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Gender, Emergencies and Humanitarian Assistance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I The importance of gender analysis in emergencies

There is growing international consensus on the need to consider gender issues in emergencies and humanitarian assistance. This reflects the concentration of women among displaced populations, especially with the rise in complex political emergencies and an impetus from within relief agencies to examine issues of gender. It is also influenced by thinking and practice from gender and development work, especially with moves to link relief and development. A range of development agencies have begun to consider ways in which gender can be incorporated into their policy and programmes in relief work.

Current relief practice to a large extent reflects a women in development (WID) rather than a gender and development (GAD) approach, focusing on women's specific needs and their role as mothers. There remains a widespread conception that women and children are the primary victims of emergencies, and yet there is limited analysis of the role of social relations, specifically gender relations, in determining who suffers in emergencies and what options are available to affected individuals and communities.

A gender approach is important to identify men's and women's differing vulnerabilities to crises as well as their different capacities and coping strategies, in order to build on these, in order to design effective relief programmes. Gender analysis can illuminate the unequal power relations underlying social institutions, to ensure that women are not further marginalised by relief interventions. Gender analysis can also assist in understanding changes in gender relations and identities which occur during crisis and conflict situations and thus highlight the potential for positive change.

II Gender issues in emergencies

Disasters are never solely 'natural' events: their impact depends on the social and political context and importantly on the social composition of the population affected. The concept of vulnerability is important in identifying which groups are at risk in emergencies.

Vulnerability combines consideration of external shocks and of internal capacity to cope and has many different dimensions. A gender analysis would not assert that all women are more vulnerable than men, but that gender is an important, though not the sole, determinant of vulnerability. Assessment of vulnerability also involves looking at the coping strategies of those in emergency situations and these are also, in part, determined by gender. In complex emergencies, vulnerability may be determined by membership of a particular ethnic or social group rather than by wider social and economic factors.

Whilst relief is often specifically targeted at women, there is often little understanding of the gender relations underlying household livelihoods. A GAD approach emphasises the need to look at men's and women's differential access to resources and power within the household and at how this might be affected by relief interventions. A gender analysis also draws attention to the division of labour between men and women and specifically to women's responsibility for reproductive labour, which is likely to intensify under emergency situations. Gender analysis also looks at processes of decision-making, focusing on women's strategic as

well as practical interests and the socio-cultural constraints faced by women, restricting their behaviour and mobility and thus their capacity to respond to emergencies.

The vast majority of people who survive emergencies do so because of their own coping strategies, rather than outside interventions. The strategies adopted and their impact varies by gender, as well as class, age and status within the family. Overall, men tend to have more options than women and women may be forced to adopt survival strategies for which they are ill-equipped or which increase their vulnerability in the long-term. Female-headed households may have particularly restricted options. In humanitarian assistance, it is important not to increase the vulnerability of particular groups, either by undermining their coping strategies or by reinforcing coping strategies which are damaging. Supporting coping strategies may be best done by modifying existing development programmes, using early warning systems to signal the need for adaptation.

While the outcome of many coping strategies is known, less is known of how processes of decision-making and negotiation within the household are affected in crisis situations. In situations of crisis, the 'fall-back' position of some household members may be reduced more rapidly than that of others, reducing their bargaining power within the household. Ultimate breakdown in negotiation occurs with family break-up, often with the abandonment of women, children, or the elderly, whose claims for support have been rejected. In the wider community, crisis situations can have differing impacts on women's public participation: the absence of adult men may provide the opportunity for some women to take on leadership roles, while increased demands on women's time may limit their participation.

Crisis situations can lead to changes in what is considered acceptable behaviour for both genders, with changes in the range of activities permissible and shifts in the gender division of labour. Some of these changes can lead to women gaining new skills and increased autonomy. In other cases, however, individuals may be forced into strategies which transgress social norms and women particularly risk losing social approval and support not just temporarily but permanently, for example by entering prostitution.

Gender ideology and identities are subject to rapid change in conflict situations. This can produce more conservative attitudes to women's behaviour decreasing their rights and mobility. Women are sometimes upheld as the symbolic bearers of caste, ethnic or national identity in conflict situations which can lead to them being singled out for attack. On the other hand, liberation struggles can promote new roles and opportunities for women as part of wider social revolution. Overall, however, conflict is more likely to reinforce, than to challenge, traditional views of men and women.

Wars also challenge stereotypes of women as victims and men as perpetrators of violence. Some women actively participate in wars as soldiers or support personnel; others use their role as guardians of culture and identity to incite violence. Equally many men are victims of war and their identities may be undermined by loss of ability to provide for or protect their families. In post-conflict situations, men and women have to adjust to and renegotiate their changed roles and situations, with some finding difficulty in reintegration.

III Gender sensitivity in responses to emergencies

A planning framework is needed in order to introduce gender analysis into emergency response. Various frameworks have been developed for gender planning in emergencies, arising mainly from the work of NGOs in this field. Each has different strengths and weaknesses and is suitable for use in different contexts, or in combination with the others. It is also crucial to consult with women, as well as men, in the planning and implementation of emergency interventions. Failing to do so means not only that the needs of women are neglected but also that women may lose access to resources they are accustomed to control and that their skills and capacities are not utilised and built upon. For example failure to consult women in camp location and design can lead to the inappropriate siting of water points, with the risk that they are not used and that health conditions will deteriorate.

Full consultation of women and other marginalised groups requires pro-active and creative measures, for example, the use of female field officers who speak the same language as beneficiaries, attention to the timing and location of consultations and cultural sensitivity. The use of participatory methods for information gathering, programme design, monitoring and evaluation - can illuminate men's and women's different needs and experiences as well as building on women's capacities, increasing their decision-making power and aiding group cohesion. Gender-awareness is required in the use of these methods.

There is now international consensus on the commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. This is a serious challenge in emergency situations and especially in the context of conflict. Women are particularly vulnerable to attack, abuse and domestic and sexual violence. **Measures are required to protect women, including consultation in camp planning and design, increased camp security, professional counselling and support for victims of violence, awareness raising about their rights and increased representation of female staff. Registration of women separately from men is required to ease problems they may face in seeking asylum. Measures to protect women returnees are also required.**

There is a strong case for building a gender dimension into emergency response at the levels of early warning, preparedness and capacity building. **Local-level early warning systems particularly could incorporate gender-specific indicators and capacity building should give attention to strengthening women's organisations.**

In relief aid, a range of gender issues are relevant to questions of targeting, distribution systems and the type of aid distributed. Women often lack access to resources in their own right and female-headed households may be overlooked. Distribution of food to men undermines women's role in managing household food consumption. Food for work schemes often involve extremely heavy labour, which women may have to combine with their existing workload, and have in some cases had a negative impact on women's nutritional status. **Distribution systems need to consider their impact on intra-household gender relations, as well as questions of speed and effectiveness, to avoid eroding women's position in the household and community. In some, but not all, cases, distribution through women may be the most appropriate mechanism. Other provision, e.g. of housing, health and mental health care, needs to consider gender-specific needs and capacities, in their design and delivery.**

Changes in gender relations during crisis often result in women's responsibilities increasing while their access to resources and rights may not have improved, or have even diminished. In some cases, long-term exile provides opportunities for women to gain organisational and educational experience which can be a useful resource in rehabilitation. Rehabilitation and resettlement is fraught with potential conflict as men and women adjust to shifts in their respective control over resources and responsibilities. Men, in particular, returned from armed combat, may find it difficult to re-integrate, or to accept women's changed circumstances and position. Women who have been directly involved in armed conflict may experience particular problems in re-integrating in a post-conflict situation.

Rehabilitation moves beyond satisfying short-term needs and is an attempt to create the conditions for longer-term security. From a gender perspective, rehabilitation provides the opportunity to redress gender inequalities which may have worsened or to build on the capacities of women, by upholding women's rights and access to resources. Income-earning opportunities for women are also vital to rehabilitation since women are often sole or major supporters of their households. **It is important that women and girls are not overlooked in education and training opportunities or in the distribution of resources such as seeds and tools. This may require adapting programmes, including entry requirements, to address constraints to women's participation. Income earning projects for women need to be clearly focused on income earning, rather than skills training or morale building, if they are to succeed and should ensure market access. Women should be involved in the design and implementation of income-generating projects.**

IV The policy and institutional environment for integrating gender into relief work

There are a number of constraints, political and institutional, to the introduction of a gender perspective in relief work. Some of these relate to the separation of relief and development work, the practical need to respond to emergencies quickly and the tendency of relief operations to be characterised by top-down, donor-dependent, expatriate-run operations, drawing on separate funds, with minimal appraisal and approval procedures, in comparison to development programmes. These factors create a culture clash when trying to introduce gender concerns.

Introducing a gender approach into relief programmes need not always slow down the delivery of relief and it can render assistance more effective. Mistakes made in the early phase of relief operations, such as the inappropriate siting of water and sanitation facilities, can prove damaging and be costly to remedy later. Consideration of gender becomes particularly important at the stage of rehabilitation. Related to institutional constraints are issues of staffing and the lack of staff in relief agencies with a capacity to undertake social, or gender, analysis. A further constraint is possible opposition to interventions which address gender issues, from staff and also from members of beneficiary communities.

There is no single model for introducing gender issues into emergency policy since each organisation will have its own approach and policy making processes. Some organisations have introduced specific policies relating to women or gender in emergencies or are in the process of developing policies. Many - though not all - of these are influenced by WID approaches and focus on women, rather than gender. Mechanisms adopted for implementing

policies have been the introduction of guidelines, new approaches to staffing and training and revised programme appraisal, monitoring and evaluation procedures. Difficulties have been encountered in developing guidelines which are relevant to a wide range of contexts and which can actually be implemented. Some agencies have seconded or appointed social development advisors to emergency sections with a remit to integrate gender issues into policy and practice. **In order for gender issues to be taken seriously, means of implementing policy and guidelines are required, such as marker systems for programme appraisal, incentives or sanctions for the inclusion of gender issues and systematic evaluation of the gender impact of programmes.**

Gender analysis is a flexible and dynamic tool and its application does not readily translate into universally applicable guidelines. **The approach adopted to gender issues should be geared to the specific circumstances of each emergency and to factors such as the social composition of the affected population and the likely duration of the emergency, the particular intervention planned and the type of organisation that is going to carry out the programme.** For instance, what is possible for an organisation with a long history of work in an area, adapting an existing gender-sensitive development programme in response to an emergency, will be very different from what is possible for a relief agency which is operating in an area for the first time.

V Integrating gender concerns into relief programmes

The adoption of gender policy in emergency work is a long-term project and must begin with what is feasible in a given organisational context. Rather than attempt to implement a comprehensive set of guidelines, which might not be adhered to, a more realistic initial approach might be to establish a 'bottom line' for emergency practice. This would comprise an accepted set of minimum level practices which, given what is known of gender issues in emergency situations, it would be unacceptable for agencies to omit and without which women may be negatively affected in ways which are costly or impossible to reverse.

Such a 'bottom line' could include:

- **Development of a gender analysis from the beginning of any response to an emergency situation. This will require the employment of staff with gender training, or the training of existing staff.**
- **Registration of refugee women.**
- **Attention to security issues.**
- **Gender should be a prime consideration in methods chosen to distribute resources.**
- **Early in the consultation process, means should be sought to ensure that women are represented.**

Involving women in consultation and giving them decision-making power is perhaps the key element in a gender-aware approach. **New mechanisms may be required in order to ensure the full participation of women, including setting up women's groups in a way that does not provoke conflict and resistance.** Consultation of women is likely also lead to the identification of needs not conventionally provided for in emergency programmes - for instance, family planning services, sanitary products and other non-food items, training and income-generating opportunities, or protection against sexual or domestic violence.

In order to move beyond the ‘bottom line’ to more extensive incorporation of gender concerns and the establishment of ‘best practice,’ a systematic institutional analysis is required to highlight strategic points of intervention, barriers to implementing gender policy and the resources, structures, procedures and incentives which might be necessary to overcome these.

Such an analysis might focus on: the mandate of the organisation and its general policy on gender; the funding structure and the relationship between relief and development work; staffing, recruitment and training policies; issues of institutional culture, including incentive structures for the inclusion of gender approaches and staff familiarity with social and gender analysis. It is also important to analyse the relief programme cycle and identify systems for incorporating gender concerns into this, at appraisal, monitoring and evaluation stages.

Given the separation of relief and development, and the constraints on introducing gender issues in emergency work, rehabilitation is likely to be the phase where the introduction of gender-aware practice is most feasible. Here, also, consultation is crucial and appropriate spaces are needed for women to articulate their concerns. Rehabilitation may also be the point where interventions can most readily seek, not only to meet women’s gender-specific needs, but also to build on their skills and capacities and to redress gender inequalities in access to resources and power.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
BHR	Bureau for Humanitarian Response
CBMS	Community based monitoring system
ESP	Emergency support personal
FFW	Food for work
GAD	Gender and Development
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Organisation for Technical Co-operation)
ICRC	International Commission of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organisation
n.d.	no date
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK)
PAME	Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
UN	United Nations
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WID	Women in Development

1. INTRODUCTION¹

1.1 Background to the report

This report was prepared on request from the Women in Development Desk of Directorate General VIII of the European Commission, as a background paper to inform internal discussion of gender issues in emergencies and humanitarian assistance. A recent paper prepared by the Commission for the European Council and Parliament (European Commission, 1995: Annex II) highlights emergency operations and crisis prevention as one of four emerging areas for sensitising development co-operation to gender issues.

There is a growing international consensus on the need to consider gender issues in emergencies, underlined by the inclusion of conflict as one of the twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing World Conference on Women Platform for Action (UNDP, 1995), in addition to concerns related to violence and human rights. A gender approach is particularly important in the current climate of recognition of and commitment to women's rights as human rights. The rights of women to freedom from all forms of violence, but particularly sexual violence, are constantly violated in emergency situations and there is a need for the assertion and protection of these rights by relief agencies.

A range of non-government, bilateral and multilateral agencies have begun to examine their own policy and practice in relation to gender issues in relief and rehabilitation, with policy and planning frameworks, guidelines and a variety of tools being adapted to increase sensitivity to gender issues (see section 4). This is therefore an opportune moment to review the debate on gender and emergencies and to assess the experience to date of attempting to bring gender concerns into relief work.

1.2 Context of the report

Both theory and practice concerned with understanding and responding to emergencies have undergone several shifts in the last 15 years in response to:

- the recognition that emergencies are most importantly social and political affairs;
- the recognition of different forms of emergencies, with complex political emergencies beginning to dominate the international agenda²;
- processes of critique and learning within agencies involved in relief work;
- political and institutional change, as agencies readjust to the changing global political context and to reduced aid budgets.

¹ This report was drafted by Bridget Byrne, Research Assistant, BRIDGE, under the supervision of Sally Baden, BRIDGE Manager, who also edited and revised the draft. Advisory inputs are also gratefully acknowledged from Richard Longhurst (Consultant, Institute of Child Health, London), Simon Maxwell and Susanna Davies (IDS Fellows), Will Campbell (Research Officer, IDS), Juliette Seibold (MA8, IDS), Karen Twining (Visiting Fellow, IDS). Other individuals and organisations who provided information and gave interviews in association with this report are listed in Appendix I.

² In 1993, there were 26 UN-designated 'complex emergencies' affecting 59 million people. (Duffield, 1994: 37)

Whilst gender is widely recognised as an important consideration in development theory, policy and practice, the integration of gender concerns into thinking and practice in humanitarian assistance is only just beginning. There is a widespread conception that women and children are the primary victims of emergency situations, and yet there is very limited analysis of the role of social relations, and specifically gender relations, in determining who suffers in emergency situations and what options are available to affected individuals and communities. In recent evaluations of some relief programmes, the need for, and frequent failure of, emergency relief operations to be gender-aware has been highlighted.

If gender is not considered, there is a danger that women become invisible in relief programmes, with men receiving most resources and participating in the planning and implementation of programmes. This can lead to increased gender inequality and may also hamper the effectiveness of relief programmes, with women's capacities remaining under-utilised and their needs not being met. Conversely, a focus on women alone (rather than gender relations) may lead to women being seen as the primary victims of emergencies, and to a failure to recognise men's and women's different needs and capacities, perhaps contributing to increased gender conflict.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the difference between WID (women in development) and GAD (gender and development) approaches in their analyses of emergencies. The WID approach is reflected to some extent in relief practice, through the recognition of some of the needs of women in food distribution and health care as well as the importance of their role as mothers. However, GAD approaches, and the associated analysis of the distribution of power and resources, and process of change in relations between men and women, are poorly articulated in emergency policy and practice.

Given that emergencies, and particularly complex emergencies, are characterised by social dislocation and change, there is an urgent need for such an analysis. A gender approach accords with the recognition that in emergency situations there are winners as well as losers, with women likely to lose more than men. It also contributes to understandings of emergencies which seek to identify not only the ways in which those affected are vulnerable, but also where they have the capacity to deal with emergency situations.

1.3 Structure of the report

This report examines emergencies and responses to emergencies through a gender analysis. In the background section, the major developments in understanding of the causes of emergencies is outlined. This is followed by a gender perspective on emergencies, reviewing approaches focusing on needs, on coping strategies, on power and decision-making and on changes in gender relations and identities in times of crisis. The third section reviews frameworks for analysing gender issues in emergencies, and the range of responses to emergencies - including food aid, health, protection and human rights issues and rehabilitation - from a gender perspective. The fourth section reviews the policy and institutional environment for integrating gender issues into emergency responses, with specific reference to recent moves towards linking relief and development. A concluding section briefly summarises the main findings and suggests some measures which might be taken towards integrating gender into humanitarian assistance. Appendices list individuals

and organisations contacted in the preparation of the report as well as examples of gender guidelines and policies. A bibliography is also attached.

2. BACKGROUND: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON EMERGENCIES, RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Summary

This section will focus on:

- approaches to emergencies, including how what constitutes an emergency and vulnerability to emergencies varies by gender;
- gender-differentiated needs in emergencies;
- gender-based power relations and decision-making processes;
- gender issues in coping strategies in emergencies and how coping strategies can be supported;
- changes in gender relations and identities in crisis, particularly conflict, situations;

This section shows how gender is important in how we define emergencies. It will explore how a WID³ influenced approach to emergencies which focuses on **needs** gives only a partial understanding. An analysis of gender relations, on the other hand, enables us to investigate men's and women's different **vulnerabilities** and **responses** to crisis, as well as the changes in gender-based **power relations** and **identities** which accompany crisis, particularly conflict, situations.

2.2 Approaches to emergencies

2.2.1 *What is an emergency?*

There are many different definitions of emergencies. Some cover situations of hardship and disruption common to many parts of the world, such as areas of high infant and maternal mortality, chronic malnutrition, and failure to meet people's basic needs, which do not receive the attention of humanitarian relief. These emergencies have been characterised as 'silent' emergencies as opposed to 'loud' emergencies and may only gain attention when a breaking point is reached and the silent becomes loud. (Longhurst, 1994: 17) Definitions of what constitutes a famine, for example, may differ between those who experience it and outsiders who may have less subtle conceptions of famine and hunger. Those who suffer from famines make distinctions between 'famines that kill' (Darker in Sudan), or 'years in which people died' (Turkana herders in Northern Kenya) and other periods of shortage. All of these situations may constitute emergencies. (Swift, 1989: 8) Box 1 shows how emergencies can be classified into six categories.

³ The WID approach, developed in the 1970s, and given impetus by the International Decade for Women (1975-1985), attempted to understand women's perceived exclusion from 'development' by focusing mainly on the situation of women and by promoting women's development projects. WID recognises women's productive and reproductive roles, but tends to focus mainly on the former, seeing greater participation in the economy as a key to women's unequal status. There is also a tendency to view women as an undifferentiated category, separate from men, rather than focusing on their inter-relationships with men. In practice, WID approaches led to the development of small-scale and poorly funded projects targeted at women, who are seen as uniformly disadvantaged by development, whilst mainstream development interventions continue to be targeted at men, with their basic assumptions and design remaining unquestioned and unaltered.

Box 1. Categories of emergencies

It is possible to classify emergencies into six 'types'

- **natural rapid onset**: triggered by earthquakes, cyclones, volcanoes, pathogens and floods. This crisis is usually temporary;
- **technological rapid onset**; e.g. fuel, chemical and nuclear accidents; disruption in information, communication and transport systems;
- **slow onset**, triggered by natural disasters such as drought and pest attacks;
- **'permanent' emergencies**: the result of widespread structural poverty requiring more or less permanent welfare;
- **mass population displacements**: both a cause and outcome of other types of emergencies;
- **'complex' emergencies**: usually characterised by conflict and associated with civil war, intimidation and harassment.

Source: Longhurst, personal communication, adapted from World Disaster Report 1995, Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell, 1994

There are overlaps between these categories. For example, complex political emergencies may be triggered by structural poverty and may also be characterised by a slow onset. Emergencies may arise from a range or combination of natural triggers such as drought, flood, earthquake, pests etc. or other triggers such as state policy and market changes, for example, the implementation of structural adjustment policies leading to price shocks; or the introduction of taxes, land redistribution, and changes in the credit market. Emergencies also occur as a result of conflict. There are also underlying trends which contribute to the emergency situation, triggered by a particular event. For example, the recurrent droughts in Sudan and other countries in the Horn of Africa triggered the famine which also had as its underlying causes changing land distribution, desertification, urbanisation and the decay of the macro-economy through conflict in the South. (Porter, 1993)

The notion of 'permanent' emergencies highlights the difficulty in distinguishing an emergency period from one of 'normality' and thus in distinguishing when people have crossed a threshold of crisis that leads to a qualitatively different situation than is usual. For some parts of the world, 'emergencies' are not out-of-the-ordinary events, but are increasingly common occurrences. In addition, for many people living in poverty and insecurity, concern over the lack of seeds for the next planting, or the immanent collapse of their housing may be more pressing than the prospect of a one year in seven drought.

No emergency can be seen as solely 'natural'. The impact that a crisis (albeit one triggered by natural phenomena like drought, flood or earthquake) has on any population will depend on the social and political context, on the level exposure of different sections of the population to the phenomenon, on their ability to cope with the phenomenon once it has struck and on the response of the local, national and international community to the disaster. What constitutes an emergency may vary between women and men and between different social groups. This is highlighted by the case study in Box 2 on floods in Bangladesh.

All disasters are characterised by inequalities. Not everyone suffers to the same extent and some people may even benefit. This becomes crucial in the consideration of emergencies in

the context of war, where famine may be a military objective, rather than an incidental by-product of conflict.

Box 2: Flood-as-hazard, flood-as-resource: gender differences in definitions of floods in Bangladesh

In Bengali, unlike in English with the single word 'flood', there are many different terms for floods varying by region and with different connotations. This reflects the fact that in Bangladesh, floods can be seen as a resource as well as a hazard, enabling the planting of different crops, and occurring with a certain degree of seasonality and regularity. There are gender differences in whether a flood may be characterised as hazard or resource. For men, whose identity is tied to cultivation, the definition of flood as hazard is perceived in terms of disruption to cultivation. For women, it is tied more to its effect on the homestead. Floods can increase women's mobility as they use the floodwaters to make trips to their natal homes, or are able to cultivate in fields without sanction in situations of crisis. However, floods can also constitute hazards to women more quickly than to men as they are prevented from maintaining purdah and carrying out ritual cleansing practices and thus risk suffering social sanctions.

Source: Shaw, 1992: 203-6

2.2.2 How are people affected by emergencies?

From a gender perspective, and as a guide to the type of interventions that will be necessary, the social composition of population affected by the emergency, may be more significant than the cause of the emergency. Box 3 outlines the different social composition of populations affected by emergencies.

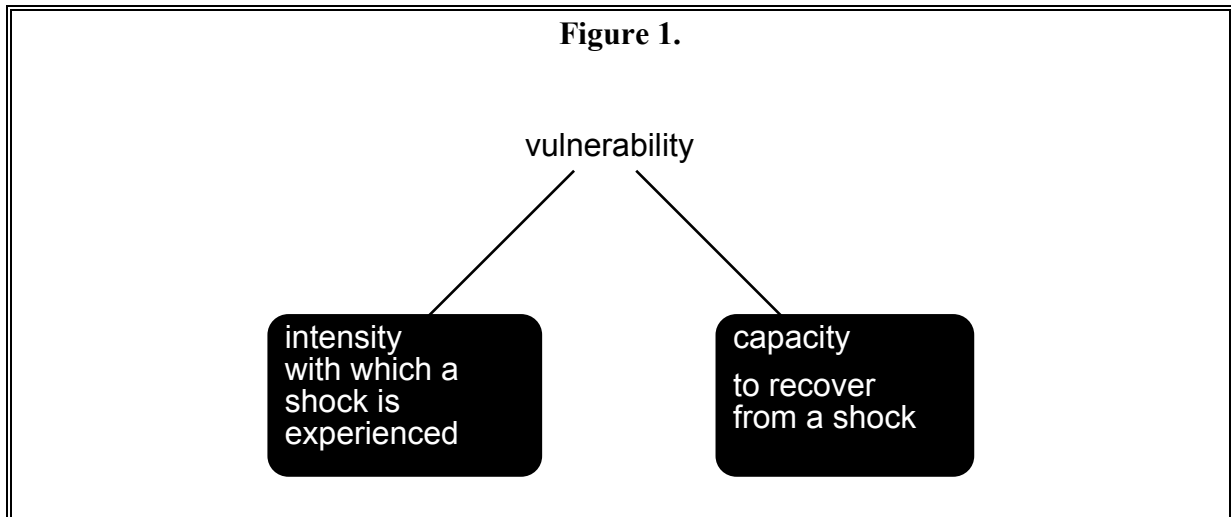
Box 3: The differing social composition of populations affected by emergencies

- The remnants of a community, remaining in their homes, often the result of natural disasters;
- Whole displaced communities, for example Afghan refugee communities in Pakistan;
- Certain community members (for example women and children) displaced as a group - often as a result of conflict;
- Mixed groups, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including whole community groups, female-headed households separated from their communities and orphans or children separated from their families. This is often the case in refugee settlements near urban centres.

Source: Susanna Davies, personal communication

If emergencies are no longer considered as largely caused by natural phenomenon, then other means of assessing risk of emergency are required than monitoring weather and geographical phenomenon. The concept of vulnerability becomes important in identifying which groups are at risk in emergencies. This concept has important gender dimensions.

Vulnerability needs to be distinguished from poverty, although poor people may well be amongst the vulnerable. Poverty concerns lack or want, whilst vulnerability, in its broadest sense, is concerned with defencelessness to external shocks.⁴ (Chambers, 1989: 1)
 Vulnerability combines both the external issues of risks, shocks and stress which people face as well as their internal capacity to cope with the threat to livelihoods without sustaining damaging loss. This is illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: adapted from Chambers, 1989: 1

Policy concerned with reducing vulnerability seeks to make people more secure and more resilient to withstand shocks and stress. People can be physically vulnerable, through sickness or lack of material resources to cope with shocks, socially vulnerable, through marginalisation and exclusion from decision-making and political processes; and psychologically vulnerable through feelings of powerlessness and victimisation. Just as there are many forms of vulnerability, equally, there are many forms of loss - becoming physically weaker, economically impoverished, socially dependent, humiliated or psychologically harmed. These different forms lead to serious challenges in categorising and ranking vulnerability and loss in emergency situations. (Anderson, 1994: 8, Chambers, 1989: 1)

An important part of the assessment of vulnerability is the recognition of coping strategies which are adopted by those who face emergency situations and which are a factor in their resilience. The options available to men and women are conditioned by gender relations which determine their relative access to resources and define appropriate behaviour.

To assess the risk of emergencies, it is important to analyse vulnerability and coping strategies at community, household and individual levels, in order to be able to identify those social groups likely to be least resilient to external shocks. It is also important to have an analysis of how, in the post-emergency scenario, households and individuals may have become more vulnerable to further shocks. A gender analysis would not seek to say that all

⁴ The difference between poverty and vulnerability is highlighted by the example of pastoralists, who may have relatively high incomes in most years, but are very vulnerable to the effects of livestock disease or a shift in the terms of trade between meat and cereals.

women are more vulnerable than men but that gender is an important, although by no means the sole, determinant of vulnerability. This is because women's lesser access to resources, their limited power in decision-making and their lack of mobility may make them more sensitive to shocks and less able to recover than men.

In complex emergencies, the rational time-scale of tried-and-tested coping strategies may no longer be available to individuals, households and communities who will have to resort to less familiar survival strategies, likely to involve greater risks. In the case of civil war, vulnerability may be more influenced by membership, or perceived membership, of a particular social or ethnic group than by economic and social factors. In this situation, gender analysis is crucial to understanding the different risks that men and women face, as well as of the rapid transformations of gender relations which are a common feature of conflict and social disruption.

2.3 Gender differentiated needs

Women are most often portrayed as the victims of emergencies and the majority of refugees, emphasising their need for assistance. Box 4 explains why this focus on women as victims - and on their numerical 'over-representation' in refugee populations - is a limited perspective.

Box 4: Stereotypes and statistics

One example of the portrayal of women as victims of emergency situations, without analysis of social relations, is the oft quoted statistic that women and children make up 80 percent of the global refugee population. This figure, in itself, is not particularly significant, given that women and children might be expected to make up around that percentage in a 'normal' population. What is significant, however, is the social and demographic make-up of refugee populations: the often high numbers of female-headed and maintained households, and the fact that many adult males in refugee situations are aged, disabled or only temporarily with their households.

Attention to women in emergency situations can highlight the differential impact of emergency situations on women and men and the fact that, as a result of crisis, they have different needs for basic survival. The most common result of this recognition is the provision of special programmes for women, often in their role as mothers, for example, feeding programmes for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Attention to women's needs also leads to provision of reproductive health care, including female medical personnel, and perhaps to measures to protect women from sexual violence and to address the specific needs of single women or female-headed households.

Women generally have less access to material and social resources than men. This situation can be exacerbated when women are denied full participation in relief programmes. Relief programmes have tended to overlook women's crucial roles in both the production and distribution of food in many societies and have delivered assistance, whether it is food aid, tools and seeds or training, directly to male heads of households. Refugee assistance programmes often only register men. This can have the effect of reducing women's influence

over areas such as the production and provision of food, which they had previously controlled and thus of undermining women's position in the household and community. For households headed by women, it can mean that, despite often being the most vulnerable households, they are completely by-passed by assistance.

However, examining the emergency situation from a purely needs perspective has limitations in that it has a tendency to view women solely as victims or mothers. This viewpoint, influenced by the WID approach, fails to recognise the extent to which women's needs are the result of gender-specific vulnerabilities, grounded in unequal gender relations.

The needs approach also fails to recognise the extent to which survival in emergencies is due to the capacities of individuals, households and communities to respond to the crisis. The range of coping strategies available are in turn, at least partially, determined by gender relations.

A gender⁵ framework enables the examination of the differential impact of emergencies on men and women. It provides a framework for understanding how women's unequal access to and control over resources can be further diminished in times of increased competition for scarce resources. As the ability of individuals, households and communities to cope with crisis diminishes, a gender analysis also enables the examination of interventions by relief agencies. A gender perspective asks how interventions impact on gender relations:

- do they serve to further weaken women's access to and control over resources;
- or do they support women's capacity to cope with crises, enhance their skills and provide them with the means to rebuild their lives?

A gender perspective highlights women's capacities and can indicate where opportunities are missed by relief interventions for making aid more effective by supporting and developing women's skills and capacities.

Whilst relief is often specifically targeted at women (for example in supplementary feeding for pregnant and breastfeeding women), there is little understanding of the gender relations underlying household livelihoods. A GAD approach emphasises the need to disaggregate the household and analyses the differential access to and control over resources within households. This is important in emergency situations, for an understanding of how both the emergency itself and relief responses will have a differential impact on individuals within the household and how the distribution of power as well as resources within the household is affected.

⁵ Gender and gender relations refer to the socially (rather than biologically) determined characteristics of men's and women's position in society. Thus, a gender analysis examines both women and men and the social, economic and cultural forces which shape their relative positions, and the relations between them. Gender is a dynamic concept, allowing for the fact that gender relations and the division of labour and responsibilities vary between cultures and social groups, are influenced by race, class, age and economic circumstance and change over time. A gender approach recognises that it is women who suffer from gender inequality and discrimination, yet it also includes an understanding of other bases of discrimination and differentiation such as race, class, caste, ethnic background, age and disability. In this way it becomes possible to analyse the differences between women and how their interests may vary and conflict.

A gender analysis draws attention to the gender division of labour and particularly the burden of reproductive labour which women bear, which is significant in limiting the options available to women, as compared to men. In emergency situations, the burden of reproductive labour, particularly in the collection of water, firewood and fuel, as well as wild foods, is likely to intensify.

Another important way in which a gender approach can contribute to the understanding of emergencies is in the analysis of changes in processes of decision-making. In this way the strategic, as well as practical, needs and interests of women can be addressed. The balance of power underlying gender relations may change in times of crisis, serving either to increase, or diminish inequalities. For example, the resources that women have control over may be depleted more swiftly than those of men, or alternatively, women may acquire new skills and gain increased autonomy and power over decision-making.

A gender perspective also analyses the socio-cultural constraints that women face, restricting their behaviour and mobility and thus their ability to respond to emergency situations. It permits a focus on issues of ideology and identity, which are often in extreme flux in conflict and crisis situations. Women, particularly, may become bearers of cultural identity in conflict situations and therefore be subject to new forms of control, or singled out for attack, individually or collectively. Awareness of these issues is vital in designing appropriate interventions and providing adequate protection from violence, particularly sexual violence.

2.4 Gender issues in coping strategies

The vast majority of people in emergency situations survive because of the strategies they adopt to deal with the shocks they experience, rather than because of the interventions of agencies. Coping strategies are influenced not only by the available resources, both material and social, but also by cultural conceptions of what is acceptable behaviour for each gender and by the skills and experiences which individuals have due to their socialisation.

Men and women will have different resources available to them in crisis situations and will thus turn to different strategies for survival. It is crucial that, if coping strategies are to be supported, the differences in men's and women's strategies are understood and the strategies of women, in particular, are not undermined. In general, men with greater resources under their control and greater mobility, will have a wider variety of options to fall back on. In crisis situations, women may be forced to adopt survival strategies for which they are ill-equipped, or untrained. Female-headed or maintained households, in particular, are likely to have fewer options available to them due to the lack of adult, able-bodied men on whose labour they can call.

Coping strategies are often examined at the level of the household, without consideration to gender divisions of labour and access to resources, or their impact on women's workload, or the processes of negotiation through which different coping strategies are adopted (see next section). Table 1 shows the different range of coping strategies which are adopted, from insurance mechanisms, through the disposal of productive assets, to destitution. These three stages have also been categorised as non-erosive coping, erosive coping and non-coping. (de

Waal, 1989) The Table illustrates how the impact of the strategies adopted varies according to gender, as well as by age and status within the family.

Table 1: Categories of coping strategies

Coping strategy	Gender implications
Stage 1: Insurance Mechanisms: risk minimising and loss management practices	
Changes in cropping and planting practices	This may involve increased labour for women as their labour is called on for more intensive farming. There may be gender-specific skills involved, e.g. calling on women's knowledge of famine crops. In times of conflict, women may be forced to farm closer to home for fear of attack. This may involve the planting of different crops.
Sale of small livestock	The sale of small stock may allow larger assets to be preserved, but it may affect women more than men, as smallstock are likely to belong to women.
Reduction of current consumption levels	Women may reduce their consumption more than men - eating last and least. Other members of the household, for instance girls and the elderly, may also get less food. Changes in the type of food eaten may involve women and girls spending more time on food processing and cooking.
Collection of wild foods	This is likely to increase women's workload. However, in times of family break-up, women may have a gendered advantage in that knowledge about the gathering and preparation of famine foods is frequently passed on only to women, leaving men (and sometimes higher class/caste women) ignorant of how to safely prepare certain wild foods. (Brown, 1991)
Use of inter-household transfers and loans	Men and women have access to different support systems based on their gender and these will vary greatly according to the social situation. However, the terms of this moral economy may change, particularly in response to crisis, and it is also frequently exploitative and can function to increase vulnerability. The moral economy often reproduces structures of domination, which may particularly disadvantage women, for example when it is women who are expected to fulfil labour obligations or provide services in exchange for support. (Davies, 1993: 44; Blaikie <i>et al.</i> , 1994: 53)
Increased petty commodity production	This may increase women's workload as they expand their production and trading of goods like beer. It may also mean that less male labour is available for agricultural production.
Migration in search of employment. (By individuals, not family units)	This migration is likely to be largely composed of men, as women have fewer employment opportunities, partly due to their generally lower levels of education. Women are also constrained from migration due to their responsibility for children and cultural limitations on their mobility. In situations of conflict, men may leave to join military forces. There is likely to be a large increase in female-headed and maintained households, with women having less male labour to rely on. In situations of conflict, women without male protection are more vulnerable to attack.
Sale of possessions	Non-productive assets which are sold off first may be women's only property, leaving them vulnerable to destitution in the event of family break up.
Stage 2: Disposal of Productive Assets	
Sale of livestock, agricultural tools and sale or mortgage of land	These are likely to involve the sale of men's assets, as few women would possess them.
Credit from merchants or money lenders	Female-headed households will not have access to these more official channels of credit as they are less likely to own assets, such as land, which can be used as collateral.
Reduction of current consumption levels	Women, girl-children and the sick and disabled are likely to be allocated less food than productive male adults

Stage 3: Destitution	
Distress migration	Women, children, particularly girls, and the elderly and disabled may find themselves abandoned at the stage of destitution. They have fewer options for survival with fewer opportunities for employment than men. However, there may be less social stigma towards women begging or calling on patronage than for men. Nevertheless, women and children are particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation

Source: adapted from Frankenburger

Coping strategies are clearly affected by class and age as well as gender divisions, linked as they are to the social and economic resources available. Those with greater resources are likely to have more options to pursue in times of crisis and/or to be able to pursue them more effectively. For example, young men who are mobile and can pay for transportation are able to get to the areas where work is - or where wages are higher - quicker than those without money - and therefore get the better jobs. (Brown, 1991: 304)

The way different classes are affected by crisis may differ by gender, in that richer women may be left worse off than their husbands and sometimes even than poorer women. Women who have been secluded, for example, may have fewer personal resources once they are left to fend for themselves than poorer or lower caste women who are more used to supporting themselves and their families. An example of this can be seen in Box 5, which describes the effect of drought and war on pastoralists in Chad.

Box 5: Class and coping strategies

In the drought and conflict in the early 1980s in Chad, some relatively prosperous families split up at an early stage as the men took their livestock to alternative pastures, leaving the women, children, elderly and sick to tend to the farm. This followed the usual pattern of seasonal migration. When the rains failed for a second time, the men stayed away in order to preserve their stock. Poorer families, with little stock to preserve and few assets to sell tended to migrate to towns together so that the earning capacities of both men and women could be utilised. The families only broke down at a later stage, with children being left to beg on the streets and husbands and wives splitting up. For the wealthier women left in their villages, once they had sold their jewellery and the animals that remained, they were unable to migrate to the towns alone and did not have the skills or experience required to earn money through their own labour.

Source: Brown, 1991

2.4.1 Supporting coping strategies

The coping strategies that communities, households or individuals adopt can make a difference between survival and destitution. However, it should also be remembered that coping strategies can be destructive to long-term livelihoods and are not necessarily 'developmental' in that they do not always increase long-term productivity or survival (Davies, 1993) They may also be environmentally destructive, leading to the depletion of natural resources. From a gender perspective, the coping strategies adopted may place particular burdens on women's time, energy and resources and so are not sustainable or desirable in the long term. Thus, whilst coping strategies may be successful in ensuring short-term survival, they may increase long-term vulnerability, particularly if what was a coping strategy gradually becomes an adaptive strategy, used on a more everyday basis. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 831)

Interventions which are not based on an understanding of the differential impacts of emergencies, may serve to increase the vulnerability of particular groups. In Bangladesh, technocratic solutions to flooding, such as afforestation projects and embankment

construction, may have adversely affected the poor, and in turn poor women, by failing to take account of the social differentiation in experiences of flooding. By fencing off land, these projects removed access to common grazing which is an essential resource for poor households. Building embankments and reducing the amount of surface water reduces the resource base and coping strategies of the poor in a similar way. (Shaw, 1992: 214) Similarly, legislation in the Malawi famine to make the selling of beer illegal in an attempt to combat food shortages closed off a source of income which was one of the few available to women (Vaughan, 1987).

The **Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief** (Eade and Williams, 1995) suggests that supporting people in their attempt to find new economic niches to survive crisis is often done best through existing development programmes. The following strategies are suggested:

- expand or increasing subsidies on existing activities - through reducing costs or rescheduling credit, or through the provision of Food for Work;
- exploit new, but temporary opportunities that result from a crisis. An example of this was an Oxfam-funded programme supporting people in the informal sector supplying pallets to aid agencies in Port Sudan in 1985-86;
- distributing key inputs, such as seeds, tools or animal feed, on a cost or subsidy basis. This provides a safety net and averts distress sales thereby having a knock-on effect for other sectors, for example by helping to maintain livestock prices;
- encouraging diversified income opportunities through new activities, such as oasis gardening in the Sahel, or agriculture in siege towns. Although these may only have temporary economic significance, they also provide skills and experience which can be used in the future.

(Eade and Williams, 1995: 830)

The support of coping strategies and the provision of alternative sources of income and consumption depends on early warning systems which would signal the need to adapt existing programmes. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 831) The gender sensitivity of these initiatives would depend on the gender-awareness of the programmes which already exist, the extent to which women are actively involved and to which their needs and interests are incorporated into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes.

2.5 Gender-based power relations and decision-making processes

Whilst the outcome of coping strategies have been widely researched, there is little material available on the processes of decision making and negotiation within the household during times of crisis. This analysis involves moving from the arena of women's practical interests, to their strategic interests and looking at how changes in the wider environment effect their relative power and autonomy.

2.5.1 *The household and co-operative conflict*

The nature of negotiations around resource allocation within households has been modelled as one of 'co-operative conflict' whereby parties who may have different interests will co-operate as long as the benefits from co-operation justify the avoidance of conflict. In this conception, the relative bargaining power of the disputing/co-operative parties is conditioned by their 'fall back' or 'breakdown' position. The breakdown position and bargaining power of family members is in turn conditioned by the economic and social resources at their disposal as well as their perceived contribution to household welfare. (Drèze and Sen; 1989; Agarwal, 1992) Cultural norms may also call on members of the family to protect other members. The head of the household may be expected to protect the rest of the household and there may be expectations of mothers 'altruistic' behaviour towards their children.

A woman's bargaining position is also influenced by what support she can call on from the state. A woman who is totally economically dependent on her husband or father, for example, has a weak bargaining position due to her lack of alternatives if negotiations collapse and his support is withdrawn. This is particularly true if her abandonment will also result in wider social stigma. Thus the woman will try to ensure, by subjugating her interests to his, that her husband or father continues to support her. (Agarwal, 1992)

Coping strategies are often described at the level of the household. However, in a crisis situation, intra-household negotiations may be under particular strain and the fall back position of some family members may be weakened or reduced more swiftly than those of others. Decisions to favour long-term security of the household over the security of individual members in the adoption of coping strategies such as the selling off of non-productive assets reflects the relative power of household members. In situations of crisis, women may also find that the income that they make, for example from beer trading - over which they would usually expect to have total control - may be targeted for inclusion in the general household resources. (Kerner and Cook, 1991)

The ultimate breakdown in the negotiation between different family members can be seen in the break-up of the family and the abandonment of family members, particularly the old, children and women. Studies of the Bengal Famine of 1943 show that a disproportionate number of those made destitute by the famine were young and middle aged women and that a much higher percentage of women than men who arrived at government relief centres during the famine were absolutely destitute and totally dependent on the free relief. (Agarwal, 1992: 192-193) Both survey and anecdotal evidence show that the married women who were destitute had been deserted by their husbands or asked to leave. (Agarwal, 1992: 194) Agarwal (*ibid.*) argues that abandonment, which was a widely reported in the Bengal Famine, as well as famines in Bangladesh in 1974 and Malawi in the 1970s, should be seen as the result of the collapse of women's entitlements and bargaining positions to the point where they are no longer seen as contributing to the overall household livelihood and any claims for protection and support by women are rejected.

2.5.2 *Beyond the household*

In times of crisis, and particularly war, the structures of decision-making are subject to change. There may be opportunities for women to increase their level of participation in decision-making. Women's organisations may increase in number and importance, especially when the proportion of adult men in a community has decreased due to war or migration and when women's important roles in production and community care are recognised. An example of this is the women's organisation Mama Maquim which was started by Guatemalan refugees in Mexico in 1990 in order to raise awareness of the conditions of refugee women's lives. (Martin, 1992: 14) Conversely, the increase in of women's work burden in times of crisis may also lead to a reduction in their participation in the public sphere, as illustrated by the example in Box 6.

Box 6: No say, no supplies

In a study of Chagga women coping with food shortages in Tanzania in 1983-4, it was found that women were no longer able to participate in meetings and training due to the increased amount of time they had to spend looking for food as well as their intensification of commercial activities. The men, by contrast, were still able to find the time to participate in meetings. In the same area, Chagga women complained bitterly that they were excluded from the free supplies of Hunger Maize because, when drawing up the list of the poorest farmers, the village chairmen had failed to consult the women. (Kerner and Cook, 1991: 265)

2.6 Emergencies, conflict and changes in gender relations and identities

Crisis situations can break down social barriers as what becomes acceptable behaviour for different genders may change. For instance, petty commerce or the sale of alcohol or drugs may be deemed acceptable activities for women, even if generally discouraged, where they are perceived to have no other options. The division of labour may become more flexible, as women, especially if adult men are absent, take over tasks formerly reserved for men, such as working in the fields. In severe crisis, desperation may force individuals to ignore cultural norms and transgress limits of acceptable behaviour, for example by engaging in prostitution or consorting with enemy soldiers. Even when conceptions of what it is acceptable for men and women to do change during crisis there is no guarantee that this widened conception is permanent. Real transgressions of cultural norms, such as entering into prostitution, or becoming a camp follower, are rarely done without cost and women risk losing the support of their social network, not only during the crisis, but permanently. However, there may be positive gains for women in some survival strategies, through learning new skills and entering new areas of participation. (el Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994: 183)

As wars are inherently political events, the ideological formulation of gender identities may be subject to change, offering either a liberated vision of women, or stressing traditional ideals of women as the reproducers of fighters and the guardians and transmitters of culture.

War can lead to more conservative attitudes to women's behaviour, particularly during civil war when there is more stress on women's idealised roles as guardians of the honour and identity of a culture. In Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, the influence of the religious

leaders was increased, obliging all women, including urban women who had formerly been accustomed to relative freedom of movement, to go into purdah. Women's human rights may also be eroded as can be seen in the introduction in Iraq of a law legitimising the murder of women suspected of offending family honour. The holding up of women as symbolic bearers of caste, ethnic or national identity can expose them to the risk of attack. The rape, or removal of women from a particular area can be used as a means for 'ethnic cleansing' and as a collective punishment of the group. Women from the opposing social or ethnic group, may be regarded as the spoils of war, legitimising their rape. Educated or wealthy women may be particularly targeted.

Some struggles for liberation such as that in Eritrea can promote new roles and opportunities for women as part of wider social revolution. In Eritrea and parts of Ethiopia, the conflict earned for women the right to public participation on an equal basis to men.

Conflict situations also challenge stereotypes of men as perpetrators and women as victims of violence. Many women actively participate in wars as soldiers or support personnel. Women may actively promote the notion that they are the guardians of cultural or ethnic identity as this role can give them status, power and a public voice. Women may use this position to incite violence, becoming the agents, rather than the victims of violence. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 857; el Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994; Reindorp, 1995)

Many men are victims of war. For men, crisis may lead to the undermining of their identities as they find themselves no longer able to provide for their families and dependent on others for support. Men's skills may be devalued, through loss of opportunities to practice trades or agriculture or pastoralism. In post-crisis situations, returning men may find that their roles have been filled by women who have become capable of undertaking tasks hitherto considered male domains. For some, this frustration may exacerbate violence and dependence on alcohol and drugs, with women and children often suffering.

However, conflict in itself is unlikely to challenge fundamental perceptions of men and women, but is more likely to reinforce them.

Conflict is on balance more likely to disempower women than to empower them, as it attacks their physical and mental health, places obstacles in the way of their economic self-sufficiency, enhances the social attitudes which maintain their subordination. In short, the impact of conflict on women mirrors the impact of conflict on all the more marginalised members of a community, and indeed on all vulnerable communities.

(el Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994: 190)

In the post-conflict situation, there may be further changes in gender ideology and identity in the process of both men and women adjusting to and re-negotiating their changed roles and situations. Analysis of gender relations becomes crucial in understanding rehabilitation, with any interventions likely to have an affect on this complex process of renegotiation. Women may find that any gains, or extensions, of their control over resources and their lives made in crisis situations are lost in the process of rehabilitation, for example if seeds or other inputs are provided to men rather than women. Conversely, rehabilitation can be a period of positive transformation in gender relations, with opportunities to increase women's skills and income-earning opportunities, and thus their autonomy. However, it is important to note that

women may not wish to retain sole responsibility for production or providing for their families as this only involves additional burdens for them. It is important for women that the changes in gender relations that do occur do not increase their workloads or exacerbate gender conflict. (el Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994)

3. GENDER SENSITIVITY IN RESPONSES TO EMERGENCIES

3.1 Summary

This section looks at the possibilities for gender sensitivity in responses to emergencies. It:

- introduces three different frameworks for looking at gender in emergency situations;
- examines the importance of consulting beneficiaries and analyses the specific constraints to consulting women;
- examines the crucial issue of human rights and protection;
- from a gender perspective, considers emergency interventions ranging from early warning and capacity building to food and commodity distribution, with attention to housing, health and mental health and, finally rehabilitation.

3.2 Frameworks for analysing gender in emergency situations

The aim of relief operations is to protect people from the effects of crisis, either by reducing the impact of the shock, or by compensating for its effect. In order to do this effectively, there needs to be a recognition of the actions that people in emergency situations themselves take to cope with shocks and an attempt to support their resilience and capacity to survive and reduce vulnerability. There also needs to be a framework for assessing when and how assistance should be delivered and to identify the most vulnerable groups who should be prioritised in the distribution of relief aid. Gender analysis should be an integral part of such a framework, so that the ways in which gender inequalities and differences affect vulnerability and capacity to cope are understood.

The relief and development NGOs, Oxfam and ACORD, have done a considerable amount of work in drawing together frameworks for analysing gender in emergency and conflict situations. They draw on three techniques which can be used in emergency situations, all of which have different strengths and weaknesses and are most suited to different contexts, or for use in combination with each other. (el Bushra, n.d.; Williams, Seed and Mway, 1994). These are presented in Table 2, with an analysis of their advantages and disadvantages.

Table 2: Frameworks for analysing gender in emergency situations

The Harvard Analytical Framework

This approach aims to create a community gender profile, which is composed of three elements:

- the gender division of labour;
- an access and control profile;
- external factors which affect the division of labour and the access and control profile of the community

This community profile can be done twice, first relating to the pre-crisis situation and second the crisis, or post-flight situation, showing how losses and gains are distributed.

This framework has been adapted by the UNHCR, to form the Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations.

Advantages and disadvantages:

The Harvard Framework has advantages in that it brings into the analysis two factors which are of great importance to women in emergency situations and which are often overlooked: time as a resource and women’s need for protection. However, it is dependent on being done on a small-scale and by people who have detailed knowledge of the community. There are also problems in using it across a region or groups of communities which may not be totally homogeneous. (el Bushra, n.d.)

Capacities and vulnerabilities approach

This approach seeks to analyse the factors which determine whether a community will survive a crisis, by looking at the capacities and vulnerabilities in the area of material and physical assets, social and organisational capacities and attitudinal or psycho-social strengths. The gender implications of all of these categories can be outlined in a matrix, as in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Capacities and vulnerabilities matrix

	Vulnerabilities		Capacities	
	women	men	women	men
Physical/ material				
social/ organisational				
motivational/ attitudinal				

Source: based on Anderson and Woodrow, 1989: 16

The matrices developed can be used to analyse how vulnerabilities and capacities vary over time, by repeating the process at different stages in a crisis. They can be done at community, provincial and national levels. Capacities and vulnerabilities analysis can be used to aid assessment of whether an intervention should be made in a crisis, how, where and when it should be made, as well as in the planning and implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages of programmes.

Advantages and disadvantages:

The main strength of this approach is that it stresses the necessity for outside agencies to build on the strengths of the community, as well as enabling agencies to measure the existing emergency provision against longer-term requirements. Its main weakness is that, in practice, it may be difficult to assess and measure physical, social and psychological vulnerabilities. (el Bushra, n.d; Richard Longhurst, personal communication.)

The Longwe hierarchy of needs

The Longwe framework looks at the relative positions of men and women in terms of certain key development indicators:

- control over resources
- participation in decision making
- conscientisation
- access to resources
- well-being

These are considered hierarchically, with the bottom one being the focus of initial attention. The framework assumes that the objectives of women’s development are ordered according to this hierarchy. Thus, gender equality of control over resources is not possible unless equality in the other four spheres has already been achieved.

Advantages and disadvantages

The Longwe framework presents practical and strategic needs as being in a progression, highlighting the importance of establishing practical needs before expecting to make strategic gains. However it takes no account of how situations change over time. Some of its basic assumptions, for example that the different stages have to be worked through in order, have been questioned. (el Bushra, n.d.)

3.3 Planning and implementation of emergency responses

Full consultation of programme participants is rare in development programmes, and even more so in relief programmes. All of the frameworks outlined in Table 2, for instance, could be adopted without any consultation of programme beneficiaries. In relief situations, it is clearly very difficult to institute proper participation, yet whom relief agencies choose or are able to consult in an emergency will have an important impact on the allocation of resources and the recognition of different needs and vulnerabilities, as well as capacities. To avoid further marginalising of vulnerable groups or providing inappropriate services, relief agencies should consult the affected populations, providing new or utilising already established fora for programme participants to express their views.

Household and community institutions generally accord women less control over decision-making than men. Women heads of household tend to have more power of decision-making and control over resources within households than women in male-headed households, although they may be marginalised in community structures.

Formal or traditional leadership positions within communities are more likely to be held by men than women, with women's influence generally being through less formalised channels. Local government and NGO workers and policy makers as well as technical personnel tend to be men. Thus, there is a tendency for men to be the prime source of information for consultation on relief. This may be because the contribution of women to production, reproduction and social management has been overlooked, or because women are less accessible, particularly to male field workers. Members of ethnic minorities or lower castes may also be specifically marginalised in local - and higher - level political institutions, or not be accustomed to expressing their needs. Older people, who may traditionally be expected to be deferred to in decision-making may find themselves overlooked in refugee camps and by relief programmes in preference for younger men. This may add to feelings of disorientation and isolation. Yet older people may have important knowledge about coping strategies gained from their experience of past crises. (Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992: 13; Eade and Williams, 1995: 880)

The result of failing to involve women and other groups in consultation means not only that their needs may be neglected and that they may lose access to resources they are accustomed to control. In addition, it means that their skills and capacities are overlooked and not built upon. In areas such as food distribution, water and sanitation, failure to use women's knowledge, experience and skills can have a damaging impact on the health of the general population. For example, if women in refugee camps are not consulted in questions of camp design and the siting of latrines and washing facilities, there is a risk that facilities inappropriately placed will not be used, creating considerable health risks. UNHCR recommends that women specifically should be consulted about water supply systems and pumps before installation. It is particularly important that women are consulted in the planning of a refugee camp, around the siting of latrine, water and washing facilities and the general lay out of the camp because they face the most direct security risks. In addition, if women are trained in the maintenance of water supply systems and pumps they are much more likely to be well-maintained due to women's direct interest in the area of water supply. However, attention must always be paid to limitations on women's time and energies. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 880; 906)

The full consultation of women and other marginalised groups often requires pro-active and creative measures as they may not be used to interacting with development or relief officials or to discussing their needs with ‘outsiders’. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 881) Consultation with women will require, among other things:

- **female field officers** who speak the same language (which may not be the official language of the country) as those they are seeking to consult. This is essential to the participation of women, particularly in discussions concerning sanitation and reproductive issues.
- **attention to the location and timing of consultations.** Women may need privacy and single sex groups to fully express their needs. Meetings need to be held at convenient times for women, allowing them to attend, with childcare facilities arranged.
- **cultural sensitivity.** Depending on women’s previous experience of public participation, it may be important for there to be separate women’s committees, perhaps organised around issues, such as health, which are culturally acceptable for women to discuss. In some instances, there will already be established women’s organisations and community groups. The key factor is the attitude of the field workers implementing programmes and the extent to which they involve women’s organisations in consultations. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 881, Juliette Seibold, personal communication; Marshall, 1995: 6)

3.3.1 Participatory tools for consulting women and other marginalised people

A number of methods have been developed which emphasise the participation of beneficiaries in information-gathering as well as programme design and monitoring. These include Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), and Participatory Assessment Monitoring and Evaluation (PAME). (Williams et al, 1994: 250) Save the Children Fund has found that the use of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) in emergencies can help to locate the effects of a disaster in the context of the economy and culture of the affected area, leading, for instance, to recognition of the importance of non-food items in relief aid. Participatory methods can also help in the targeting of aid and in gaining understanding of people’s traditional methods of coping with disaster. (Eldridge and Gosling, 1995) In Box 7 below, an example is given of how participatory methods can reveal men and women’s different experiences and priorities.

Box 7: Participation and rehabilitation: the different needs of men and women after the Maharashtra earthquake

A participatory approach was used in the aftermath of the Maharashtra earthquake to involve communities in the process of designing new village layouts. This involved discussions with separate groups of men and women about the layout and history of the village, preparing maps of the old village, identifying social groups within the village and discussing different options for the layout of the new site. Discussions with the women revealed gender-specific concerns that the men's group did not raise and which were also unlikely to be raised in mixed groups.

The women were concerned over the siting of water points in the village and particularly the need to separate the drinking water and washing points (which women used) from the cattle point (which men used). The women also raised the need for house design to give women some private space so that they could follow the customary practice that women should not go into the kitchen, or touch anything in the kitchen, or anyone, for three days during their menstrual cycle.

Source: Shah, 1994

Participatory methods not only help to reveal different gender needs, but also to build women's capacities, increasing their decision-making power and aiding group cohesion. Important issues for participatory practice from a gender perspective include the need for female researchers, attention to timing and location of sessions and the limitations of what is culturally acceptable for women to discuss. Given the deep-seated nature of gender inequalities, it is important not to underestimate the difficulties involved in raising these issues.

3.4 Protection and human rights issues

In the Platform for Action of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, governments and UN agencies have a commitment to the protection of women's rights, which are confirmed as human rights, and commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.⁶ This is a serious challenge in emergency situations and most especially in the context of conflict. Programmes which either ignore women, or regard them solely as mothers, are likely to fail in their responsibility to protect their human rights.

⁶ Commitment 9 of the Platform for Action reaffirms the signatories commitment to 'ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms'. Commitment 29 also commits them to 'prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls'. (UNDP, 1995)

In situations of crisis, women frequently find themselves vulnerable to attack in the following ways:

- They lose the protection of their communities due to social dislocation and may be subject to **targeted attacks and sexual violence**.⁷ Children, including boys, and men may also be subject to sexual violence. This can have profound physical, social, intellectual and psychological consequences. Women can be vulnerable to violence before, during and after flight.
- The lack of alternatives may lead women and children into **prostitution** as a survival strategy, in situations of high risk of violence and abuse.
- Particularly in conflict situations, men, women and children may be targeted for **abuse by the police, the military or other officials**. When women are detained, they are particularly vulnerable to general and sexual violence. This may happen in their countries of origin, or during flight when they attempt to cross borders. (UNHCR, 1995)
- Women and children without male accompaniment are particularly vulnerable to **attacks** from pirates, bandits, members of the security forces, smugglers or other refugees. Refugee camps may be subject to attacks from bandits or irregular forces, with women being a special target. For the estimated 90 per cent of refugees who return to their countries of origin without official assistance, they return to situations where the source of conflict remains unresolved and thus remain vulnerable to violence.
- In the country of asylum, women can be vulnerable to **sexual attack and manipulation** by people in authority, including those who are responsible for their protection and assistance. Those responsible for registration of refugees, or the distribution of resources, may attempt to exchange sexual favours for their assistance. This reinforces the need for more female staff in relief situations and for the distribution of resources through female networks.
- The **difficulty in obtaining refugee status and documentation** which women experience, through practices of registering only male heads of household, also makes them more vulnerable to abuse.
- The social dislocation and break-up of households means that women may **lose access to traditional support networks**.
- Refugee camps themselves, through the stressed and overcrowded conditions may foster increased **domestic and sexual violence**. The men of the camps may be transitory, returning only occasionally from fighting for a rest, increasing domestic tension and violence and the prevalence of weapons in the camps.(UNHCR, 1995)

⁷ Sexual violence is used to cover all forms of sexual threat, assault, interference and exploitation, including 'statutory rape' and molestation without physical harm or penetration. (UNHCR, 1995: 1)

Within refugee settlements, measures need to be taken to increase women's sense of security and to provide counselling for victims of violence. The following are recommended measures based on the experience of UNHCR:

- **Women refugees should be consulted in the planning of camp location and design.** Camp design can play a crucial role in increasing or decreasing the vulnerability of women and, once established, is difficult to remedy. Issues such as the siting of latrines for men and women are important as is the question of lighting. Women are particularly at risk when they leave the camps to gather firewood or wild foods.
- **Camp security should be increased,** with an awareness that security personnel themselves can be threatening to women. Measures such as planting thorn bushes around settlements, or the use of barbed wire can deter raids from bandits and militia. (Marshall, 1995: 6)
- **For victims of violence, professional counselling and advice, provided by personnel of the same sex, is crucial.** Victims need to be assured of total confidentiality and efforts made to prevent the social ostracism that victims of sexual violence suffer in many cultures. This may involve relocation to other refugee camps or quicker opportunities for resettlement abroad. (UNHCR, 1995; Marshall, 1995) Gender training and sensitisation of staff is crucial in this area, so that staff are aware of the correct procedures for dealing with victims of violence, particularly sexual violence. It may be important that there is not one member of staff who is associated with sexual abuse, which would lead to the ready identification of the victims. (UNHCR, 1991; UNHCR, 1995: 34)
- **Women refugees should be made aware of their rights and of the sources of protection and redress available to them.**
- **Increasing the number of female staff in relief programmes is essential to the inclusion of women.** There need to be serious attempts to overcome the security fears of female staff, as well as the cultural opposition to their work that they may face.

Whether resettling in the first country of asylum, or a different country, women may have legal problems in gaining rights of asylum because they have not been registered individually as refugees. The practice of only registering male heads of household makes women very vulnerable, particularly in situations of family breakdown, or on the death of their husband or fathers. Women who wish to join their husbands in their country of asylum frequently face legal barriers and may have difficulties in proving their rights to asylum. Women may be vulnerable to attack because of their husband's or father's political activity but they may not be able to give the detailed accounts of these activities which are often required for asylum applications. Legal problems in gaining asylum are compounded by the relatively higher rates of illiteracy and mono-lingualism among women than men.

In situations where it is possible for refugees to return to their homes, special measures are required to ensure the security of women, especially female heads of household, unaccompanied children, the elderly and the disabled. These groups may often be reluctant to return home as they lack sufficient information about what conditions they will return to, whereas able-bodied men may have made trips home in advance, depending on the distance between refugee camps and the places of origin. (Chilimanpunga and Tavrow, 1994)

3.5 Emergency interventions

3.5.1 *Early warning, preparedness and capacity building*

Early warning systems have been developed, particularly in the area of food security, to try and predict when a crisis is likely to occur. If these systems are successful, then severe crises can be offset through early interventions which support communities' own coping strategies and prevent destitution. Often early warning systems are developed on a national scale and monitor indicators such as market prices and climatic conditions. At this level, there are unlikely to be viable or useful gender-specific indicators (Susanna Davies, personal communication).

However, early warning systems may also be used at the local level, using more subtle indicators. For instance, ActionAid uses the Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS). This involves the ongoing collection of pre-arranged and locally relevant indicators, such as market prices, school drop outs, uptake of coping strategies as well as other qualitative indicators. The disadvantage of these systems is their dependence on local knowledge to interpret them. Thus, they are vulnerable to being neglected or misinterpreted in a situation of high staff turn over. (Pippa Howell, personal communication) Where the uptake of coping strategies is used as an early warning indicator, there may be gender-specific coping strategies that could be monitored, such as women's increased participation in the labour market, or other indicators which monitor the situation of particularly vulnerable groups.

The question of developing early warning systems for other kinds of shock, such as conflict, is beginning to be raised. However, monitoring the level of tension in communities is difficult given people's reluctance to talk about these issues. (Pippa Howell, personal communication.)

Disaster preparedness includes capacity building at local, regional and national levels to predict, recognise and deal with crises. From a gender perspective, this could include increasing the number of women staff in emergency organisations and strengthening women's organisations. Two examples of capacity building are given in Box 8. They illustrate some of the difficulties of working with women, as well as the opportunities.

Box 8. Capacity building at the local level: are women involved?

In Southern Somalia, the NGO ACORD, which was already involved in development work with the community at the time of the famine, assisted the elders' committees in liaising directly with the ICRC during the famine. This involved discussing the problem with the elders and helping them to prepare the necessary information and plans for their meetings with the ICRC, as well as attending the meetings. However, given the totally male composition of the elders' committees and their hostility to women's inclusion, it was almost impossible to include women in this process. (Judy el-Bushra, personal communication)

In contrast to this is the co-operation between CARE International and the Afghan Woman's Higher Association, in carrying out research, which included a process of capacity building, although that was not the primary intention of the programme. CARE had identified widowed women as the single most impoverished group and supported the Afghan Woman's Higher Association in using its large membership network to identify the target population. The Afghan Women's association was able to identify 5,000 of the most destitute households and to co-ordinate the widow's tailoring programme, making traditional clothing which was sold to the ICRC. (Guy Templer, personal communication)

3.5.2 Relief aid

There are many different forms which relief aid may take, all of which may have gender implications. In addition, the mechanisms of targeting relief beneficiaries and delivering aid are also crucial in affecting the gender sensitivity of aid programmes.

Registering of beneficiaries, targeting of aid and delivery mechanisms

There is a tendency in many relief situations to speed up processes of registration of beneficiaries by registering only male heads of household. This has serious implications for women, including the following:

- women, if they are not registered, do not have access to resources in their own right and they risk losing indirect access to resources if the head of their household leaves or abandons them. This is particularly serious in refugee situations, where a woman's refugee status may be tied to her husband, father or brother, leaving her legally unprotected and vulnerable to abuse;
- female heads of households and their dependants are often not registered, so do not receive resources, despite being amongst the most vulnerable;
- food or other resources distributed through men have often failed to reach the intended beneficiaries and instead have been siphoned off to be sold on the market, or to supply armed forces. (Marshall, 1995: 6)
- if food aid is distributed to men, women not only risk losing access to the food, but they lose influence over a key area of activity where they previously had control. This is particularly the case in Africa where women are generally responsible for the production for household consumption.

It is crucial that women are registered in their own right in refugee situations and that there is careful consideration of methods of targeting and distributing relief aid. It is increasingly recognised that food aid should not be automatically distributed to male heads of household and that women are often the most appropriate people to receive food aid, due to their responsibility for food management. There is also the possibility that distributing resources to women will strengthen their bargaining position within the household. The case study, in Box 9, of a food distribution project in the Turkana district of north-west Kenya shows how programmes can recognise the crucial role of women in food distribution and seek to reinforce rather than undermine it.

Box 9. Distributing food aid to women in Turkana

Oxfam operated a large-scale distribution programme to pastoralists in Turkana in response to the drought of 1990-1994. The registration for food aid reflected customary social arrangements in Turkana by placing women at the centre of the distribution system. The household was defined as a woman and the members of her *ekol* or day-hut - her children and other dependants who would normally eat together. Turkana society is polygamous, so husbands were usually registered with their first wives. Individuals in households were registered by name so that larger households received proportionately more food.

The distribution of food aid through women, particularly as food aid became an increasingly important part of the household's resources, increased women's authority. The evaluation study conducted for Oxfam found that some men felt that their powers were temporarily eroded. Oxfam had taken over the role of men to find food for households. In the words of one of the women: '*Oxfam is our husband because it now feeds us*'. However, by and large, men tended to accept this redistribution, perhaps temporary, of authority, as there was a general recognition that women were best suited for this task. The reports do not elaborate on what sort of a burden the collection of food represented for women but since the distributions were limited to once a month, this can be assumed to have been minimal and offset by the increased control of resources.

There are indications that women's nutritional position was strengthened, as in times of food shortages they, along with younger children, have to go without. In a PRA exercise, wives were uniformly identified as eating food last - indicating that all women may be vulnerable to food shortages, not just pregnant and breastfeeding women as commonly assumed. Women were also saved time in looking for food and this was particularly valued by pregnant women. However, it should be noted that food aid alone may not be enough to deal with all health needs.

Source: Lukhanyo *et al*, 1994; Oxfam, 1995:

However, simply using women as the means of distribution of food aid does not necessarily mean that they are empowered by the process and certainly does not guarantee the permanence in any changes in gender relations. This is particularly the case where being the recipient of aid involves the woman in added work and long hours of queuing. If insufficient protection is provided, women may not even be able to maintain control of what they receive, as food aid and other commodities are stolen or obtained through intimidation. There is also

the possibility that increased gender conflict may undermine any gains women may have made. Box 10 present a different case study, of ‘women-only’ distribution in Khmer refugee camps in Thailand, which highlights the dangers of seeing women purely as an effective means of distribution of relief aid.

Box 10: ‘Women-only’ food distribution in Khmer refugee camps in Thailand

In 1980, UNICEF introduced ‘women-only’ distribution systems in some of the Khmer refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border, to deliver UNBRO food aid to camp populations. These were still operational in several camps in 1986, but following research on their impact were replaced by direct distribution systems in 1987/8.

The rationale for introducing women-only distribution, in this case, was not based on an analysis of women’s role in food production and household provisioning, or an attempt to improve their status or bargaining position. Rather, the women-only system was an attempt to prevent food aid being siphoned off for military use, to limit corruption by camp officials and to save distribution time by halving the number of recipients. Women and girls became the instruments of food distribution without any consideration of the impact it would have on them, or on gender relations.

Under this system, food was distributed only to women and girls aged over eight years old. Each eligible woman received enough food to feed 2.75 people per week. Tickets entitling women and girls to food aid were handed out at biannual head counts. The screening for eligibility involved in this process caused great distress as those with insufficient food rations attempted to pass ineligible children through the screening gates. Parents with more boys than girls often tried to disguise them by dressing them in girls’ clothing and allowing them to grow their hair long. To prevent people from getting extra rations in this way, the children’s genitals were examined. This practice was later banned by UNBRO.

The system also created severe inequalities in people’s access to food. Families with a large number of children under eight, or with a high proportion of males to females over eight, received insufficient food. Also disfavoured were families where the adult men were not soldiers and, most of all, single men. Because of these inequalities, many households received less than they required to meet their minimum needs, compounded by the fact the individual ration was set very low.

The new system of direct distribution introduced following concern over these problems may not, either, have considered gender issues. However, this example shows that using simply women and girls as the instruments of distribution, without consideration of gender and wider social relations and structures, is not in itself a solution.

Source: Baden, 1989

Food aid, food for work, cash and credit distribution

Food aid is a controversial issue, with debates continuing about its purpose, its impact on local production, whether it leads to dependency, as well as its effectiveness and nutritional value. There are many questions about how (where, when, how much) and to whom it should be distributed. The appropriate form of aid will vary with the context and it is crucial to consult beneficiaries on which resources they consider to be most important. There is considerable controversy over the effectiveness of food aid and many espouse the replacement of food with cash as a more flexible resource.

From a gender perspective, it is important to consider whether particular resources, i.e. cash or credit, are more likely than food to be taken out of the control of women, even when directly distributed to them. Men may be more likely to consider cash as something that they should control, but in a situation of scarcity, any additional resources are a potential cause of gender conflicts. Thus, approaches to targeting and the protection of women are probably more significant than the nature of relief aid being distributed.

Food for work (FFW) programmes are intended to be a means of targeting the most vulnerable, giving them access to food (or cash) whilst at the same time using their labour to develop local infrastructure, for example in road-building programmes. The tasks involved are usually very physically demanding, with low wages (or increasing the workload whilst not increasing the payment in food) in order to ensure that only those who are really in need of the food take part in the scheme. However, there are serious questions as to the effect of the workload on participants, especially women who are often not able to stop doing their other work when they enter FFW schemes. This is particularly the case for some female heads of household who already have considerable workloads, but may be most in need of food.

In a study of FFW in Ethiopia, it was found that when women were participating in FFW programmes, it was in addition to their normal work, whereas men substituted FFW for other work. It was also found that, unlike men who were unaffected, women's participation had a small negative effect on their Body Mass Index, indicating that they were not benefiting personally from participation in the schemes. (Sell, 1995)

Housing

In natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, there is a need to replace housing as well as possessions. There needs to be assistance in building housing that will be more resistant to future shocks. Female-headed households, the elderly and disabled will need extra assistance. Housing schemes which provide housing materials and expect the beneficiaries to build their own shelters may result in female-headed households or older people remaining dependent on others to build their houses, or being stranded in refugee settlements. (Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992)

In the Maharashtra earthquake women experienced a higher mortality rate than men because they slept inside the houses, unlike the men who traditionally sleep outside. In general, women are likely to suffer more from poorly constructed homes as they spend more time there than men. (Maybin, 1994: 34; Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992) Women may face particular problems during an emergency which results in a loss of shelter because of more

stringent taboos associated with infringement of their personal privacy. The lack of privacy may prevent women from being able to wash properly and lack of clothes may confine them to their shelters and increase feelings of vulnerability and humiliation. In addition, crowded living conditions such as in refugee camps often exacerbate male violence against women and children. (Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992)

Health

Women have specific vulnerabilities in the area of health, particularly related to reproduction, but also due to their lack of equitable access to resources as well as their responsibility for childcare and sanitation and hygiene which expose them to particular health risks. (Eade and Williams, 1995; Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992).

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women need higher levels of nutrition which they may not receive. They also need ante- and post- natal care if they are to avoid health complications. Proper gynaecological care for women refugees is often not available, or is inaccessible because the medical staff are male and they are reluctant, or, forbidden, to be treated by male health workers.
- In many societies, particularly in times of crisis, girls will be given less food in preference to adults and male children.
- Children, older people and the disabled have particular problems in access to health care and face health risks in using facilities, for example, latrines designed for able-bodied adults.
- The stress of conflict, famine or natural disaster may lead to menstrual problems for women, as well as prevent their breastfeeding, causing distress at the inability to provide for their new-born children. Women who lost their children in the Bangladesh floods were in urgent need of breast-pumps, but often felt unable to express this need, or found that such equipment was not included in relief supplies. (Begum, 1993: 39)
- In some cultures, women are subject to the practices of female genital mutilation which can have severe consequences for health.
- The needs of women relating to menstruation and reproduction are often overlooked. In order to establish what these needs are, there must be sensitive consultation with women concerning sanitary provision, possibly leading to ensuring the provision of appropriate privacy and washing facilities, as well as extra cloth, paper or towels. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 906)
- In periods of food shortage and stress, pregnancy has particular risks for women, yet the provision of family planning services is rarely considered a priority in relief situations. This may partly be due to a lack of consultation with women about their needs. In situations of conflict and ethnic strife, family planning can be a highly political issue as communities wish to replace those who have been killed. However, it is important to distinguish the desires and needs of men and women in this situation and to recognise the rights of women to determine their own fertility, and to offer family planning services as an integrated part of other health provisions for women and men.

- Both men and women need education and information on sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. This is particularly important in situations of social dislocation, where there is increased prostitution and sexual promiscuity. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 907)
- Women's responsibility for childcare, water provision and sanitation involves them in having closer and more frequent contact than men with the sources of many parasitic diseases: human faeces and contaminated water resources. This is a source of vulnerability for women, but their responsibility is also a capacity which can be utilised and built on by hygiene education and training.

Women are often overlooked as a potential resource in the field of health, due to their lower rates of literacy and training. Training women to care for and educate others in the areas of health and sanitation not only makes it more likely that other women will be reached by the programmes, but also develops women's capacities, increasing their self-confidence, skills and organising abilities. Older women, in particular may be overlooked, despite their experience and knowledge and the role they traditionally play as midwives and health educators. This points to the need for agencies to reassess priorities, such as qualifications or English language skills, when selecting refugees for health training. (Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992: 26; Marshall, 1995; UNHCR 1991: 52)

Mental health

People in emergencies suffer not only from physical, but also mental trauma, which may be more difficult to detect and treat and also longer lasting than physical damage. Gender differences in the effects of emergencies on mental health is an under-researched area. Women and men have different ways of expressing stress, although there is a general tendency for men to resort more to alcohol and violence as expressions of stress. In crisis situations, women may face increased domestic violence as well as fears for their security. Single women and women heads of household are particularly vulnerable to attack, as well as facing the burden of providing for dependants. (Wiest, Mocellin and Motosisi, 1992: 21).

In conflict situations, the deliberate traumatising of whole communities may be a weapon of war. Attacks on and rapes of women may be used as a means of causing fear in a whole community, increasing the vulnerability of women. There is little research on the psychological effects of the traumatising of whole communities over long periods of time and its effect on social cohesion. Children are likely to be negatively affected by the psychological problems of their parents due to their dependence on them, as well as facing physical and sexual abuse particularly in situations of family breakdown and flight. In many conflict situations, large numbers of young boys have been conscripted into armies and witnessed or committed atrocities. The issue of rape and sexual abuse is particularly sensitive and may remain uncovered if special attempts are not made to listen sensitively to women and provide them with counselling.

Oxfam experience in working with survivors of atrocities points to the importance of listening to what they have to say, as well as a willingness to provide unconventional relief inputs - such as shrouds, funeral expenses, recreational or musical equipment and legal expenses - which allow people opportunities to acknowledge and channel their grief in culturally appropriate ways. They have also found that human rights work and documentation

and lobbying against abuses can provide useful channels for anger, suffering and distress. (Eade and Williams, 1995: 857)

3.6 Rehabilitation

Where relief and development most clearly overlap is in the area of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation differs from relief in that it moves beyond simply satisfying short-term needs and is an attempt to create the conditions for longer-term security. Restoration of the pre-crisis situation is rarely desirable given that the situation was one of vulnerability. Unfortunately, rehabilitation tends to receive relatively less attention than the direct emergency situation, as once the crisis has passed, international attention is drawn to seemingly more pressing situations.

From a gender perspective, rehabilitation provides an opportunity to build on the capacities of women which may have been extended by the crisis situation and to redress existing gender inequalities or disadvantage, which may have worsened under emergency conditions, by upholding women's rights and access to resources. It is crucial that women are not further disadvantaged in the process of rehabilitation, by being overlooked in the provision of education and training or when resources - such as seeds and tools - are distributed.

Crisis often leads to changes in gender relations, notably shifts in or a loosening of the division of labour, changes in household structure and marriage relationships. Women's organisations may have developed, or grown in strength. Liberation ideologies, and women's participation in conflict as fighters, may have challenged gender ideologies and stereotypes of women's and men's roles. Rehabilitation thus offers many possibilities for positive change (el Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994: 189)

3.6.1 Education, training and income-earning opportunities

Rehabilitation can often start in refugee camps, particularly once the peak of the crisis has passed and if there is no immediate prospect of return for the refugees. Women and girls may be overlooked or excluded from education, training or income-earning opportunities. Under 10 percent of refugee children receiving UNHCR assistance are enrolled in schools and the figures for those actually attending are likely to be much lower. In many countries, girls have much lower rates of participation in education programmes than boys, at all levels. Even where refugees have access to schools, classes may be seriously overcrowded and suffer from a shortage of teachers, particularly female teachers. (UNHCR, 1991)

Women's access to training programmes offered in refugee camps is constrained by inadequate resources, teachers and classes, but it is also affected by cultural constraints. Women may face cultural opposition to undertaking training that removes them from the household, or is considered inappropriate. Women are generally responsible for childcare and thus may be unable to attend classes. Training courses may demand a prior level of education and/or literacy which excludes many women. Some courses offered to women have proved to be irrelevant to their needs, or focused on skills that are not marketable. (UNHCR, 1991)

Women are an integral part of their household's economic activities, through earned income, household production, marketing goods or providing services such as cooking and laundry for other family members who engage in wage labour. In many refugee situations, women form the majority of adults with able-bodied men often only temporarily in camps. (Forbes Martin and Mends-Cole, 1992: 4) Thus if refugee households are to be free from total dependency on donor agencies and to begin the process of rehabilitation, increasing the income-earning power of women is crucial.

Many women refugees support their households through employment in the informal sector, including petty trading and domestic work. This type of work is typically characterised by low wages and also can place women in situations where they are vulnerable to violence and abuse. The majority of large-scale employment projects in refugee camps, such as road-building, reforestation etc. employ male workers. Women's training and income-earning is generally on a small-scale, marginal basis (for example handicrafts or soap making) which, whilst they may serve other purposes - providing social spaces for women to interact and increasing self-confidence and morale, often do not provide women with additional income. It is important to distinguish between projects aimed at increasing the income of women and households and those with other aims, such as increasing skill levels or morale. (Forbes Martin and Mends-Cole, 1992: 9; UNHCR, 1991: 58)

There are a number of constraints to creating real opportunities for women to increase their income in refugee situations:

- **Host country ambivalence.** Developmental projects for refugees in host countries may face opposition, from both the local population and governments, who fear competition and the permanent settlement of refugee populations. There may be specific restraints, e.g. laws making refugee employment illegal and preventing refugees from owning land or property. (Forbes Martin and Mends-Cole, 1992: 7)
- **Lack of education and training.** Women, often with less access than men to education and training, generally have fewer trade skills to offer, or linguistic skills which could give them access to sought after jobs with agencies.
- **Lack of recognition of women's capabilities.** Whilst women do generally have lower levels of education, there is also a tendency for project planners to overlook what skills women do have. There is often an assumption that women are skilled in 'traditional' female tasks such as handicrafts and cooking, which may not be the case. In addition, women's agricultural skills are often overlooked and left undeveloped. This highlights the need for proper consultation with women at the outset of project planning to properly establish their needs and capacities.
- **Cultural constraints.** In some cultures it may be considered inappropriate for women to pursue income-generating opportunities outside the home. In these cases, women will generally pursue strategies that allow them to work within their household compounds. However, outside assumptions about cultural constraints, or confusion between ideal and actual practice, can also limit project design. In many cases it may be possible for women to work without coming up against cultural barriers, or for these barriers to be overcome. In a refugee camp in Somalia in early 1980s, a community centre restaurant run by women was opened despite initial opposition from the men of the community. The opposition was overcome after the argument was put in a mass meeting that there would be no problems 'if the men who use the restaurant respect the women workers'. (Hall, 1988)

- **Time and energy constraints.** The responsibilities which women carry for childcare, the provision of food, firewood and water, mean that they have severe limitations on their time, unless they are aided in these tasks. The introduction of labour-saving devices as well as child care facilities can free up women's time for other work. It may also be important that women are assured safe transport to and from work.

Box 11: Promoting income generation for refugee women

In order to be successful, income generation projects for refugee women should, at a minimum, fulfil the following:

- The primary objective should be to generate income for the participants;
- The income generated should be in proportion to the amount of time and energy lost;
- Staff and participants must have mutual understanding of the project's goals and outcomes.
- Most importantly, refugee women must be included in throughout the design and implementation of the projects as key partners in ensuring that the projects meet the needs and expectations of those participating in them, and that the projects benefit from the capacities that refugee women bring to the effort.

(Forbes Martin and Mends-Cole, 1992: 16)

Frequently, the most successful income-generating projects are those where products such as clothing are sold directly to relief agencies. However, whilst a market and thus an income is guaranteed in the short-term, there is no guarantee that the demand will be sustained once the relief programme ends.

3.6.2 Rehabilitation and changing gender relations

Emergencies frequently involve shifts in gender relations. However, such changes may not be welcome where they result in increased responsibilities without women increasing their control over resources. Whilst women may have become involved in certain processes of crop production, for example, they may well not have gained land rights, or access to credit. The rehabilitation or resettlement process is fraught with potential conflict as both men and women adjust to shifts in their respective patterns of control over resources and responsibilities. Where men have returned from migration or fighting, they may find it difficult to re-integrate into their families. These problems are exacerbated in situations of conflict where demobilised soldiers often have access to arms, leading to increased violence.

The experience of long-term exile from one's own country can offer opportunities to develop in ways which challenge existing social relations. Guatemalan refugees in Central America, particularly women, have been enabled to gain education and organisational experience that would not have been possible in their home country. (Forbes Martin, 1992: 14) Saharawi women refugees, forming the majority of adults in refugee camps, have developed leadership and organisational skills, with 80 percent of administrators, 80 percent of teachers, and 70 percent of medical staff being women. (One World Action, 1993: 26)

Box 12: Rehabilitation in Rwanda

Background

The majority of those killed in Rwanda were men and young people, particularly boys, leaving women with the task of rebuilding their lives. Women face obstacles to rebuilding their lives on economic, social and psychological levels.

- **Economic:** A large number of households are headed by women, including many adolescent women. There is a lack of material resources: shelter, clothing and food as well as access to health care facilities. Women lack employment opportunities and do not have the capital to support income-generating activities whilst the price of goods on local markets is often beyond their reach.
- **Social:** There is great mistrust between neighbours. Women face undesired pregnancies, rape and sexual harassment. Women lack the experience and skills to take up tasks formerly undertaken by men. Given this, and the imbalance in the sex ratio, there is a danger that polygamy, currently illegal, will make a comeback, with negative consequences for women's rights. Women are ignorant of their legal rights against perpetrators of abuse.
- **Psychological:** The physical and mental repercussions of genocide have affected whole communities as well as individuals, resulting in fear and uncertainty about the future. Many women fear living alone and their neighbours have often been killed or are living in exile. There is also fear that the militias may return.

Women have responded by organising themselves in groups for the construction of houses and by establishing revolving credit schemes. Women often meet in the evenings as they only have the courage to go out at night in groups. The groups allow women a space to give voice to some of the atrocities which they have witnessed and suffered, which they would otherwise not dare to mention in public.

The Programme

ACORD, which has been working in Rwanda since 1979, has established a £315,000 pilot rehabilitation programme, for 500 female heads of households, aiming to serve the strategic needs of women as they adapt to new roles in the post-war situation. The programme aims not only to serve women's direct needs, but also to increase their capacities.

The programme includes:

- **Institutional** support to women's groups, increasing their managerial capacities and enabling them to take charge of the programme
- Support for **house building**, so that each family has a house, with the members of the group deciding whether to restore existing housing, or to relocate.
- Help for women to attain **self-sufficiency**, through support to agricultural production, to a rotating credit scheme organised by the women's groups, by supplying material resources and technical training, and by assisting the organisation of mutual help groups of women, to make up for the absence of male labour power. There is also support to income-earning activities.
- Dealing with **trauma** The programme seeks to encourage the exchange of experiences between women, as well as individual counselling, if that is preferred.
- providing **self-defence, rights defence and technical training**

Source: ACORD, 1995

However, whilst women may have benefited from educational and organisational experiences, there are many challenges to successful rehabilitation. Men, returning from war, may not be prepared to accept women's changed circumstances and position. In many liberation struggles, women have found that they have sacrificed much for a cause which does

not necessarily want to recognise their rights or expanded aspirations. Women who have been directly involved in armed struggles may find particular problems in reintegrating into society as they pose direct challenges to existing gender relations. Refugees that are able to return to their homes may find that those who stayed behind resent the opportunities that they have had and governments may be more concerned to assist those who remained in the country during the crisis.

Conflict situations are fraught with difficulties for rehabilitation, as there is rarely a clear-cut end to the crisis and political and social tensions are likely to remain for some time. Box 12 outlines some of the problems, as experienced in Rwanda, and also describes a programme by ACORD which attempts to address some of these issues. As the programme has begun only relatively recently, it is not possible to assess its impact or success.

4. THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR INTEGRATING GENDER CONCERNS INTO EMERGENCY RESPONSE

4.1 Summary

In the context both of the increasing attention to gender analysis in development and the rise of complex political emergencies resulting in large displaced populations, mainly comprised of women and children, there is a growing awareness of the importance of gender issues in emergency situations. Many organisations have, or are currently developing, gender policies for their relief work. This phenomenon is mirrored by and connected to calls for the linking of relief and development. As this is a relatively recent development, it is too early to draw definitive conclusions on how awareness of the need for gender analysis is being translated into conceptual frameworks, policy or practice. Nevertheless, this section will map out the mechanisms used by different organisations to develop and implement policy in this area, based on policy and programme documents as well as informal interviews and outline some of the barriers to the implementation of gender policy in relief work. It will focus on:

- the different conceptual frameworks behind gender policy and the forces within, and external to, organisations for the development of a gender policy;
- the constraints to integrating gender into relief operations;
- gender in emergency policy of UN, bi-lateral and non-governmental organisations;
- tools and mechanisms for the implementation of gender policy.

4.2 The archaeology of gender policy

The WID approach already has some influence over thinking and practice in emergency situations. There is acceptance of certain categories of women as a vulnerable group, limited attention to women's specific health needs and some recognition of women's role in managing household food provision, as well as in child care. However, this approach gives only a partial understanding of gender relations in emergency situations and has the tendency to, on the one hand, meet some of women's needs, whilst on the other increasing their work loads or reducing their control over decision-making. This can be seen, for example, in refugee situations where widows are kept apart and fed separately. Whilst this ensures that they receive sufficient food, it also serves to increase their isolation and cut them off from potential support networks.

A GAD analysis allows for a fuller appreciation of the effect that gender relations have on vulnerability to crisis, and of the impact of interventions on gender relations and thus on the relative positions of men and women.

Whether a WID or GAD approach is followed by an agency in emergency situations will, to a large extent, depend on their general policy towards gender issues. Outcomes are influenced by the mandate of the organisation and what objectives lie behind the interest in gender. Moser (1993) - see Box 13 - has outlined how attention to issues in gender and development have followed several different rationales and these are also relevant to approaches to emergencies.

Box 13: Different rationales behind gender policy

Implementation of gendered approaches can be seen from four different perspectives:

- **welfarist**, as an attempt to address women's needs;
- **efficiency**, if an understanding of gender relations, and the increased participation of women can be seen to produce better results;
- **equity**, an attempt to reduce inequalities between men and women in access to resources and opportunities;
- **transformative**, where the object is to assist women in taking increased control of their lives.

Source: Moser, 1989

However, in practice, it is very difficult to separate and identify the rationales behind policy and programmes, which may be fulfilling several different rationales simultaneously, as can be seen below.

Within an organisation, the impetus for looking at emergencies from a gender perspective may have different origins and is influenced by the structure of the organisation. Some of these will include:

- a desire from emergency policy makers and practitioners themselves to use a gender analysis to understand and **overcome recurrent problems in practice and conceptualisation**. This may accord with any of the above rationales - welfare, efficiency, equity or transformation;
- a recognition by those working in emergencies of gender analysis both as a **tool** for identifying those who are most vulnerable and to highlight the barriers to effective delivery of aid to women. This is most likely to come from welfarist or efficiency approaches;
- as a product of a move towards increasing the **participation** of beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of relief and rehabilitation programmes. This may fulfil equity, efficiency or transformative objectives;
- as a result of the **demographic shift** characteristic of some complex emergencies, such as Somalia and Rwanda. Women may make up the majority of the population, thus the objectives may be welfarist, efficiency, equity or transformation. There may also be a perception that **women and children are more politically 'neutral'** than men and thus in sensitive situations they are a means of avoiding the militarisation of camps, as was the case in Goma. However, the assumption that women are politically neutral and are not active agents in conflict situations is problematic.

There may also be external pressures to take on a gender approach. These pressures may come, in particular, from social development sections of organisations, calling on their colleagues working in emergency sections to incorporate a gender analysis, in order to be more in line with their approach. This may particularly be the case where development work is perceived to be undermined by recurrent emergencies and where funding flows are increasingly being channelled towards emergency and relief work. It may also be the result of

moves towards linking relief and development. For some NGOs, emergency work has grown out of their development work as they respond to recurrent crises in the areas in which they are working. In this situation, the importance of a gender analysis may already be established within the agency and it is a matter of extending this approach to their new work. In some cases, agencies may simply be responding to donor requirements for gender considerations to be incorporated into programming.

These differences in approaches to gender, both institutional and attitudinal, mean that there is no single model for integrating gender concerns into policy and practice. A range of approaches have been used by different agencies attempting to incorporate gender and some of these will be examined below.

4.3 Constraints to integrating gender into relief operations

Attempts to introduce a gender perspective in emergency situations may face varied constraints, some of which are common with attempts to link relief and development, and others which are specific to introducing a gender analysis.

4.3.1 *Linking relief and development*

There are increasing calls to link relief and development more effectively. At the lowest level, this is simply an attempt to ensure that relief efforts do not unnecessarily impede development and that development interventions do not increase vulnerability to famine and disaster. The ideal model, however, is one where 'relief and development interventions are implemented harmoniously to provide poor people with secure livelihoods and efficient safety nets, mitigating the frequency and impact of shocks and easing rehabilitation'. (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell, 1994: 3) A draft discussion document prepared for the European Commission Humanitarian Organisation (ECHO) workshop on links between relief, rehabilitation and development in Brussels in October 1995, asserts that 'Better "development" can reduce the need for emergency relief; better "relief" can contribute to development; and better "rehabilitation" can ease the transition between the two'. (EC, 1995b)

Whilst calls for co-ordination and harmony between relief and development efforts seem perfectly logical, efforts to achieve this face several obstacles on conceptual, economic, political and institutional levels.

Economic - separation of funds for relief and development.

At the international level, there are problems of the rigid separation in donor agencies between humanitarian and development aid. This separation is reinforced in the context of increasing political conditionality on development aid, but not on humanitarian assistance. Where countries are refused aid because of their refusal to comply with political conditions, there can be no linking of relief and development. This is a particularly severe problem when attempting to do rehabilitation work after the crisis has officially passed. Money for relief is also easier to access than aid for development and politically more popular, and this can reinforce a tendency to separate relief from development.

This separation of funds for relief and development has an impact on gender-sensitive practice within relief work. Relief programmes which seek to develop capacities, for example by training women to maintain facilities in refugee camps, or by extending the coping strategies available to women, may fall foul of the distinctions funders make between development and relief. Programmers have to become adept at finding alternative sources of funding, or ways around strict definitions.

Institutional and staffing obstacles

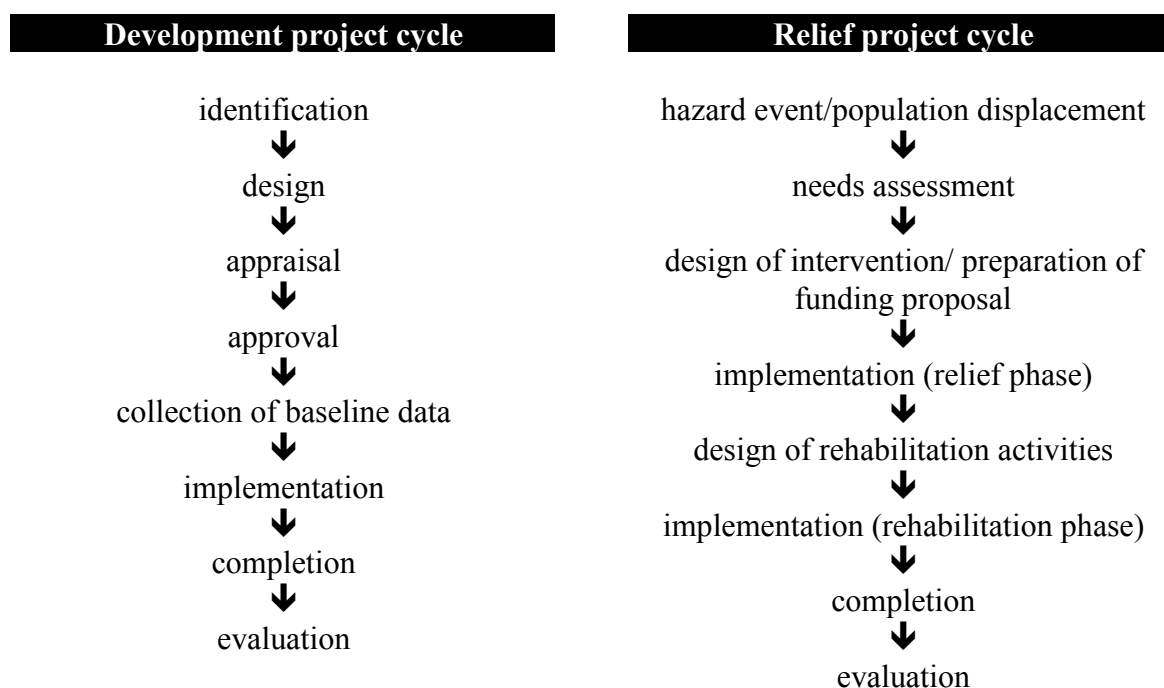
The institutional obstacles include the different philosophy and operational approach of relief and development programmes. The practical need to respond to emergencies quickly may dictate the separation of relief and development funds and personnel. Buchanan-Smith (1990: 29) has emphasised the differences between relief planning and longer-term food security planning. Many of these differences are also present in the 'culture clash' encountered when attempting to introduce gender concerns into relief. Relief operations are driven by a sense of urgency which tends to favour top-down, donor-dependent, expatriate-run operations, reliant on a narrow range of indicators, whilst integration of developmental and gender concerns, requires a fuller understanding of gender relations, and more bottom-up, participatory methods.

One of the most commonly cited reasons for the difficulties in implementing a gender approach, particularly at acute stages of a crisis, is the argument that speed is the highest priority and that emergency relief is primarily concerned with saving lives quickly. The culture of speed would seem to prevail in many relief organisations, even when emergencies are not acute. In these circumstances, consideration of gender issues can seem to be irrelevant, or a luxury.

However, a gender approach will not necessarily slow down the delivery of relief and moreover can ensure more effective relief assistance, through improved targeting of resources. Gender is particularly important in longer-term considerations of rehabilitation. Mistakes that are made, or procedures that are implemented at an early stage of relief, due to a sense of urgency, can have long-term harmful effects that are often difficult to remedy. Inappropriate siting of water and sanitation facilities, due to a lack of understanding of gender relations and a failure to consult women, for example, can cause increased mortality due to the spread of infectious diseases.

Figure 3 shows how the relief project cycle differs from the development project cycle. It is important to bear in mind that in the development cycle, the stages from identification to implementation may take between 12 and 36 months, whereas in the relief cycle the time between the hazard event and the response may be as short as a few days. In the relief cycle, the needs assessment may be very cursory and there is often no or limited collection of baseline data which makes assessment of gender issues very difficult. In addition, programmes are rarely subjected to the same appraisal and approval procedures which development programmes would face, thus limiting the possibilities of enforcing gender policy.

Figure 3 The development project cycle compared to the relief project cycle



Source: adapted from IFRC, 1995: 43

Related to the question of institutional culture, is the issue of staffing and the lack of staff within relief agencies with the expertise to do a gender analysis and/or to use participatory methodologies. Emergency departments have a tendency to be staffed by predominantly technical personnel who may be unused to analysis of social relations.

4.3.2 Gender specific constraints to implementation

Introducing a gender policy into relief and development poses specific challenges to programming and for staff implementing programmes. Whilst all interventions will have an impact on gender relations, programmes which specifically address gender relations and inequalities require an understanding of the complexities of gender relations and associated processes of change. This is particularly difficult in emergency situations, not only because of the culture of speed and the technical nature of many operations, but also because gender relations undergo rapid transformation during crises.

There may be opposition from beneficiary communities to policies which are perceived to challenge traditional structures. Channelling resources to women, or seeking to enhance their participation, can be highly political. It is important that attempts to increase women's self-determination do not increase gender conflict. In situations which are intensely politicised, community opposition may make implementation of gender policies extremely difficult. Staff within organisations may also be hostile to the implementation of gender policies, which may be challenging to deeply held personal beliefs.

4.4 Gender in emergency policy

There is no single model for introducing gender policy into emergency policy, since different organisations have their own processes of policy making and approaches to gender.

Furthermore, there are no internationally agreed standards in emergency policy. However, in 1994, in an attempt to achieve more consistency of approach between NGOs, the Standing Committee for Humanitarian Response drew up a code for conduct for NGOs, which also includes recommendations for the governments of disaster-affected areas and intergovernmental organisations (see Appendix II). NGOs are rapidly increasing their scope in emergency situations with much bi-lateral and international funding being channelled through both Northern and Southern NGOs. Concern is increasingly being raised about the lack of regulation of emergency operations and the lack of accountability of NGOs. The Code is important in setting international standards for the conduct of emergency operations.

The Code does not mention gender specifically, although it does ‘recognise the crucial role played by women in disaster prone communities and will ensure that this role is supported, not diminished, by our aid programmes’. There is also scope for incorporating a gender approach in commitments on building local capacities, involving beneficiaries in the management of relief aid, reducing vulnerabilities to disaster, accountability to beneficiaries and to retaining the dignity of disaster victims. The Code also commits NGOs to ‘respect culture and custom’. This issue raises the difficult question of whom in a community can be seen to represent, or be an arbiter, of culture and custom. This may be particularly difficult in conflict situations where cultural identity has become intensely politicised.

Whilst this Code of Conduct makes little specific reference to gender, various organisations have developed, or are in the process of developing specific gender policies for emergency operations. A few examples are elaborated below.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

In 1990, the Executive Committee of the UNHCR approved a policy on refugee women (see Appendix III) which called for improvements in the participation and access of refugee women in all programmes, along the principle of mainstreaming, and can be seen to follow a WID perspective. The policy states that:

‘In its broadest sense, a UNHCR programme or project which mainstreams refugee women should attempt to:

- achieve greater involvement of refugee women both as participants and beneficiaries in the social and economic activities of the project;
- increase their status and participation in the community/society;
- provide a catalyst through which they can have access to better employment, education, services and opportunities in their society;
- take into account the particular social relationship between the refugee women and their families.’

(UNHCR, 1990, n.d.: 7)

The Policy was the culmination of expressions of concern over several years by the Executive Committee for the need for ‘special attention to the protection and assistance needs of refugee

women' and the need to 'promote the participation of refugee women as agents as well as beneficiaries of programmes on their behalf' (*ibid.*). It was also influenced by the obligation of the UNHCR, as a United Nations agency, to implement the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

The UNHCR has subsequently produced several guidelines for the implementation of this policy including: **Guidelines for the Protection of Refugee Women** (1991). This includes issues of assessment and planning, the protection needs of women, questions of camp design and layout and women's access to distributed items, water and firewood, health care, education and skills training and economic activities. However, it does not deal directly with gender relations. Other relevant UNHCR publications include:

- **A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations Taking Account of Women, Men and Children**, (1992)
- **People-Oriented Planning At Work. Using POP to Improve UNHCR Programming** (1994)
- **Sexual Violence against Refugees. Guidelines on Prevention and Response**, (1995)

The UNHCR is also in the process of drawing up guidelines on food and commodity distribution, following a workshop in October 1995. The guidelines will deal with gender aspects of the distribution of food and other commodities. The guidelines are likely to stress that distributing directly to women is an option, but it is not the only possibility and that mechanisms of distribution should be dependent on the situation. (Bernie Doyle, personal communication).

The UNHCR WID advisor and programme officers distribute the guidelines concerning women in refugee situations and run an average of 19 training sessions on them a year. These issues are also covered in other training sessions. (Sophie Von-Stopelmohr, UNHCR, personal communication) However, there is a lack of further mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the guidelines, or evaluate how they are being implemented. Given this and the tendency towards a command structure within relief and refugee operations, there may be limitations on the potential for change through using guidelines.

The World Food Programme (WFP)

The World Food Programme (WFP) has recently made significant commitments to address the issue of women's unequal access to resources in its operations. At the United Nations World Conference on Women, in a document entitled 'Commitments for women', it stressed that 'WFP's commitment to improve the condition of women is based on the fundamental premise that strengthening opportunities and options for women is the key to the solutions of the problems of hunger and poverty'.

The WFP has made four general commitments:

1. Ensure that more WFP food actually reaches women;
2. Selecting activities that are more 'women-friendly';
3. Using food aid innovatively to address women's micro-nutrient deficiency problems;
4. Ensuring increased leadership for women in all WFP activities.

It also makes several further commitments, including to :

- ‘distribute food directly to households, and where possible, to the senior female in the household. In at least 80 percent of WFP handled and subcontracted operations, food will be distributed in this manner. It will be incumbent on the country office and/or WFP’s implementing partner to clearly justify why food aid cannot/should not be distributed in this manner.’
- ‘allocate 25 percent of its resources going to food-for-work activities to those in which women have a direct stake in the assets these FFW activities create and will ensure that 25 percent of generated funds are allocated to activities which promote the condition of women. Such projects must include complementary support activities accessible to women such as functional literacy/numeracy, diversification of skills, savings mechanisms and institutions, acquisition of land, credit and production of higher valued and marketable products.’
- ‘In countries which show serious disadvantages for women compared to men in their share of economic and social development indicators (e.g. 25 percent gap in literacy, education, skills) WFP will commit 60 percent of country programme resources to target women and girls.’
- ‘ensure that women have a substantial voice in local decision-making committees on administration of food aid management and also in those which administer the assets/benefits created.’
- ‘Work with national and international NGOs under contractual arrangements that specify conditions to fulfil gender-specific planning, targeting and distribution mechanisms, and monitor their performance.’
- ‘Hire women for half of all senior management posts (D1 and above).’

The WFP has commissioned several gender evaluations of its emergency operations as well as a paper examining WFP’s policy and practice. In this paper, the question of the level of commitment to gender in WFP’s guidelines and practice is raised. The issue of targeting resources to women without addressing ‘the inter-relation of gender roles or the socio-political context within which women are disempowered’ is also raised. The paper identifies, *inter alia*, the need to:

- create organisational coherence as to the approach to gender, including assessing the degree of political will behind potential interventions;
- increase WFP staff awareness, including awareness of gender relations between staff and training in cultural sensitivity;
- revise WFP recruitment policy.

The report also include guidelines on how operations - within the project cycle of information gathering, implementation, evaluation and phasing out - could be made more gender sensitive. (WFP, 1995)

USAID

USAID takes a WID approach in its emergencies policy. It states that 'we must embrace the fact that the role of women is critical to the viability of that community in the face of rending emergencies'. (BHR, n.d.: 1) The strategy paper 'Women in Disasters' by the Bureau for Humanitarian Response (BHR), highlights the main roles of women that are considered important, namely 'women as income earners'; 'women as homestead providers'; 'women as reproducers', and outlines some of the areas of vulnerability of women (*ibid.*). The strategy also emphasises the importance of compiling data relevant to gender in emergency situations. The BHR has not drawn up guidelines for the implementation of its WID policy in emergencies, due to the complexity of the issue, given the different cultural, economic and religious contexts in relief work.

The BHR has established a 'Women in Disasters' working group representing each of the offices in the bureau. The working group has an information sharing role both within and outside the agency, but does not appear to have any power to influence the design of projects, or assess policy.

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)

Gender-awareness is a principle of German development co-operation, elaborated in various policy papers. As part of a broad attempt to increase the integration of gender in its work, the relief and rehabilitation programme is one of several programmes within GTZ which is collaborating with the WID office to increase gender awareness, and 'target-group orientation'. As part of this process, an outside consultancy agency has been commissioned to draw up guidelines, with a particular focus on Africa. A workshop is also being organised in Ethiopia to discuss gender and relief and rehabilitation with partner organisations. As this process is still underway, and the guidelines in draft form, it is not clear how they will be used within GTZ and with partner organisations.

Oxfam

Oxfam introduced a Gender Policy in 1993, which included the commitment to 'ensuring that all emergency and development responses incorporate a gender perspective in assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation'. This commitment comes from a desire to transform exploitative or oppressive gender relations (Oxfam, 1993: 4-5) Within Oxfam, the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Team and the Gender Team work together to ensure that Strategic Planning Frameworks incorporate a gender perspective. Managers, within the UK and in the field, as well as advisors, are trained in the integration of the gender policy. In addition, Oxfam is in the process of creating 'good practice guidelines' at the country team level. Working guidelines for gender in disaster relief have also been written by the gender and emergency units. The guidelines cover data collection, basic gender needs including water, food, shelter and health and how women may be further disempowered, or empowered by relief interventions.

4.5 Implementing gender policy

It is crucial in implementing policy that the purpose of the policy is clearly articulated and understood. Only then can some of the constraints to gender policy be dealt with. In this section, a few means which agencies have adopted for overcoming those constraints will be outlined, including the development of guidelines, staffing and training policies and the appraisal, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

4.5.1 *Guidelines*

A common mechanism, used by several agencies to encourage the implementation of gender considerations, is to introduce guidelines. These briefly outline the approach taken by the agency and provide instructions for the incorporation of policy into practice. Whilst they may be useful in making staff and co-operating or funding agencies aware of the issues and giving practical guidance, there is little guarantee that they will be implemented as they lack mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of their practical effect. Given the time constraints on those involved in emergency aid, and the often high-turn over of staff, there is also a risk that they will not be read, or are easily forgotten. As USAID have found, there are difficulties in developing guidelines which can be applied across different social, political and economic contexts.

Oxfam, which works towards developing 'good practice guidelines' uses them to acknowledge that change may be slow and that minimum standards that are applicable on a global or regional basis would end in being reduced to the lowest common denominator. It outlines three types of good practice guidelines:

1. what teams believe Oxfam should be aiming for in programme structure
2. those that teams are expected to implement and relate to Oxfam only and not to partners
3. those that are mandatory

(Oxfam, 1994: 8)

For the third type of guidelines - those that are mandatory, there would need to be a linked process of accountability, by which programme officers were called to account for not carrying out the guidelines.

The processes by which guidelines are developed has important implications for the likelihood of their being effective, in particular whether the process can be regarded as 'top down' - imposed by a donor or development, or WID, department - or 'bottom up' - the result of an internal process within the emergency agency or department. It may, more often, be a combination of the two and the result of a collaboration.

4.5.2 Staff and training

Two main approaches have been adopted by agencies attempting to overcome the problems both of institutional culture which may be resistant to implementing gender policy and of lack of expertise on gender:

- to seek to sensitise staff to gender issues, through the issuing of guidelines and publications and the running of workshops and training programmes.
- to widen the personnel resources of emergency teams, both at policy-making levels and in the field. This involves the employment of specialised staff with responsibility for integrating gender concerns. It also involves the employment of more female staff who are essential in the field for reaching women and enabling their participation and access to resources.

Gender training is well established in the development field and is increasingly being introduced to emergency practitioners and policy makers. The limitations to this approach are that it is largely voluntary and depends on the interest of individuals. High staff turn-over, and the employment of staff at short-notice also limit the effects of training. In addition, gender training can be challenging to many deeply-felt personal views. It needs to be part of an on-going process and take place in a context which is supportive to change. (Tina Wallace, personal communication.)

In terms of the second approach, the UK ODA has recently appointed both a senior advisor and a social development advisor to their emergency programmes, who facilitate an approach which includes the examination of social relations. In a similar way, Oxfam UK has created two new posts of ESPs (Emergency Support Personnel) who are charged with the task of integrating gender into the relief work at both policy and field levels.

The success of this approach depends to a large degree on the ability of staff with different areas of expertise to communicate and find common agendas. This in turn is partly dependent on organisational factors, such as the amount of contact time between staff. Here again, organisational culture, and the practical demands of emergency work can serve as barriers. In a high speed culture, with staff frequently in the field in emergency situations, the potential for thorough and on-going assessment of practice, attitudes and approaches is limited. It is important to examine the ways in which the employment conditions of an agency restrict the ability of women to work there (through frequent demands to travel with limited support; lack of childcare facilities etc.). However, it should not be assumed that simply by employing more women that organisational culture, or gender sensitivity will be improved.

4.5.3 Programme appraisal, monitoring and evaluation

As has been outlined above, the guidelines can give pointers as to how to implement a gender policy, but they do not necessarily incorporate procedures for appraisal, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, sanctions against failure to follow the guidelines, or incentives to do so. As a consequence, they are often ignored or poorly executed. The culture of speed also extends to the area of funding programmes for relief and proposals for relief projects are often not subjected to the same systematised scrutiny as development projects. Incentive

structures can be introduced within organisations, as well as by funders, where ‘marking’ systems for evaluating proposed projects can include gender indicators.

An important way in which the implementation of gender policy can be improved is through enhancing institutional memory. It is crucial that lessons are learnt from mistakes and achievements in improving the gender awareness and effectiveness of programmes. A common regret within agencies is that relief programmes are constantly ‘re-inventing the wheel’. In the area of gender, the wheel only is in the process of being invented for the first time, thus it is a particularly strategic time to improve processes of monitoring and evaluation. Increasingly agencies are including gender criteria for the evaluation of programmes, for example the NGO ACORD’s project proposals and country annual reports always contain section on the gender components of programmes or the integration of gender into programmes. However there is a tendency for gender to be seen as only a small component of a programme and thus only merit a cursory mention. This is a more exaggerated phenomenon in relief rather than development projects due to the nature and speed of operations.

Agencies can also commission specific gender assessments of projects and programmes in order to increase the potential for learning from experiences. An example of this is the ‘Evaluation of relief and rehabilitation programmes in Eritrea, from a gender perspective’, commissioned by Oxfam in 1992 which set out to evaluate the involvement of women in the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme and their Food Distribution Programme in Eritrea. The report looked at women both as beneficiaries of the programme and in decision-making processes. The research involved semi-structured interviews with small groups of women as well as measures of nutritional intake. (Almedom, 1992) The World Food Programme has also commissioned a series of gender assessments of its emergency food assistance programmes. The success of such evaluations, particularly when undertaken by external consultants, is to some extent dependant on the co-operation of field officers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the perspective of those aiming to provide humanitarian assistance, an emergency is constituted by the reduction in people's ability to cope and survive in a time of crisis. Gender differences and inequalities influence the impact that a crisis has on individuals and communities as well as the range of options available to cope with the situation. Women tend to have less access to and control over resources than men - as well as less influence in decision-making and greater restrictions on their behaviour - while often being ultimately responsible for children and other dependants. For these reasons, they may be more vulnerable than men in emergency situations. In addition, in a situation of crisis, the social, economic and cultural aspects of gender relations are under stress and subject to change. Thus, gender analysis is crucial for understanding both the ways in which emergencies affect people and their ability to cope.

All interventions in emergency situations are likely to have an impact on gender relations, by changing the patterns of access to and control over resources. Therefore, it is important to incorporate a gender perspective in the planning and design of relief programmes, as well as mechanisms for monitoring their impact by gender, to ensure that women's access to resources and status in the community is not further eroded. A gender analysis can also enhance the effectiveness of interventions, by ensuring that resources reach those who need them most and that the services provided match actual needs. A gender perspective can illuminate both women and men's abilities, so that these are recognised and built upon, leading to more effective relief and also paving the way for better rehabilitation.

Once the importance, as well as the benefits, of using a gender analysis are recognised, the question remains as to how this analysis can be translated into policy and practice. Gender analysis is a flexible and dynamic tool and its application does not readily translate into universally applicable guidelines. The approach adopted to gender issues should be geared to the specific circumstances of each emergency and to factors such as the social composition of the affected population and the likely duration of the emergency. The approach is also dependent on the particular intervention planned and the type of organisation that is going to carry out the programme. For instance, what is possible for an organisation with a long history of work in an area, adapting an existing gender-sensitive development programme in response to an emergency will be very different from what is possible for a relief agency which is operating in an area for the first time, without a pre-existing commitment to gender issues.

There are a range of different rationales, not always distinct, for introducing gender into policy frameworks, including welfarist, efficiency based, equity, and transformative rationales. In terms of emergencies, approaches based on gender-differentiated needs are not uncommon, whereby some recognition is given to men's and women's separate needs and roles, e.g. in health provision or food distribution. Some approaches also focus on capacities and specifically on coping strategies, recognising that the adoption and consequences of these will vary by gender, possibly intensifying women's workload or leading to sale of their assets, to ensure household survival. However, it is also important to look at the processes of negotiation and decision-making underlying the adoption of coping strategies and to recognise the potential for building on women's capacities and supporting transformative change in gender relations, in crisis situations.

The adoption of gender policy in emergency work is a long term project and must begin with what is feasible in a given organisational context. As noted in section 4, there are many institutional and other barriers to the implementation of gender policy in emergencies work. Rather than attempt to implement a comprehensive set of guidelines, which might not be adhered to, a more realistic initial approach might be to establish a ‘bottom line’ for emergency practice. This would comprise an accepted set of minimum level practices which, given what is known of gender issues in emergency situations, it would be unacceptable for agencies to omit and without which women may be negatively affected in ways which are costly or impossible to reverse.

Such a ‘bottom line’ could include:

- **Development of a gender analysis from the beginning of any response to an emergency situation.** Programmes should never, for sake of speed, forget women or treat them as an undifferentiated and passive group, with no relation to men. In planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes, agencies should always recognise that men and women have different material needs. This will involve the employment of staff with gender training, or the training of existing staff. They should seek to understand changes in gender relations and establish the means by which that understanding can be reached - i.e. through programme appraisals, baseline studies and needs assessments to identify gender-based vulnerabilities and responses, involving beneficiaries wherever possible. The frameworks presented in section 3 are tools of analysis for emergency situations from a gender perspective.
- **Registration of refugee women.** Given the amount of evidence on the negative effects for women of registering only adult men or male heads of household, this practice in refugee camps is unacceptable and, at the earliest possible stage, both male and female adults should be registered.
- **Attention to security issues.** Lack of physical security may at times pose the greatest threats to women’s well-being in emergency situations. Thus camp design and lay-out should always be planned from the perspective of reducing security threats to women, with attention paid to the siting of facilities that women use, such as latrines and water supplies and providing lighting as well as the provision of trust-worthy security patrols.
- **Gender should be a prime consideration in methods chosen to distribute resources.** It is not possible to give a generalised solution to distribution problems, which will depend on the context. The question of whether it is possible or desirable to distribute through community structures, to household heads or to individuals should begin with an understanding of the effect on intra-household and intra-community distribution and on gender relations.
- **Early in the consultation process, means should be sought to ensure that women are represented.** Any intervention attempting to be gender aware will depend on proper consultation with both men and women and will involve the participation of women in a way which goes beyond merely using them as instruments for delivering relief. Whilst thorough consultation may not always be possible in periods of acute crisis, mechanisms to give participants a voice in decision-making processes should be set up as soon as possible. It is unacceptable to rely on community leaders (most often men) as the sole

mechanism for consulting programme beneficiaries, and only at a later stage consider the representation of women and other marginalised groups.

Involving women in consultation and giving them decision-making power is perhaps the key element in a gender-aware approach. New mechanisms may be required in order to ensure the full participation of women, including setting up women's groups in a way that does not provoke conflict and resistance. This might include use of the participatory methods discussed in section 3. Consultation of women is likely also lead to challenges to agency approach and practice, with the identification of a variety of needs not conventionally provided for in emergency programmes - for instance, family planning services, sanitary products and other non-food items, training and income-generating opportunities, or protection against sexual or domestic violence.

Enhancing women's participation involves building on their skills and organisational capacities, for example in providing health care, organising food distribution, monitoring nutritional levels, conducting research and in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. The full participation of women in programmes may require the rethinking of criteria for employment and training so that women can participate, for instance the requirement that participants are literate, or speak English as well as measures to ensure the security of female staff.

Section 4 gave a preliminary analysis of attempts to introduce gender policy in emergencies in a range of organisations based on documentation and informal interviews. In order to move beyond the 'bottom line' to more extensive incorporation of gender concerns and the establishment of 'best practice,' a systematic institutional analysis is required to highlight strategic points of intervention, barriers to implementing gender policy and the resources, structures and incentives which might be necessary to overcome these.

Such an analysis might focus on issues such as: the mandate of the organisation and its general policy on gender; the funding structure and the relationship between relief and development work; staffing, recruitment and training policies; issues of institutional culture, including incentive structures for the inclusion of gender approaches and staff familiarity with social and gender analysis. It would also be important to analyse the programme cycle and identify systems for incorporating gender concerns into this, at appraisal, monitoring and evaluation stages.

Given the separation of relief and development, and the constraints on introducing gender issues in emergencies work, rehabilitation is likely to be the phase when the introduction of gender-aware practice is most feasible. Here, also, consultation is crucial and appropriate spaces are needed for women to articulate their concerns. It may also be the point when interventions can most readily seek, not only to meet women's gender-specific needs, but also to build on their skills and capacities and redress gender inequalities in access to resources and power.

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APPENDIX II : CODE OF CONDUCT FOR NGOS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

The Code of Conduct drawn up by the Standing Committee for Humanitarian Response has 10 main points:

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first
 2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationalist of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone
 3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious stand-point
 4. NGOs shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy
 5. NGOs shall respect culture and custom
 6. NGOs shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
 7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
 8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs
 9. NGOs shall hold themselves accountable to both those they seek to assist and those from whom they accept resources
 10. In their information, publicity and advertising activities, NGOs shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects
- (Eade and Williams, 1995: 801-804)

The NGOs and Non-governmental Humanitarian Agencies which have signed up to the Code of Conduct include: Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Relief Service, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Save the Children Fund Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, the World Council of Churches and the International Commission of the Red Cross. (World Disasters Report, 1995)

APPENDIX III: UNHCR POLICY ON REFUGEE WOMEN

UNHCR POLICY ON REFUGEE WOMEN

1. Introduction

The Executive Committee has adopted four general conclusions relating specifically to refugee women:

- During its thirty-sixth session in 1985, the Executive Committee adopted conclusion No. 39, entitled *Refugee Women and International Protection*, in which it stressed the need for UNHCR and host governments to give particular attention to the international protection of refugee women.
- At its thirty-eighth session in 1987, the Executive Committee in *its General Conclusions on International Protection*, noted that refugee women had protection and assistance needs which necessitated special attention in order to improve existing protection and assistance programmes, and called on all States and concerned agencies to support the efforts of the Office in this regard. It also recognised the need for reliable information and statistics about refugee women in order to increase awareness about their situation.
- In 1988, at its thirty-ninth session, the Executive Committee adopted a conclusion entitled *Refugee Women*, which elaborates further on the special vulnerability of refugee women and the particular problems that they face, notably in the area of physical security, and noted the need to promote the participation of refugee women as agents as well as beneficiaries of programmes on their behalf. The conclusion also stressed the need for *an active senior-level steering committee* on refugee women to coordinate, integrate and oversee the assessment, reorientation and strengthening of existing policies and programmes in favour of refugee women, whilst ensuring that such efforts are culturally appropriate and resulted in the full integration of the women concerned. There was also emphasis on the necessity for public information on the issue of refugee women and the need for the development of training modules on the subject, in order to increase awareness of the specific needs of refugee women and the practical means of addressing these needs.
- At its fortieth session in 1989, the Executive Committee adopted a conclusion on refugee women reiterating concern about physical safety and sexual exploitation. It also called for a policy framework for the next stages in mainstreaming women's issues within the organisation with particular attention to the need for female field workers to facilitate the participation of refugee women. It reaffirmed the conclusions of the thirty-ninth session regarding refugee women, called for expanded training and the development of a methodology to systematically address gender issues in refugee programmes.
- In addition to the Executive Committee conclusions, UNHCR, as a United Nations agency, is obliged to implement the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Both the above noted conclusions and the strategies reflect the international community's recognition that programmes which are planned or implemented without the consultation or participation of half the target population (the

women) cannot be effective and could, inadvertently, have a negative impact on their socio-economic situation. This paper draws together the various Executive Committee conclusions and applicable United Nations resolutions into a policy framework for future action aimed at improving the situation of refugee women.

UNHCR's unique functions of providing protection to refugees and helping find durable solutions to their problems implies specific obligations with regard to programmes for refugee women who represent, with their dependents, over 80 per cent of the beneficiaries of UNHCR's assistance programmes. The present paper sets out the policy framework for the elaboration of an organisational work plan for the integration of refugee women into programming⁸ and project activities. The Office's international protection activities on behalf of refugee women are considered in more detail in a separate paper, document EC/SCP/50, which also discusses in detail some of the considerations in the area of protection and assistance on which the formulations of the present paper are based. The Executive Committee's conclusions on this paper will be incorporated into the organisational work plan.

The present paper introduces, in Part III, the underlying principles of the policy. These are the integration of the resources and needs of refugee women into all aspects of programming, rather than creating special women's projects, and the need for each staff member to ensure that this takes place in his or her area of competence. In Part IV, the paper outlines the organisational goals for refugee women, that is, the activities which UNHCR is required to carry out in this connection under its mandate. In Part V are outlined the policy objectives, that is, the interpretation of the organisational goals at the policy level. Finally, Part VI sets out the operational objectives of the policy, that is, a series of activities at the project level to ensure the practical implementation of the policy. These objectives are based on the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the conclusions adopted by the Executive Committee since its thirty-ninth session.

2. General

The policy set out in this document is premised on the recognition that becoming a refugee affects men and women differently and that effective programming must recognise these differences. Furthermore, to understand fully the protection needs and assistance resources of the refugee population, and to encourage dignity and self-sufficiency, refugee women themselves must participate in planning and implementing projects. Socio-cultural and economic roles can, to a great extent, determine the pattern of such participation. Traditional roles are often disrupted and then either undermined, or reinforced by the refugee situation. It is, therefore, essential that organisations working with refugees recognise that special initiatives must often be taken to ensure that all refugees have the opportunity to contribute to activities planned for them.

3. The Basic Principle: Mainstreaming/Integration

It is the intention of UNHCR to integrate the resources and needs of refugee women in all aspects of programme planning and implementation. This does not mean that separate *women's* projects are to be initiated or added on to existing general programme activities. Nor does it mean that responsibility for this process will rest with one work unit. It is the

⁸ Programmes refer to all aspects of UNHCR's activities including protection, assistance and durable solutions.

responsibility of each staff member to ensure that it takes place within his or her area of competence. The following terms and definitions are useful in understanding this concept.

What are programmes or projects which mainstream/integrate refugee women?

Any intervention, emergency, mid- or long-term, will have a different impact on men, women and children. Protection and assistance programmes or projects which mainstream/integrate refugee women are based on an explicit recognition of this fact. In activities which mainstream refugee women, action is taken to enable refugee women to participate and make a positive contribution.

Planning for such projects includes more than women's social role as daughter/wife/mother. It highlights a woman's economic role as income-earner for herself and her family, producer and/or manager of food, provider of fuel and water, and her religious, cultural and political activities. These roles, and, even more importantly, the change in these roles created by the refugee situation are frequently overlooked by planners. Consequently, interventions which do not take these factors into consideration may be inappropriate to women, tend to isolate them from mainstream project activities, further reinforce their dependency, and force them into unaccustomed social or economic roles.

The concept of mainstreaming refugee women arose from a better understanding of the implications of the division of labour between women and men. A programme which integrates refugee women will have taken into consideration factors influenced by the male/female roles in a society and included these in the planned activity with a view to benefiting the whole target population, not marginalising a portion of it. Refugee women are emphasised because, inadvertently, planners have often overlooked them. Until needs assessment and participation of all segments of a target group are integral to good planning, attention must be consistently drawn to refugee women. This will ensure that they are included in mainstream activities, not made peripheral to them or segregated into *women's projects*.

Projects that focus on refugee women as a target group are not necessarily mainstreaming/integrating projects.

The provision of goods to refugee women, that is, when women are passive recipients of shelter or food aid, is not in itself integrating refugee women. Neither is the provision of services to refugee women and their families necessarily an integrating activity. However, the provision of goods and services to refugee women may be part of a project or programme which mainstreams or integrates refugee women. For example, if women as well as men are consulted on the type of shelter required and the resources available to set up and maintain this shelter, then they have been integrated in the overall project. If women are asked about traditional diet, food preparation, and participate in the distribution and allocation of food, then they have been integrated into this activity.

By interpreting UNHCR's policy and operational objectives, the meaning of mainstreaming in a project becomes clearer. For example, projects may:

- Identify constraints to women's participation related to project delivery procedures;

- Respond to the initiatives of refugee women to improve their own situation;
- Make available appropriate technologies that alleviate time and energy demands on refugee women;
- Collect statistics indicating the male/female breakdown of the population and prepare baseline case studies in order to identify and to eliminate unintentional discrimination in delivering goods and services and thereby improve planning of future activities.

In its broadest sense, a UNHCR programme or project which mainstreams refugee women should attempt to:

- Achieve greater involvement of refugee women both as participants and beneficiaries in the social and economic activities of the project;
- Increase their status and participation in the community/society;
- Provide a catalyst through which they can have access to better employment, education, services and opportunities in their society;
- Take into account the particular social relationship between the refugee women and their families.

Underlying these broad definitions is the assumption that refugee women are participating or should participate at all levels of project and program development, from the initial identification of resources and needs to the evaluation stage.

4. Organisational goals

The organisational goals of UNHCR regarding refugee women are:

- To provide protection appropriate to their specific needs;
- To identify an appropriate durable solution;
- To provide assistance which will encourage the realisation of their full potential and encourage their participation in preparing for the durable solution.

5. Policy objectives

The policy objectives which support the overall organisational goals are:

- To recognise that refugee women represent, either as single women or with their dependents, approximately 80 per cent of UNHCR's target population and that programmes can be effective only if they are planned with an adequate understanding of, and consultation with, this group;
- To ensure that the specific protection needs and the legal rights of refugee women are understood and that adequate measures are taken to respond;

- To support the efforts of refugee women by recognising their needs and resources and ensuring their participation in UNHCR's protection and assistance activities;
- To ensure that the differing needs and resources of refugee women and refugee men are considered in programme activities and where necessary for cultural or social reasons, undertake special efforts to develop specific activities to ensure women benefit equally from programmes;
- To place particular emphasis on strategies to protect and assist refugee women, recognising that becoming a refugee can result not only in an unaccustomed social role such as becoming a single head of household or being without extended family support but also in substantially increased physical workload in building and maintaining the future of the entire family;
- To ensure that refugee women are equitably represented in resettlement programmes;
- To encourage each staff member and staff of implementing partners to ensure that the integration of refugee women's resources/needs takes place in his/her area of competence.

6. Operational objectives

Operational objectives provide the basis for the development of appropriate activities and work plans to support implementation of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Women. These are:

- To develop mechanisms to ensure that the resources and needs of refugee women are addressed in all stages of programme (protection and assistance) planning, management and evaluation systems;
- To cooperate with implementing partners, other United Nations institutions, governments and development agencies with a view to benefiting from their experience in women in development activities and, where appropriate, adapting these to UNHCR's specific programming requirements, sharing with them the long-term development implications specific to the situation of refugee women and appropriate methods of incorporating their specific needs and resources into programming activities;
- To develop communication strategies to call attention to the situation of refugee women of the public, NGOs, other United Nations agencies, donors, and host countries;
- To develop specific plans for each organisational work unit within UNHCR which will encourage and facilitate consultation and participation of refugee women, and serve as a means of monitoring and maintaining this consultation and participation;
- To develop training courses for staff of UNHCR and implementing partners to assist them in identifying opportunities for increased participation of refugee women in their areas of competence;
- To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of protection and assistance programmes by ensuring that adequate attention is given to the needs and resources of all members of the target population;

- To review and, where necessary, amend existing policies to ensure that they adequately take into consideration the situation and participation of all members of the target population;
- To improve data collection and needs assessment in order to have a more accurate representation of the refugee population in order to target programmes more effectively to specific social groups;
- To ensure that there are adequate female field staff to work with refugee women, and, accordingly, to review staffing and recruitment policies to ensure that there is an equitable representation of female staff and that this is adequately reflected in appointments, posting and promotion activities by UNHCR.
- To review present operational activities and identify means of improving them in order to facilitate participation of refugee women, and achieve a greater understanding of their needs and resources.

APPENDIX IV: OXFAM GENDER GUIDELINES ON EMERGENCIES

DISASTER RELIEF – THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

While there has been increasing understanding that gender planning is a vital component of development programmes, it has been less widely recognised that gender awareness is also central to effective planning and implementation of relief and emergency programmes. The need for rapid response and short term specialist inputs has often meant that relief programmes are conceived and implemented in a top-down manner. Complex logistics requiring coordination with a wide range of governmental and nongovernmental organisations, political sensitivities and the very large numbers of people often involved are also factors which practice the approach, whereby speed of delivery is seen as a priority, has often precluded proper discussion with the affected community in general, overlooked gender considerations in particular, and resulted in an inappropriate and therefore ineffective response. Women, especially, lack access to discussions about their needs, and are rarely involved in planning or policy making. Yet the majority of those affected by emergencies, for example refugees or displaced, are likely to be women and children. It is therefore essential to understand the gender dimensions of an emergency and to find ways of working with women. Awareness of their needs is not enough. Women should be actively involved in the emergency response from the beginning. The following guidelines may be of assistance.

1. Data collection

- Gather information from women and men separately
- Involve women in data collection, in survey teams etc
- Disaggregate data by sex and age – this may reveal a high proportion of women-maintained households, or groups of unaccompanied children.

2. Basic gender needs

- Gather information from women about their concerns

e.g. WATER of	Siting and maintenance, distribution mechanisms, methods and times collection, containers and storage facilities Cultural practices in water use – washing/bathing sanitation facilities
FOOD	Involve women in targeting, monitoring and distribution of food rations, allocation at household level, needs of vulnerable groups will processing/cooking of food give women more/less work? Is fuel easily available?
SHELTER	Consult women about siting and design, bear in mind women's needs

for security, privacy, safe access to facilities, e.g. washing/bathing/sanitation

Camp design should take account of women's vulnerability to harassment

HEALTH Involve women as health workers, consult women directly about health needs and to identify target groups, e.g. for nutrition, health care and support
Rape is a tool of war and women survivors will need medical help, moral support and a safe environment

3. Empowerment and disempowerment – changing roles and responsibilities

Refugees and displaced communities are experiencing change which will also have an impact on gender relations. Women and children are among the most vulnerable in most communities. In an emergency situation their vulnerability will be increased but there may be new opportunities. Relief programmes must be designed in such a way as to reduce vulnerability and strengthen the capacity of both women and men to cope. It will be useful to remember that:

Women may be further disempowered

- If they are deprived of their customary authority over the management of water and food (e.g. men control access/distribution)
- In the home (often culturally their place of authority) – if shelter is inadequate, inappropriately designed, increases their vulnerability to harassment and violence
- In their community leadership roles – these are often less formal and therefore less visible than those of the men, outsiders such as camp authorities/agency workers may overlook/bypass women's community groups through lack of awareness and thus further reduce women's authority.

Women may be empowered

- If they are treated with respect, their needs, views, skills and experience are regarded as important
- By being consulted directly about their needs
- By being involved in programme design and implementation
- By having positions of authority in their traditional sphere e.g. in food distribution mechanisms, in health care services
- By also receiving support, encouragement and skills training for the new roles they have taken on in the new situation.

Conclusion

The above suggestions are not exhaustive but are intended as guidelines for the development of gender sensitive programming in emergency situations. Although situations will differ depending on context it is crucial for the success of emergency and relief programmes that gender issues be raised, monitored and included at all stages in the response.

Further reading

Field Studies Paper No 2: Working with Women in Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Programmes, May 1991. Available from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva.

UNHCR: UNHCP Policy on Refugee Women
Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women
A Framework for People Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations – A Practical
Planning Tool for Refugee Workers

Bridget Walker/GADU/Oxfam 1993