linked to the fact that Unicef delegates operational responsibilities to its implementing partners. That said, many interviewees remained at an alarmingly 'administrative' and 'general' level in many of their answers and comments. And some describe the Handbook as "far too comprehensive" for their line of work.

4.3.3. Communication

Unicef staff report positive and constructive experience with an internal gender-adviser initiative which resembles GenCap, where a member of staff is deployed to a country office for a period of six months. "He or she can sit with them [field office level staff] and show them what this means in practice". Interviewees in Nairobi, where the gender adviser initiative was piloted some time ago, refer to several gender activities that have been maintained by staff well beyond the departure of the gender adviser. One example is

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[23] http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Strategic_Priority_Action_Plan_2010_to_2012.pdf

the Gender Task Force in Nairobi, which convenes once a month. The Task Force sets up, for instance, a monthly 'Gender Work Plan', which is distributed to staff at the Nairobi office. At headquarters level, the gender adviser initiative is seen as an extremely effective tool in mainstreaming gender, but also "resource intensive" and therefore "unrealistic as a permanent thing".

Also, some of the GenCap advisers refer to Unicef as an agency that has been easy to work with and willing to adopt the Handbook principles in their work at field level. "I have been collaborating with Unicef for two years now," writes a GendCap adviser in her questionnaire. "That is why the organisation knows and appreciates the Handbook."

4.3.4. *Awareness*

Interviews reveal significant discrepancies in the way Unicef staff perceive and relate to gender, and there appears to be an on-going shift in gender awareness within the agency. While several interviewees report that they are familiar with the Handbook and that they have undertaken the e-learning course, some interviewees also appear to think of gender as an issue that primarily concerns gender-based violence and/or women. Many interviewees report that they would pay better attention to gender with a less demanding workload and more time, while others say that "we must be careful not to mainstream gender into oblivion". Several interviewees are keen to get a [Unicef] gender adviser deployed in their mission, to get help in seeing where and how to gender Unicef's work at a more profound level. "We are still missing a systematic approach to capacity building on gender," comments one interviewee at headquarters level. "Gender happens in the details of programming, and sending out a policy by email is not going to change anything."

4.3.5. *Practices*

At field office level, Unicef staff appear to focus on capacity development in the local government structures and civil society. GMTA encompasses ensuring women and girls have access to services such as healthcare and education. Interviewees refer to the Convention of the Rights of the Child[24] as their guiding tool in terms of operational focus. "We are in dialogue with some of the ministries, for instance," says a Unicef consultant. "And we provide support and competence in areas such as GBV. We work through these kinds of channels, to ensure national ownership and sustainability."

One example of Unicef's support to local authorities is physically evident in Haiti, where the building that housed the Ministere a la Condition Feminine et aux droits des Femmes was destroyed in the earthquake. Unicef sponsored two tents where the ministry's most basic services could be resumed and where meetings could be held.

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[24] http://www.unicef.org/crc/

Unicef's practices with regard to GMTA at sub-field level did, however, prove difficult to assess, as most activities at this level both in Haiti and Dadaab had been delegated to partner NGOs. When asking Unicef staff at field office level about the extent to which partner activities are gendered, interviewees say that the "focus is on the provision of services", and that "we haven't seen people [in partner organisations] go back to check". There are also comments about a disconnection between policies and strategies, and "the hands in the field". One interviewee explains such comments by saying that Unicef works out the policies, while its partners work on the ground. She adds that when things have to happen quickly, like after the earthquake, "you just assume they keep an eye on the gender issues."

In Haiti, interviewees report that access to reliable information has been the biggest practical challenge in the wake of the earthquake. "We asked for sex disaggregated data from our partners, but they didn't always have it," comments a senior recovery adviser. "That said, when we have 200 people using the same latrine, we're not yet at a point where we talk about gender sensitivity." Another interviewee says that sex-disaggregated data only have marginal significance in relation to projects anyway, as it is "limited to counting how many boys and how many girls".

Despite reassurances that "there is a chain of accountability" between Unicef and its implementing partners, I have not identified any systematic communication on gender-related issues, apart from reports linked to initiatives that are described as "naturally gendered" since they target children and their mothers. It may well be that partner activities are well adapted to gender concerns within the cultural context of operations, but there do not appear to be any good routines in place for qualitative monitoring of these activities. Interviewees do, however, report shortcomings which reveal individual attention and communication. "We funded bladder watching[25] as an income-generating activity run by a partner NGO," says a member of staff at field office level. "But then we found that only men were employed. So now we address this with the NGO."

4.3.6.   Summary

Since Unicef has a limited degree of operational responsibility at sub-field level, it is difficult to obtain a good picture of the gender competence and practices among staff beyond an abstract, theoretical and/or administrative perspective. There also appears to be significant differences among the interviewees concerning competence and awareness, which may be linked to the on-going efforts to improve GMTA within Unicef. While some staff report that they have undertaken the Handbook e-learning course, Unicef's own policies and handbooks, including an e-learning course on gender equality, gain priority. Initiatives for transferring GMTA from policy documents through to improved practice in the field are still fragmented, and they seem somewhat strained by the

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[25] Bladder watching means guarding soft-skinned water tanks, to keep control of who gets access to the water.

apparent lack of adequate reporting on gender between Unicef and its implementing partners.

Score: 2a / 1 = At headquarters and field office level there are good indications that Handbook principles and standards are in the process of being implemented, although with very few references to the Handbook itself. At sub-field level, it has been difficult to identify any systematic or coherent implementation of Handbook principles and standards.

4.4. UN-OCHA

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is not a regular agency but a part of the UN secretariat. First established as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) in 1991 and then in 1998 reorganised and renamed, OCHA is the UN entity "responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies". With over 1,800 employees, OCHA during 2010 responded to 19 humanitarian crises in 32 countries. OCHA does not lead any of the clusters, but forms part of UN's humanitarian coordination structure alongside IASC, for instance by assisting the other organisations in coordination and information management tasks.

4.4.1. OCHA's gender tools

Since OCHA's establishment is based on the same UN resolution as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, with its core mission being to "mobilise and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action," the organisation's tools on gender mainstreaming are also closely linked to those of IASC.[26] In fact, the production of the Handbook was headed by OCHA staff, the production of the e-learning course was overseen by OCHA staff, the Gender SWG is currently led by OCHA's senior gender adviser, the GenCap system is managed by OCHA and OCHA organises much of the implementation of the cluster approach. Assessing to what extent the principles and standards of the Handbook are present in OCHA's programme activities is therefore a somewhat different exercise, compared to the other three agencies in this review.

4.4.2. Competence

All OCHA staff at field and sub-field level interviewed for this review appear to have good knowledge of the Handbook. Many quote workshops and seminars they have attended, while others – mostly at sub-field level – wish for better access to training. Some refer to the e-learning course but several say they haven't had the time to look at it

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[26] http://www.unocha.org/about-us/who-we-are/history

yet. Many of the interviewees are concerned about the challenges of implementing GMTA, and see the lack of attention to gender in other agencies – especially sex-disaggregated data – as the main problem.

At headquarters level, however, some interviewees speak of the Handbook as "too complicated – you have to be a gender expert to understand the terminology" and "to be honest with you, I have 250 emails to act on every day, and the e-learning course is just another link". Some interviewees at headquarters level also convey a negative perception of gender mainstreaming in OCHA, and say they have distanced themselves from it because they feel it has been promoted too aggressively. "The whole issue has been twisted," comments a manager. "There is this undercurrent that I don't like."

4.4.3. Communication

Most of the field and sub-field level interviews with OCHA staff have been conducted in Haiti, where the staff turnover has been exceptionally high and where "there is absolutely no institutional memory right now". When asked about how gender is discussed in meetings and reports, interviewees refer to "the total chaos here" and "we have so many other problems to deal with, we haven't even started to think about gender".

Communication on gender with other agencies is also described as problematic. "There are too many actors here and coordination is still a disaster. We don't know what people are doing. They don't tell us anything".

Communication with other organisational levels within OCHA also seems to have some flaws in terms of gender. "We heard nothing from the HQ for two months. Then they sent me all the guidelines – except the Gender Handbook."

4.4.4. Awareness

Again, while staff at field and sub-field level displays good awareness of gender issues and how to implement the principles and standards of the Handbook in their daily work, some of the interviewed staff at headquarters level are less enthusiastic. "I talked to my colleagues about it and then it made sense," says a senior member of staff. "But then later I forgot about it. It's just too theoretic." One interviewee links the discrepancies to the fact that OCHA staff is dependent on the actions of others in their implementation of GMTA, which makes it more complex as a theoretical exercise. "People struggle to understand the term gender, and then they don't know how to mainstream it in practice," explains an interviewee at headquarters level. "For instance, with GIS, unless you are standing next to the person making the map, it's difficult for him or her to know what to do."

4.4.5.   Practices

When describing gender implementation in OCHA's activities at field and sub-field level, interviewees mostly talk about incorporating gender-relevant data into the various information flows, such as situation reports, cluster updates and Flash Appeals/CAPs. Some describe the challenges of obtaining such data from the other agencies. Haiti is referred to as especially problematic in this sense, and that the lack of data combined with the high staff turnover in OCHA has made gender "really just an issue that is on our list".

Some interviewees express deep frustration, saying that Haiti is the most challenging mission of their career. "Working on the revised Flash Appeal, OCHA is completely understaffed and one person is doing everything," sighs a member of staff at field office level. "Gender? Forget about it!"

A senior reporting officer explains how OCHA works to collate information on the various activities of the different agencies and NGOs that are operating in post-earthquake Haiti. A so-called dashboard has been designed where various data will be visualised in a user-friendly manner to enable better coordination. "The problem is," says the senior reporting officer, "that the agencies and NGOs don't even send us their basic data. Which means that we don't know what people are doing."

At headquarters level, gender implementation appears inconsistent. One interviewee says he does not consider gender part of his work at all. "While I'm aware of it [the Handbook], it is not really a primary issue for me". Another interviewee is keen to implement a stronger gender element in the training that he organises. "We haven't yet found a way to embed gender in our reflexes, and that's where OCHA staff should have it. Because in emergencies, everybody is chasing you and there are all these different political agendas, and then it won't work to come and say 'don't forget about the gender issue'."

4.4.6.   Summary

OCHA is the only reviewed organisation where all interviewees have been familiar with the Handbook. The most striking finding regarding OCHA is the difference between awareness and competence on gender among staff at field and sub-field level, and staff at headquarters level. Gender appears to be perceived much more as a political issue than what I have found in the other agencies, and implementation of the Handbook principles and standards is not always seen as something that will invariably lead to improvements.

OCHA's role as coordinator and information manager means that GMTA in practice will to some extent depend on what is generated by other agencies. This argument is often used to explain frustration over inadequate results.

It is somewhat surprising that the organisation with the strongest links to the IASC and the Handbook is also the one where some interviewees are critical about its applicability.

That said, OCHA is also where I found the highest level of frustrations about implementation shortcomings, which I interpret as honest expressions of commitment.

Score: 2b = The Handbook is used and its principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although with inadequate coherence.

4.5.   The cluster approach

Data collected for this review reveal, surprisingly, that the implementation of the Handbook and/or its principles and standards is somewhat disconnected from the cluster structure, as it is practiced at field office level of the UN system. The clusters are first and foremost 'active' during the actual period of a humanitarian emergency operation. Agencies do take part in cluster meetings, and they do discuss needs and gaps. However, the attention that is given to gender in planning, practices and reporting of activities appears to derive from within the individual agency structures, and not through external influence at the field level – especially not at the 'height' of an emergency situation. Discussions on gender issues in cluster meetings often seem to be linked to particular cases and problem-solving.

In Haiti, for instance, the WASH cluster reportedly discussed the construction and location of latrines in camps, as well as possibilities for lighting in the latrine areas, after it became known that women were not using the latrines. Concerns were also raised in cluster meetings about the safety of women in connection with food distribution, following reports of attacks against women on their way home or at home after having received food rations. This reflects a reactionary rather than a preventive approach to gender-based protection, where reported problems are addressed while marginal attention is afforded pro-active and systematic inter-agency vulnerability assessments.

With regard to cluster-related GMTA, interviewees quote gaining knowledge and awareness through workshops and seminars, emails/distributions from gender advisers, and from visiting the cluster website.[27] Much of the individual 'competence building' on gender, however, has taken place whenever interviewees have had a "quiet" period during an emergency operation, or time away from it – not through the cluster cooperation as such. "You have to be pragmatic. Everyone has got their own agenda," comments one interviewee. "People in the field are so busy, they will only ever look at their own agency's material, because that's what they will be held accountable on."

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[27] http://oneresponse.info

## 4.6.	GenCap

The GenCap system appears to be an effective mechanism with regard to GMTA. Many of the interviewed GenCap advisers refer to how they have distributed the Handbook and arranged information meetings and seminars on it in contexts where it was previously unused or unknown.

Some GenCap advisers do, however, quote the Handbook as "somewhat comprehensive" in some contexts. Checklists and other material that are simple and easy to apply or practical in their approach are welcomed and often quoted as those most successfully adopted. "The Handbook is a BOOK, and reality is that people who are not gender focal points, or really keen on the subject, are not going to sit down and read dense text. People want to be spoon-fed, easily digestible techniques for how they can do the job right, and interested in only a quick basic understanding of the rationale behind it."

The Handbook e-learning course is referred to as "excellent", "applicable", "relevant," and "easy to use", with its weakness being that it is only available in English.

Although cluster leads are among the primary contact persons for deployed Gen Cap advisers (alongside programme managers, protection officers, and gender focal points), they refer to the cluster structure as "a challenging place" to promote the principles and standards of the Handbook. They report it is difficult to establish the Handbook as a common reference tool, because agencies refer almost exclusively to their own tools and reporting routines. "In complex humanitarian contexts, like the DRC, gender 'competes' with other priorities," comments one survey respondent.

GenCap advisers also report challenges related to "unwillingness" and "lack of knowledge" among senior managers. "The word 'gender' is really unpopular in the Pacific, and also with many UN people here and elsewhere: People have had too many negative experiences trying to deal with 'gender'. But people are very open to making humanitarian response more effective, and to avoid repeating previous blunders that have occurred as a result of not including women." One survey respondent calls for the UN to make sure "ALL senior staff members are committed and knowledgeable".

Some report problems in establishing contact with the different agencies. This could be related to the fact that GenCap officers are not assigned to a particular agency but are working across agencies. Several survey respondents report the most significant progress where they have been able to "link up and help people to do practical analyses of what are the actual differences between women and men in a given place, and their implications for preparedness and actual disaster." They write that once attitudes have been changed, awareness raised, money allocated and accountability ensured within the agencies, GenCap initiatives prove sustainable.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this review has been to assess to what extent UNHCR, WFP, Unicef and UN-OCHA have knowledge of and integrate in their activities the standards of the IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian action. The Handbook standards are used as benchmarks because they represent a conceptual framework and programming guidance to which all relevant UN agencies have an ownership. Originating from within IASC, the Handbook is intended and formally acknowledged as a common framework for how UN agencies should work on GMTA.

Further, as described in chapter 2, the dissemination and implementation of the Handbook principles are anchored in the cluster-based coordination structure and the support system that accompanies the transition from sector-oriented to cluster-based coordination of UN's humanitarian operations. The GenCap initiative forms part of this support system.

The Handbook and its standards can as such be seen to represent a common effort to put GMTA on UN's humanitarian agenda, in which all participating agencies – through the IASC and the cluster-based coordination structure – are active stakeholders. Assuming the quality of the Handbook material meets the standards of the contributing agencies, I have in this review not focused on its contents but rather the extent to which the Handbook and/or its principles and standards have been implemented. Whenever the Handbook has not proven to be in use, I have sought to identify the main reasons why.

As described in chapter 4, the reviewed organisations are quite different from each other. This concerns both their mandates/missions as well as in their approach to humanitarian activities. WFP and UNHCR have a long history of hands-on sub-field practice and many of their staff members are in daily contact with refugees and crisis-affected people. While UNHCR through its work with refugees has a wide range of socially oriented programme activities, WFP's distribution of food affords the agency a more logistical character. Unicef, while also firmly rooted in UN's humanitarian traditions, is generally not operative at sub-field office level. The agency works primarily vis-a-vis local authorities and through partner organisations. OCHA is a coordinating body and staff members depend on the cooperation of other agencies in order to achieve its purpose in emergency operations. Accordingly, I have identified differences in how the four reviewed organisations perceive GMTA and seek to implement it. Unicef is theoretic and general in its approach, OCHA works to convince and coordinate the others, while WFP and UNHCR have their own traditions on how to address gender issues and in many aspects feel independent of OCHA.

Findings reveal that while neither UNHCR, WFP nor Unicef have integrated the Handbook in their humanitarian work and responses, all are in the process of implementing standards and principles of similar or comparable quality. OCHA has integrated the Handbook but there seem to be inconsistencies in GMTA implementation.

With regard to competence, gender-related training is normally provided although with some inconsistency. Interviewed members of staff who have undergone training on GMTA appear to have a well-informed and practical-oriented approach to GMTA in their work. Those with limited training tend to associate GMTA with either mother-and-child activities and/or GBV. Many of the interviewees who seem to have good competence on gender-related issues report that they have recently taken the Handbook e-learning course (launched a few months prior to the data collection for this review).

UNHCR and WFP staff appear to talk about GMTA in connection with practical issues and problem-solving, whereas interviewees at Unicef refer to gender-related communication at a more theoretical level. This is probably linked to the fact that the agency has marginal sub-field office activities. OCHA staff reveal a commitment to gender issues in how they communicate with other agencies, and quote poor access to gender-related data as the main barrier to effective implementation of GMTA.

The level of individual awareness in all four agencies seems closely linked to the gender-sensitive practices at field and sub-field office level. Whenever GMTA is put high on the agenda, individual members of staff feel encouraged to apply their gender-related training and knowledge in their daily tasks. When not high on the agenda, the GMTA that takes place appears ad-hoc and driven only by the efforts of a few individual members of staff.

A summary of the findings, related to an assessment scale described in chapter 3, is as follows:

UNHCR: Handbook principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although with lacking or inconsistent references to the Handbook itself. Score: 2a

WFP: Handbook principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although without references to the Handbook itself. Score: 2a

Unicef: At headquarters and field office level there are good indications that Handbook principles and standards are in the process of being implemented, although with very few references to the Handbook itself. At sub-field level, it has been difficult to identify any systematic or coherent implementation of Handbook principles and standards. Score: 2a/1

UN-OCHA: The Handbook is used and its principles and standards appear to have been implemented, although with inadequate coherence. Score: 2b.

Two main factors seem to contribute to these results. First, staff in UNHCR, WFP and Unicef refer almost exclusively to their own organisation's gender policies, handbooks and guidelines for capacity building, programme planning and field-level practices. Reasons are that they relate to the documents relevant to established planning, practice, reporting and evaluation routines within the agency, and that the Handbook has not been made part of such routines. In OCHA, the situation is slightly different, as the Handbook material is embedded within the organisation's guiding documents. Some OCHA

interviewees, however, mostly at headquarter level, are sceptical about GMTA in general as well as reluctant about implementing the Handbook in their daily work. The reasons for this could be linked to political divergences within OCHA.

The second factor relates to the perceived user-friendliness of the Handbook itself. While some interviewees describe it as "useful" and "practical", it is also by several seen as "too comprehensive" and "too complex". In other words, the Handbook may be of good quality but not sufficiently adapted to the learning and working environment of field office and sub-field office humanitarian staff.

The reported "complexity" of the printed version of the Handbook is contrasted by the positive responses to the Handbook e-learning course, which is also more widely applied among staff in all four agencies.

The main notion that can be drawn from these findings, is that the agency-specific material on GMTA in UNHCR, WFP and Unicef probably incorporates principles and standards that reflect those of the Handbook. Further, the Handbook e-learning course – rather than the printed version – may potentially have had some influence on competence and awareness among interviewed members of staff.

Findings also suggest that the GenCap initiative proves to be an effective means in coupling IASC's gender material with the agencies' humanitarian training, planning, and practices. GenCap advisers appear able to function as 'agents' that understand and know how to bridge IASC material and the agencies' on-going activities in a given emergency operation. The number of deployed GenCap advisers, however, appears somewhat low in relation to the scale of current humanitarian operations led by the UN, and the number of staff working on these. IASC has recently commissioned an evaluation of the GenCap capacity, *Evaluation of ProCap and GenCap Project*, which due to be completed in early 2012.

In conclusion, the Handbook does not appear to serve its intended purpose as a common reference for GMTA in UN's humanitarian activities. The recently launched Handbook e-learning course, however, may have had an effect on the individual competence of interviewed members of staff in all four agencies. Also, the GenCap initiative represents a resource that is not sufficiently drawn upon by UN agencies, when it comes to coordinating the agencies' different approaches to gender-sensitive programming.

The principles and standards of the Handbook appear to be adequately implemented even when conceptual frameworks, policies and guidelines are rooted within each individual agency. What is missing, is the guarantee that the UN in its humanitarian operations will 'deliver as one' on gender.

6. Recommendations

1) In order to ensure coherence in UN's humanitarian activities with regard to GMTA,UN organisations should be required to assess their own gender tools with reference to the principles and standards of the Handbook.

2) This evaluation exercise should involve staff and management both at headquarters, field and sub-field office levels of the organisations. Contributions from all organisational levels will prevent the evaluation from becoming a mere 'paper exercise' and may contribute to an enhanced learning process with regard to GMTA.

3) UN organisations should be strongly encouraged to proactively and systematically involve their partners in the implementation and integration of GMTA. Findings suggest that Unicef should be particularly targeted on this aspect.

4) Awaiting the results of the *Evaluation of ProCap and GenCap Projects*, with expected completion in early 2012, UN organisations should be more strongly encouraged to make active use of the GenCap capacity.

5) With reference to the above-mentioned evaluation, additional financial support to the GenCap capacity may also be considered by relevant stakeholders.

6) UN organisations should be required to implement systems to ensure that staff at all organisational levels receive basic and/or specialised training on gender (including the Handbook e-learning course), related to their area of work. Managers should be particularly targeted. Such training should be developed by IASC, administered and financed by the individual agencies, and result in career-meriting certificates accredited by IASC.

7) With reference to point 6, funding should be made available for the production of a French language version of the Handbook e-learning course.

8) In a longer term perspective, IASC should be encouraged to assess the feasibility of a staff certification system for gender competence in humanitarian operations. Existing material that may exist in relation to point 6 could form 'modules' within such a system. UN organisations should be encouraged to actively endorse this certification system at all organisational levels.

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