

## INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

### XXI Meeting Geneva - 31 May 1999 Background Document for Item 7

#### FINAL VERSION

#### **Policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance**

1. The agreed conclusions of ECOSOC's 1998 humanitarian affairs segment requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator to "ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into humanitarian activities and policies" (E/1998/L.15 of 16 July 1998).

#### **Background/Facts**

2. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is fully committed to taking the steps necessary towards this goal, in particular considering the following facts:

a) complex emergencies and natural disasters have a differentiated impact on men and women which often affect the realization of rights;

b) in complex emergencies, men account for the largest numbers of combatants while women and children comprise the largest section of civilians affected by conflict. In addition, up to eighty percent of the internally displaced persons and refugees around the world are women and children. This leads to a dramatic increase in the number of women heads of households with responsibilities and high demands for meeting the needs of both children and aging relatives, abrupt changes in women's roles and increased workloads, access to and control over the benefits of goods and services;

c) in such situations the human rights of women and children are often directly threatened, i.e. the right to physical integrity and to lead a life free of violence, and women become more exposed to violence, especially sexual violence;

d) in emergency situations the nutritional and health needs of women, including their reproductive and sexual health needs, and of pregnant and nursing mothers and their infants are often overlooked or neglected;

- e) well-documented field practice has shown that gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance can help in mitigating the different and negative effects of complex emergencies and natural disasters on men and women;
- f) humanitarian aid can also be more efficient and have a greater impact if opportunities for positive change in gender roles created by crisis situations are enhanced and sustained during the emergency and Post-Conflict phase.

### **Principles**

3. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is committed to the principles embodied in international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It notes that the provisions of these instruments are applicable equally to men and women without discrimination.

4. In the context of humanitarian assistance, this implies embracing principles such as:

- a) gender equality and the equal protection of human rights of women and men in carrying out humanitarian and peace-building activities, as well as paying special attention to the violation of human rights of women and the provision of appropriate remedies;
- b) equal representation of women and men in peace mediation and decision making at all levels and stages of humanitarian assistance;
- c) integration of a gender perspective and participation of women's organizations in capacity building in humanitarian response, as well as in the rehabilitation and recovery phase.

### **Commitments to Action**

5. In order to achieve the above mentioned principles, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee commits itself to ensuring that its member organizations take the following actions:

- a) Formulate specific strategies for ensuring that gender issues are brought into the mainstream of activities within the IASC areas of responsibility. Priority areas are: assessment and strategic planning for humanitarian crisis; the consolidated appeals process; principled approach to emergencies; and participation of women in the planning, designing and monitoring of all aspects of emergency programs;

- b) Ensure data disaggregated by sex and age and include a gender perspective in analysis of information. Produce gender-sensitive operational studies, best practices, guidelines and checklists for programming, as well as the establishment of instruments and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, such as gender-impact methodologies, in order to incorporate gender analysis techniques in institutional tools and procedures;
- c) Develop capacity for systematic gender mainstreaming in programmes, policies, actions, and training;
- d) Ensure reporting and accountability mechanisms for activities and results in gender mainstreaming within the UN and partners, such as incentives, performance evaluations, MOUs, budget allocation analysis and actions for redressing staff imbalance.

