



IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

## EPC - Gender Fact Sheet



A young mother and her child are just two of the third-country nationals who have fled Iraq, to the Ruweished camp, Jordan.

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### Definition

Often used to equate with women, the word “gender” has become increasingly dynamic and important to humanitarian issues. Once in the field, most humanitarian workers quickly realize the different challenges facing women and men, girls and boys and the importance of addressing gender-based needs in emergency situations.

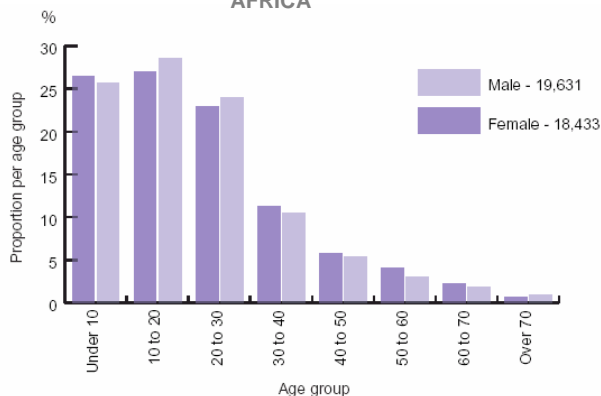
To adapt to these needs, IOM has made positive strides in its attempts to institutionalize and mainstream gender into its planning and actions. In recognizing the different needs of men and women and creating strategies to adhere to them, IOM has been able to more accurately accommodate those needs in times of crisis.

While every emergency is different, the aim of all emergency missions is to protect people from the harmful repercussions of the crisis. The Emergency and Post Conflict (EPC) Division of IOM is tasked with addressing these issues. In each emergency there are key cross-cutting gender issues that are relevant to all emergency activities, which EPC directly addresses.

### Change of Roles

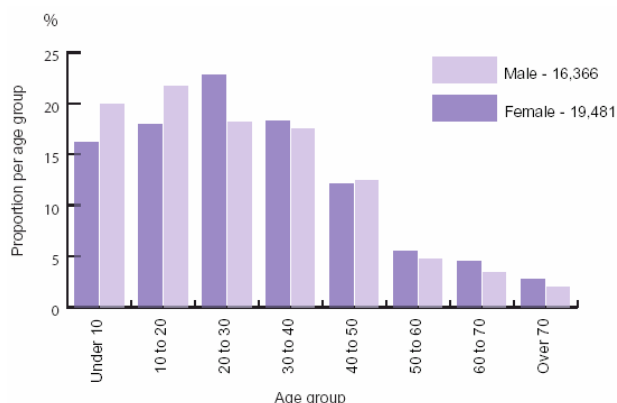
Some statistics show that women are more than half of the total migrants in industrialized countries. Historically, migrant women have been marginalized within the societies they live. Their particular needs have been frequently neglected when implementing social, political or economic programmes. Nevertheless, over the last few decades, there has been an increasing acknowledgement of specific women’s rights concerning both internally displaced women and refugees when approaching economic, social, legal and health issues.

Gender and age division of all migrants and refugees per region of origin, 2004  
AFRICA



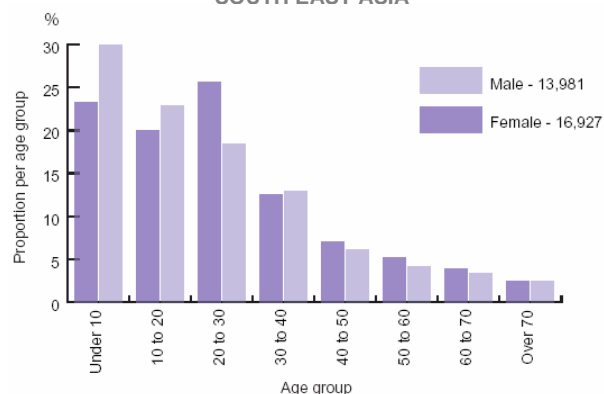
Gender and age division of all migrants and refugees per region of origin, 2004

#### EAST EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



Gender and age division of all migrants and refugees per region of origin, 2004

#### SOUTH EAST ASIA



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Men, women, boys and girls experience conflict and war in different ways. When emergencies and/or conflicts emerge, family structures and their social networks are often destroyed and gender roles are changed.

Women often take over non-traditional roles such as the head of household, for which they are seldom prepared. In these positions, women often become more vulnerable. As social infrastructure deteriorates, the support networks also disappear.

In times of conflict, women are often used as slaves, raped and recruited as soldiers themselves. It is issues like these that create a sense of vulnerability among women.

However, little attention is paid to gender issues in humanitarian assistance, largely stemming from inadequate awareness and lack of understanding of the impact of humanitarian crises on women.

The invisibility of women in decision-making, policies and political agendas of governments often reflects this. In order to balance this inequity, it is of great importance to identify and address the issues facing women and children.

## Policy

### IOM Objectives

IOM's key goal of mainstreaming gender into all activities encourages programmes to be proactive regarding equality between women and men, girls and boys, in all areas of its work, according to the international commitments.

IOM's overall and programming objectives are as follows:

#### Overall Objectives:

- To increase awareness of and sensitivity towards gender issues;
- To strengthen the capacity of programme and operations officers to incorporate gender analysis considerations into planning.

#### Programming Objectives:

- To promote gender equality, including in decision-making in all emergency programme activities;
- To ensure equal protection of the human rights of women and men, girls and boys;
- To ensure equal representation of women and men in decision-making at all levels of humanitarian assistance;
- To ensure integration of a gender perspective in all phases of an emergency from on-set to recovery;

## Framework

**"IOM is committed to ensuring that the particular needs of all migrant women are identified, taken into consideration and addressed by IOM projects and services."**

Within the framework of its constitutional purposes and functions, IOM has been making efforts to institutionalize and mainstream gender into its work. In February 1995, a Working Group on Gender Issues was created with the task of establishing existing measures and efforts, and making further progress towards ensuring that gender issues are an integral part of IOM's planning and actions.

It is within this context that a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy has been developed, approved and integrated into the overall activities of the Organization. As a functional facet of IOM's work, Gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that women and men are provided with equal opportunities to develop and utilize their skills and to participate in decisions affecting their lives.



IOM provides medical screening and is returning thousands of Vietnamese who wish to return to their country of origin.

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As a standing invitee of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), IOM adheres to the IASC policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance. 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).

IOM 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.

## EPC Response

The international community looks to IOM to provide assistance to migrants, refugees and displaced persons in many situations: people fleeing conflict, refugees being resettled in their countries or repatriated, stranded individuals and unsuccessful asylum seekers returning home, internally or externally displaced persons, individuals seeking to be reunited with other members of their families, victims of trafficking, and migrants involved in regular migration.

The Emergency and Post Crisis (EPC) Division is the focal point in IOM for migration emergency preparedness and response.

Since January 2000, EPC has coordinated and supported projects in three main areas; internally displaced persons, former combatants, and elections.

## Internally Displaced Persons

While leaving entire communities devastated, displacement often renders women completely vulnerable to violence, disease and food scarcity. In cases of Internally Displaced Persons, EPC accommodates to the individual needs of each sex.

## Former Combatants

EPC participates in Demobilization and Reintegration activities for ex-combatants returning to civilian life. While traditionally focusing on male ex-combatants, women also make up a significant number of combatants in many conflicts. For this reason, EPC takes gender-specific needs into consideration when addressing DDR issues.

## Elections

IOM supports the inclusion of displaced populations into democratic electoral processes. Typically, women are underrepresented in political decision-making. To ensure political equity and sustainability, equal representation between the sexes must be enforced.

IOM provides people with secure, reliable, cost-effective services, including counselling, document processing, medical examination, transportation, training, and assistance with cultural orientation and integration.

For instance, activities with a gender component to meet the needs of internally displaced persons include: the collection of information on gender-related needs for water, food, shelter and health care, and on gender roles; integration of a gender perspective in workshops and training for officials; and the mainstreaming of gender in operational guidelines.

IOM action also includes the provision of emergency assistance to persons affected by conflict and post-conflict situations. The Organization has participated in virtually every emergency involving large-scale movement of people since it was founded in 1951. These services can be even more crucial during the critical transition from emergency humanitarian relief, through a period of rehabilitation, to longer-term reconstruction and development efforts.

## Examples of Response by Regions

### Angola

#### Capacity Building

Preparations for presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2006 are already underway. After a long period of war, these will be the second elections Angola has ever held in a climate of peace, and with several political parties in the running. For this reason, assistance was requested from IOM, UNFPA and UNDP for the preparation and delivery of training sessions on gender and democracy. In Luanda in March 2005, MINFAMU, IOM and UNFPA held a seminar entitled "Gender and Democracy" where participants included 15 female representatives of four political parties: MPLA, UNITA, FNLA, and PRS1.

During the seminar, the representatives discussed the barriers that limit women's participation such as: illiteracy, work overload to meet the needs of the family, caring for small children, and frequent movement in search of security and better living conditions for the family. Some of the suggestions put forward to eliminate these barriers included: efforts to increase awareness on civil and political rights with meetings, pamphlets and media campaigns, involve men in these activities, enlarge gender awareness activities for policy makers, and to reach out politicians to support women's training and female candidates.

### Afghanistan

#### The Afghanistan Transition Initiative

This initiative was created to support the process of rehabilitation and political stabilization.

Gender roles in social, political and economic life have been subject to constant change throughout the history of Afghanistan. After more than two decades of conflict in Afghanistan demography, traditions, values and structures are much altered. The establishment of a transitional Government in 2001 and the first democratic elections held in October 2004 provided an unprecedented opportunity for Afghan women to participate in political life and gain a voice in society.

Participation varies depending on the type of grant and region of implementation. Within the fall of the Taliban regime, the ATI was supporting women to become involved, supporting their return to work, providing opportunities for economic empowerment and giving them a voice to comment on political events.



A Kutchi IDP girl at Dragon Pass, Bamyan District. © Ferrán García / IOM 2002 - MAF0124

#### Voting

IOM was responsible for organizing **Out of Country Registration and Voting (OCRV) for Afghans living in Iran and in Pakistan.**

In the Afghan OCV elections, IOM followed the policy of recruiting 50 per cent female staff. Out of 8,812 Afghan polling staff working for the Afghan elections in Iran, 44 per cent were female. Out of 699 Afghan Community Mobilizers in Pakistan during the Afghan elections, 49 per cent were female.

All IOM 'voter education material' to encourage participation in the election depicted men and women. Eighteen offices were opened by IOM across Pakistan and Iran with over 20,000 staff. Hundreds of locations had to be found polling centres: for every centre for males there was one for females. In the rare instances where communities refused to allow women to vote, IOM stuck to a firm policy of not establishing any polling centre. Over 850,000 Afghans voted in Pakistan and Iran.

## Colombia

### Promotion of a Gender Dimension

As part of the cross-cutting activities, but particularly focused on the IDP programme, the mission in Colombia has been working on building the capacity of IOM staff and partners in order to provide a more effective assistance to displaced women.

As a result, development began on a manual to promote the gender perspective when working with internally displaced groups.

This manual was finally published with funds from the IOM - Headquarters Working Group on Gender Issues, in coordination with the School of Gender Studies from the Colombian National University.

### Colombian Gender Working Group

IOM Colombia also participates actively in the United Nations Colombian working group on gender issues. Established in 2003, the working group aims to integrate a gender perspective in both projects managed by the organization and within the IOM system itself.

Every year, IOM and the working group in Colombia create a working plan to guide projects and programmes towards a stronger gender-consciousness.



## Iraq

### Out of Country Voting

The Iraqi programme to participate in the Transitional National Assembly Election was **Out of Country Registration and Voting for Iraqi expatriates**.

This Iraq OCV programme secured agreements with the governments of 14 countries and recruited, trained and deployed over 7,000 staff, of which almost 90% were Iraqi.

On 17 January, 74 registration centres opened in 36 different cities in the 14 countries. When the poll closed on 30 January, a total of 278,101 Iraqis had voted in the OCV programme.

*Out of 25,809 voters in the US,  
10,543 were women.*

Throughout the 14 countries, the percentage of female voters was an average of 36.92%. In both efforts, IOM was instrumental in enfranchising women to learn and encouraging them in their civic duty, a major first step toward empowerment.



**Indigenous Family benefited from the IDPs Programme in Colombia.**

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## Zimbabwe

### Health

As cross-border migrants, women and girls are made more vulnerable. Therefore, one particularly vulnerable group of migrants is informal cross border traders, which is a source of livelihood for a growing number of Zimbabweans, particularly women. The sector provides employment and contributes significantly to the transformation of gender relations by thrusting women into non-traditional areas of operation and into the public arena. Yet, the circular nature of their migration increases their susceptibility to HIV infection.

Informal cross-border traders also pass through high transmission areas, or border posts such as that described above, where relationships have formed among uniformed personnel (customs and immigration officials and customs clearing agents), commercial sex workers truck drivers, informal cross-border traders, money-changers, local border-town residents and deportees, which inadvertently result in sexual relations, some of which may be exploitative.

Gender mainstreaming in humanitarian programmes involve responding to unmet needs that empower women and the local communities. Wherever possible, IOM encourages women's direct access to food aid through registration of women as direct recipients of food for their respective households.

Gender analysis helps to clarify the specific and often different capacities, vulnerabilities, needs and coping-strategies of men and women. Special supplies provided under IOM's humanitarian assistance programme to meet the special needs of girls and women include soap, buckets, and sanitary pads/cotton wool, to cater for their reproductive health needs.



Programme activities also encourage greater involvement of men in taking care of the sick in order to reduce the caring burden on women. Sex-disaggregated data is also part of the gender mainstreaming strategy. In order to protect the personal safety of women and girls, IOM and its partners are mainstreaming minimum responses to gender-based violence (GBV), which include constant information, education, persuasion and mobilization of individuals, families, communities and relevant authorities against all forms of child abuse as well as GBV.

The mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS and gender issues is seen as an important crosscutting approach in emergency assistance provided by IOM to mobile and vulnerable populations in Zimbabwe.

So far this year, IOM's Migration Health Unit has directly reached over 24,000 of the most vulnerable people in Zimbabwe. In the wake of Operation Murambatsvina, for example, IOM was able to immediately use their existing capacity to assist the affected populations. Beneficiaries were reached through group discussions during food distributions, the supply of condoms, Information and Education materials, such as pamphlets and brochures, assistance for the chronically ill through dietary support, and finally, through medical care.

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