Executive Committee of the 
High Commissioner’s Programme 
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NGO Statement on Community Based Protection, and Age, Gender and Diversity 
Agenda Item 2e 
Extended version 

Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, 

This statement has been drafted in consultation with, and is delivered on behalf of, a wide range of NGOs and aims to reflect the diversity of views within the NGO community. 

Community-Based Protection 

People and communities impacted by crisis or displacement are the most central actors in their own protection. Communities have the most at stake in achieving their own safety, dignity, and rights, and possess significant existing capacities to do just that – capacities that, when tapped and supported, can improve efficiencies, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability. NGOs believe that supporting these local actions and responses that enhance protection should be central in UNHCR’s understanding of its protection mandate. We further believe that the broad range of UNHCR protection and assistance interventions should seek to understand and reinforce the protective roles of communities. NGOs commend UNHCR for its important commitments to Community-based protection, including the steps it has taken globally to better understand Community-based protection, to better prepare and position its workforce for Community-based protection, and plans it has to pilot innovative Community-based protection programming. We call on member States to affirm UNHCR’s commitment to Community-based protection, to track UNHCR’s progress in this important regard, and to ensure donor funding modalities are conducive to meaningfully support Community-based protection. 

We would like to also underscore the importance of providing attention to host communities in IDP and refugee settings. Host communities play a crucial role in social peace and local integration, and thus, protection of IDPs and refugees. 

Age, Gender and Diversity 

NGOs welcome UNHCR’s paper on Community-Based Protection / Age, Gender and Diversity. We applaud UNHCR for continuing to promote an age, gender and diversity approach to its work and that of its partners. NGOs recognize that this approach has helped place refugees and IDPs at the center of UNHCR decision-making processes such as country operations plans and
budgets and has led to valued work on refugees with disabilities and LGBTI refugees. NGOs support UNHCR’s continued emphasis on applying an AGD approach to its operations. Promoting gender equality in programming both complements and is part of the AGD approach. Continued work is needed to address the specific needs of traditionally over-looked populations such as ethnic and religious minorities, and older refugees. Humanitarian assistance must be exclusively based on needs, while taking into consideration specific vulnerabilities of people of concern. We welcome UNHCR’s efforts on AGD accountability and encourage UNHCR to advocate for collective responsibility in reporting on inclusiveness and non-discrimination of aid to the most vulnerable populations.

NGOs note that one of the main gaps identified in the implementation of the AGD policy is addressing the needs of youth. NGOs appreciate the importance placed on the empowerment of youth by UNHCR in this Standing Committee and we congratulate UNHCR on its successful Youth Initiative Fund. We welcome UNHCR’s timely suggestion to the Executive Committee to consider adopting an Excom Conclusion on engagement and empowerment of youth. Existing protection risks and vulnerabilities faced by all adolescents and youth are exacerbated in situations of displacement and humanitarian crises: adolescent girls, youth with disabilities, pregnant and parenting youth are particularly at risk. Humanitarian actors frequently fail to consult with or include adolescents and youth in their programmes. As a result, youth often “fall between the gap” and their specific capacities, needs and protection risks are overlooked. NGOs call on UNHCR and governments to make greater efforts to consult with, seek the views of, and include youth and adolescents in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes. We request governments to provide targeted funding for youth and adolescents in crisis situations and to include them in decisions that will affect their lives and shape their futures. NGOs welcome the joint UNHCR – NGO initiative to launch a series of Global Consultations with Refugee and Displaced Youth in 2015-2016, supported by the Youth and Adolescents in Emergencies (YAE) Advocacy Group. We urge governments to support this important initiative.

NGOs welcome UNHCR’s commitment to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in its programming and protection activities and to forge new partnerships with national disability actors. We support UNHCR’s multi-year programme to strengthen technical support for country operations and to ensure that persons with disabilities are actively included in project planning, design and evaluation. We stand ready to collaborate with UNHCR and governments in this important area of work.

Thank you, Mr. Chair