



Briefing Note

**A Gender Perspective on Humanitarian Assistance
in Northern Sri Lanka**

February 2009

**United Nations
Resident Co-ordinator's Office
Sri Lanka**

Introduction

Gender equality principles provide the foundation for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)¹ humanitarian response in Sri Lanka, underpinned by eight global commitments to achieving gender equality², and in support of the Humanitarian Coordinator's mandate to mainstream gender in all humanitarian action.³ It further compliments cluster/sector commitments to addressing gender concerns as outlined in the Consolidated Humanitarian Appeals Process 2009 (CHAP 2009).

Displacement changes gender roles as families become separated, relatives are killed and homes destroyed. Camps where women, men and children seek refuge present a lifestyle alien to cultural values and in unfamiliar social contacts, gender roles change radically. Internally displaced people are constrained in their ability to access institutional or legal mechanisms for receiving assistance and may suffer violations of their rights. Women and men often find themselves forced into unaccustomed roles and responsibilities for which they are ill prepared.

This briefing note is informed by discussions with displaced people in three camps in Vavuniya in late February 2009.

In light of the rapidly changing situation in the North, the aim of this briefing note is twofold:

1. to highlight the gender dimensions of internal displacement and;
2. provide a platform for a gendered humanitarian response within a rights based framework

Protecting human rights and promoting gender equality are central to the humanitarian community's responsibility to protect and provide assistance to the displaced. Gender concerns for internally displaced women primarily relate to two core issues:

1. **Protection** – safeguarding women and girls from physical and psychological abuse
2. **Access & Participation** - the right of internally displaced people to equal access and full participation in decisions that affect their lives

The effects of displacement are characterized by loss. In the context of the current population movement from the Vanni to emergency shelter sites (Transit Centres⁴) in Vavuniya, some of the immediate manifestations of displacement include;

- the loss of home, possessions and income
- family separations and loss of social structures and support mechanisms
- trauma associated with displacement and deaths/disappearances of family members
- potential exposure to gender violence
- impaired health

Consideration of these issues in the context of protection, access and participation is central to a gendered humanitarian response.

¹ Currently being referred to as Humanitarian Country Team, Sri Lanka

² Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) 1979, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BFPA, 1995), Agreed Conclusions of ECOSOC Coordination Segment on Gender Mainstreaming 1997 and Reiterated 2006., Security Council Resolutions on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2000., Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict., Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)

³ IASC Policy Statement on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action 2008

⁴ The term 'camp' is used throughout the document and refers to Emergency Shelter Sites as per the official United Nations definition. Transit Centre is the term used by Government of Sri Lanka

1. Protection

Protection encompasses all activities aimed at securing full respect for the rights of individual – women, girls, boys and men – in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of human rights and humanitarian law. Protection activities aim to create an environment in which human dignity is respected, specific patterns of abuse are prevented or their immediate effects alleviated and dignified conditions of life are restored through repatriation, restitution and rehabilitation.

Definition of Protection, IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, 2007

Central to protection is empowerment of civilians and restoration of a self determined life.

Militarization of Camps

IDP camps represent a microcosm of broader societal norms and attitudes. In a militarized environment, power, control and violence are often practiced as part of the social structure, the most obvious manifestation being the containment of people and restrictions on freedom of movement.⁵

Forms of oppression for women in general, and more so for those that are perceived to adhere to an undesired political ideology must be understood in relation to the existing political power structure.⁶ It is important to recognize what Tamil women and men symbolize to the mono-ethnic Singhalese military that are responsible for providing camp security and the manner in which this power imbalance is manifested. Indefinite confinement in military controlled camps, communication between military personnel and civilians who often do not share a common language, restricted movement of IDP in and out of camps, the presence of military personnel within the camps and allegations of screening in the camps by paramilitary groups are some of the urgent challenges.

The militarization of camps leaves women particularly vulnerable. Women have reportedly refused to leave the confines of shelters for fear of attracting the attention of military personnel. There have been reports of night military patrols inside camp buildings.

The right to freedom of movement and to choosing a place of residence is guaranteed for all citizens under the Constitution. The UN in Sri Lanka has called for the civilian nature of IDP camps to be guaranteed.

Threat of violence

Violence is the chief source of fear for displaced women and girls.⁷ The social disruption of displacement dismantles the social status of women and effectively returns them to subordination based on their physical vulnerability. Taking advantage of the weakest has long been a key strategy in conflict and in situations of displacement, women and girls become easy targets of aggression.⁸ Family separations increase the exposure of women and girls to gender based violence. Overcrowding in camp sites leading to a lack of privacy for women and adolescent girls further create an enabling environment for abuse.

Women reported incidents of verbal harassment by military personnel within the camps. The location of bathing and toilet facilities, lack of adequate night lighting in camps and the open construction of emergency shelters further impact the threat of violence.

The Guiding Principles reference four specific groups that require special attention because they are at particular risk of human rights violations, physical attacks and other protection problems; 1) children especially unaccompanied minors; 2) women especially expectant mothers, mothers with

⁵ Agger, I, 1994, *The Blue Room, Trauma and Testimony among Refugee Women – A psychosocial exploration*, Zed Books, London

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2001, *The Gender Dimension of Internal Displacement*, Concept Paper

⁸ Barry, J, 2005, *Rising Up in Response, Women's Rights Activism in Conflict*, Urgent Action Fund

young children and female heads of households; 3) persons with disabilities and 4) elderly persons.⁹ Acts of violence against internally displaced persons are prohibited in all circumstances.¹⁰

Structural and practical measures need to be in place to ensure protection and reduce the risk of violence against women and girls in IDP camps.

Trauma

Families that lose their social networks of support often lose everything. The disintegration of community unity increases the vulnerability of women and men and weakens their coping mechanisms.

Over time, the cumulative effects of personal loss may result in depression and physical deterioration.¹¹ The long-term impact of displacement on women may mean the permanent loss of social and cultural ties, the termination of income generating activities and disruption to family life. The majority of the disappeared and abducted are male resulting in disproportionate numbers of female headed households.¹² Women separated from their husbands or widowed must take on the responsibility for household provisions, often with little or no means to do so. Some marriages do not survive the stress of displacement and divorces are common in IDP settings. Displacement may affect women's rights to inherit land and property.

Men no longer able to work and/or separated from family and community suffer a loss of identity and sense of self worth. The idleness and humiliation of IDP life created by the militarization of camps, restrictions on movement, lack of employment opportunities and the loss of rights to determine the life course further impacts on often already reduced coping skills.¹³ The climate of fear generated by the threat of recruitment into the LTTE and paramilitary groups further erodes a sense of safety and security.

Children suffer in situations of protracted displacement. They miss education during their formative years, undergo trauma and psychological stress, can suffer stunted growth due to extended poor nutrition, and have difficulties in socialization.¹⁴ At a practical level, the current shortage of children's clothing and delayed food distribution resulting in children missing meals are key concerns.

Registration

Currently, there is no standard individual registration process for IDPs coming out of the Vanni.¹⁵ From a gender rights perspective and in the context of international and national law, this has a number of important implications.

Access to sex and age disaggregated data is critical to a gendered humanitarian response. Two key principles underpin this requirement; *gendered analysis* of needs based on systematic collection and reporting of sex and age disaggregated data and the *design of equitable services* aimed at meeting the different needs of women, men, boys and girls.¹⁶ Neither of these can be operationalized in the absence of available and accessible IDP sex and age disaggregated data.

In the case of the Vanni population, the majority of people - if not all - have had some dealings with the LTTE, in many cases out of necessity or because of the forced recruitment under the "one person per family" policy. The blurred distinction between combatant and civilian has resulted in the entire population being considered 'suspicious'.

⁹ UNHCR, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1998

¹⁰ Ibid, Principle 10, 2

¹¹ Agger, I, 1994, *The Blue Room, Trauma and Testimony among Refugee Women – A psychosocial exploration*, Zed Books, London

¹² Human Rights Commission Sri Lanka Statistics, November 2008

¹³ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2001, *The Gender Dimension of Internal Displacement*, Concept Paper

¹⁴ UNICEF, Office of Emergency Programmes, New York

¹⁵ Centre for Policy Alternatives, *Report of the situation of IDPs leaving the Vanni*, forthcoming, February 2009

¹⁶ IASC, 2007, *Gender in Emergencies Handbook: Women, Girls, Boys and Men – Different Needs, Equal Opportunities*, New York

Forced family separations have been reported as part of the screening process with reports of ex-LTTE combatants being taken into custody. The absence of registration mechanisms means family tracing &/or unification becomes seriously hindered and legal redress virtually impossible. Similarly, the government has made explicit that young unaccompanied men suspected of LTTE involvement are a targeted demographic, making them vulnerable to arrest and detention and separating them from family, their whereabouts often unknown.

This has severely compounded the fear and distress of family members who have arrived in Vavuniya. The high levels of LTTE recruitment amongst males has also shifted the gender dynamic resulting in high numbers of female headed households.

The government has recognized the urgent need to establish a process for IDP documentation including the need to improve awareness among relevant authorities in order to guarantee IDP freedom of movement.¹⁷

Individuals likely to be targeted during the screening process and taken into custody, have a right to recognition under the law and due process. The only way to ensure their rights are upheld is individual registration. The registration process needs to be mandatory and transparent and ICRC and UNHCR given full access to IDP registration lists.

Box 1. Protection Instruments

<p><u>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights</i> (Article 1) - <i>Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person</i> (Article 3) - <i>No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.</i> (Article 5) - <i>Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state</i> (Article 13, 1) - <i>No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property</i> (Article 17) - <i>The State parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health</i> (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 12) - <i>Discrimination against women violates the principles of equality rights and respect of human dignity..</i> (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, Preamble) <p><u>Registration:</u>¹⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the personal detail of persons deprived of their liberty must be recorded.</i>(IHL, Rule 123 of Customary IHL) <p><u>Liberty & Security</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The right to freedom of movement and to choosing a place of residence is guaranteed for all citizens under the constitution.</i> (Constitution of Sri Lanka, 1978, Ch 3, Article 14, (h)). - <i>prohibition of enforced disappearances</i> (IHL, Rule 98 Customary IHL) - <i>obligation to account for persons reported missing</i> (IHL, Rule 117 Customary IHL) - <i>Everyone has the right to liberty and security of the person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention</i> (ICCPR, Article 9 (1)) <p><u>Forced separations/Family Reunification:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society</i> - <i>family life must be respected as far as possible</i> (IHL, Rule 105 Customary IHL) - <i>reunion of families temporarily separated</i> (Additional Protocol II- Article 4 (3) (b)) - <i>Each party to the conflict shall facilitate enquires made by members of families dispersed owing to the war, with the object of renewing contact with one another and of meeting, if possible</i> (Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 26)
--

¹⁷ Perera, R, Dr & Fernando, M, 2009, *Draft Report of the first phase of consultations in the development of a national plan of action for the promotion and protection of human rights*, Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Sri Lanka

¹⁸ The following abbreviations are used: International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Customary International Humanitarian Law (CIHL), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Constitution of Sri Lanka

- All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law (Article 12, 1)
- No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any one of such grounds (Article 12, 2)
- No person shall, on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex or any one of such grounds, be subject to disability, liability, restriction or condition with regards to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, places of public entertainment and places of public worship of his own religion (Article 12, 3)
- No person shall be arrested except in accordance to procedure established by law. (Article 13, 1)

National Law

Special groups: -

Youth; In every place where juveniles are detained, a complete and secure record of the following should be kept;

- a) Information on the identity of the juvenile
- b) the fact of and reasons for commitment and authority therefore;
- c) the day and hour of admission, transfer and release
- d) Details of the notification to parents and guardians on every admission, transfer or release of the juvenile in their care at the time of commitment;
- e) Details of known physical and mental health problems, including drug and alcohol abuse. (Article 21 Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty)

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

- IDPs shall enjoy, **in full equality**, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced. (Principle 1, 1)
- Attacks or other **acts of violence** against internally displaced persons who do not or no longer participate in hostilities are prohibited in all circumstances (Principle 10, 2)
- Every human being has the right to dignity and physical, mental and moral integrity (Principle 11, 1)
- Internally displaced persons, whether or not their liberty has been restricted, shall be protected in particular against a) Rape, mutilation, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and other outrages upon personal dignity, such as acts of **gender specific violence**, forced prostitution and any form of indecent assault c) Acts of violence intended to spread terror among internally displaced persons (Principle 11, (a) & (c))
- Right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention (Principle 12, 1)
- ...not be interned or **confined to a camp** (Principle 12, 2)
- IDPs shall be protected from discriminatory **arrest and detention** as a result of their displacement (Principle 12, 3)
- Every internally displaced person has the right to liberty of movement, freedom to choose her/his residence and the right to move freely in and out of camps (Principle 14, 1 and 2)
- Every human being has the right to respect of his or her **family life** (Principle 17, 1)
- To give effect to this right for IDPs, family members who wish to remain together shall be allowed to do so (Principle 17, 2)
- Members of IDP families whose personal liberty has been restricted by internment or confinement in camps shall have the right to remain together (Principle 17,3)
- All internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate **standard of living** (Principle 18)
- Special efforts should be made to ensure the **full participation of women** in the planning and distribution of basic supplies (Principle 18, 3)
- Special attention should be paid to the **health needs of women**, including access to female health care provider and services, such as reproductive health care, as well as appropriate counseling for victims of sexual and other abuses. (Principle 18, 2)
- Women and men shall have equal rights to obtain such necessary **documents** and shall have the right to have such documentation issued in their own names (Principle 20, 3)
- Internally displaced persons, whether or not they are living in camps, shall not be discriminated against...in the enjoyment of the following rights; b) right to seek freely opportunities for **employment** and to participate in economic activities c) associate freely and participate equally in **community** affairs e) right to communicate in a **language** they understand

2. Equal Access & Full Participation – IDP involvement in humanitarian response

A gendered approach to humanitarian response requires that the different needs of women and men inform and shape the assistance provided and both practical and strategic needs are met.¹⁹ The principles central to this gendered response are **equal access** and **full participation** of women, men, girls and boys in all humanitarian response actions.

The rapid and dramatic changes to the lives of those forced to flee often have a direct impact on women and men's gender roles. This can manifest itself in stronger adherence to traditional roles, values and perceptions takes place. Conversely, a crisis may open up avenues for change which can lead to more balanced relations between women and men.²⁰ This dynamic of change within the displaced population will determine to a great extent the success of humanitarian response.

Equal Access

A gender perspective is not optional or divisive but imperative to direct aid and to plan for full and equitable service delivery. Nothing in emergency work is 'gender neutral'. A gendered interpretation of 'access' encompasses equal opportunity for all and the removal of discrimination against women through social, administrative and legal mechanisms.

In the context of displacement, access refers both to free and unrestricted access of the humanitarian community to the displaced population and the access of IDPs to humanitarian assistance.

The Government has acknowledged the need to ensure IDP access to humanitarian assistance. Specifically, the government has recognized the need for increased information-sharing to IDPs concerning their rights and entitlements as well as consultation with the displaced population on decisions affecting their lives.²¹

Currently, IDP access to information is extremely limited. There are no formal information mechanisms either between the government and the displaced, or the international community and the displaced. Displaced men reported receiving information that they will be 'handed over' to ICRC/UN in May 2009 and expressed fear of prolonged detainment by the government.

Restricted contact with relatives or friends outside the camps, the unknown whereabouts of those in the Vanni, the absence of information on IDP rights and lack of access to formal communication mechanisms, including information about screening process, have resulted in high levels of fear and confusion.

In camp situations men are often in a stronger position to negotiate with authorities and are more likely to be consulted in decision making or asked to assist with camp matters. There is no definitive mechanism in place to ensure that women are also part of decision making processes in relation to camp administration and in relation to decisions regarding the wellbeing of the displaced.

There are a significant number of single women or widows, responsible for family welfare among the displaced. These women are often severely disadvantaged with regard to accessing services and provisions. Reports by women in camps revealed that they are not being consulted on camp issues or involved in decisions that affect their lives. This further contributes to their disempowerment.

Displaced women, men, boys and girls have the right to access opportunities that enable them to provide meaningful input into humanitarian response programs that directly affect them.²² The

¹⁹ IASC, 2007, *Gender in Emergencies Handbook: Women, Girls, Boys and Men – Different Needs, Equal Opportunities*, New York

²⁰ March, C, Smyth, I, Mukhopadhyay, 2000, *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks*, Oxfam

²¹ Perera, R, Dr & Fernando, M, 2009, *Report of the first phase of consultations in the development of a national plan of action for the promotion and protection of human rights*, Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Sri Lanka

²² Please refer to Box 2 Rights-based Frameworks and Legal instruments – Access and Participation

displaced are people from all stratum of society and there is an urgent need to recognize the different but complimentary competencies of displaced women and men and to develop strategies to ensure their involvement in humanitarian response.

Full Participation

The participation of IDPs is a right enshrined in international instruments and reflected in international operational standards.²³ Decisions regarding *who* participates, *how* they participate and *for what purpose* shape the impact of humanitarian action. From a gender perspective, consultation with displaced women and men is essential in understanding their gender differentiated needs.

Although the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) has committed to the implementation of international standards and best practice and to working within an empowerment framework²⁴, at national level the current humanitarian response has been designed *for* rather than *by* the displaced population.²⁵ Current reports suggest the participation of IDP women in decision making and camp management is minimal.²⁶

Internally displaced citizens differ from other citizens only with respect to their forced displacement. Denied the opportunity to actively participate in decisions that directly affect the lives of displaced women and men is a violation of rights. Whilst IDPs face difficult circumstances as a result of conflict and displacement – often multiple displacements – all IDPs should be supported in utilizing the transformative window of opportunity to address the gendered aspects of displacement.

A rights based approach focused on the displaced as possessors of rights rather than as victims is crucial. The greater involvement of internally displaced women and men in planning designing and monitoring of programmes, the further empowered they are and the less likely abuse and exploitation will occur.

²³ SPHERE Standards, 2004. Please refer Box 2 Rights-based Frameworks and Legal instruments – Access and Participation

²⁴ Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights quoted in *Govt. committed to permanent resolution of IDPs problems*, The Daily News, Sri Lanka, 29 September 2008

²⁵ Please refer *Urgent Relief Programme for the People of the Vanni*, Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services, January 2009

²⁶ Ministry of Health & UNFPA, *Joint mission to assess health services in Vavuniya*, 12-13 February 2009, Assessment mission report

Box 2 Rights-based Frameworks & Legal Instruments - Access and Participation

- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19)

- A policy or programme that is formulated without the active and informed participation of those affected is most unlikely to be effective, (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

- Participation in humanitarian action is also linked to a person's rights and related to the use of and access to information (Declaration on the Right to Development and UN Economic and Social Council: Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (10 May 2001)

- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice. (The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW)1979

- ...the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and [stresses] the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution." UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

- The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

International Humanitarian Law

- Torture, cruel or inhuman treatment and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment are prohibited. (Rule 90 Customary IHL)

- rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited (Rule 93 Customary IHL)

- arbitrary deprivation of liberty is prohibited (Rule 99 Customary IHL)

- the disaster-affected population actively participates in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance programs. The Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

- IDPs shall enjoy, **in full equality**, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced. (General Principles, Principle 1.1)

- All internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living. (Principle 18,1)

- At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide internally displaced persons with and ensure safe access to: (a) essential food and potable water; (b) basic shelter and housing; (c) appropriate clothing; and (d) essential medical services and sanitation (Principle 18,2)

- Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of women in the planning and distribution of these basic supplies (Principle 18, 3)

- Certain IDPs, such as children, especially unaccompanied minors, expectant mothers, mothers with young children, female heads of household, persons with disabilities and elderly persons, shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs. (Principle 4, 2)

- The authorities concerned shall endeavor to involve those affected, particularly women, in the planning and management of their relocation. (Principle 7, 2.1 (d))

- Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of women in the planning and distribution of basic supplies (Principle 18, 3)

- Special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female health care providers and services, such as reproductive health care, as well appropriate counseling for victims of sexual and other abuses. (Principle 19, 1

Appendix

Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Equality Principles

1. **Gender equality and the equal protection of human rights** of women and men in carrying out humanitarian actions, paying special attention to the violation of human rights of women and the provision of appropriate remedies;
2. **Equal representation and participation of women and men** reflected in the equal representation of women and men in decision making at all levels and the use of participatory methods in all aspects of information gathering, reporting and assessment, research and policy development.
3. **Gendered analysis** of the different needs and capacities of women, girls, boys and men through the systematic and regular collection and reporting of sex and age disaggregated data
4. **Design of equitable services** based on systematic gendered analysis aimed at meeting the different needs of women, men, boys and girls
5. **Promotion and use of global best practice and common standards** in strengthening gender capacity in humanitarian action.
6. **Establishment, engagement and coordination of gender sensitive networks and information sharing mechanisms** to ensure information on the different needs of women, men boys and girls is collected and used to inform sector response plans and programmes
7. **Funds specifically allocated for gender sensitive budgeting** for targeted actions aimed at addressing gender inequalities, empowering women and girls and integrating gender equality into humanitarian policies and programmes

Government of Sri Lanka commitments to Gender Equality in Sri Lanka

- Gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Sri Lanka 1978.
- Sri Lanka is signatory to and ratified Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in October 1981
- Sri Lanka is signatory to and ratified International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights & International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC)
- Prevention of Domestic Violence Law enacted in August 2005
- Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Development have developed a National Plan of Action for Women (NPAW) with a view to achieving gender equality in Sri Lanka

UN commitments to Gender in Humanitarian Action

- IASC Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action Policy Statement, June 2008
- IASC Policy Statement for the Integration of a Gender perspective in Humanitarian Assistance, 1999
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) 1979.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BFPA, 1995)
- Agreed Conclusions of ECOSOC Coordination Segment on Gender Mainstreaming 1997 and Reiterated 2006.
- Security Council Resolutions on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.
- Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2000.
- Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict 1620
- Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)
- Guiding Principles for Humanitarian and Development Assistance in Sri Lanka
- UNCT Sri Lanka Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action Policy Statement, December 2008

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
for Humanitarian and Development Assistance in Sri Lanka

Guided by international human rights law, international humanitarian law, Sri Lankan laws and all applicable international standards, the undersigned have reaffirmed the following Guiding Principles to be able to implement effective Humanitarian and Development assistance in Sri Lanka. The undersigned endeavor that their staff and their implementing partners (I/NGOs, UN, Red Cross, etc.) adhere to the following 10 principles to the extent permitted under applicable law:²⁷

1. **Objective of Humanitarian and Development Assistance:** We are working together to contribute to improvements in the quality of life of the people in Sri Lanka. Our assistance focuses on alleviating suffering, eradicating poverty, enabling communities to become self-sufficient and supporting an inclusive peaceful solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka.
2. **Non-discrimination:** We provide assistance solely based on identified needs, regardless of location, ethnicity, gender, social status or religion.
3. **Impartiality:** We will remain impartial and we do not accept our assistance, supplies, vehicles, facilities or equipment to be used for any military, political or sectarian purposes.
4. **Respect of human dignity:** We request the respect for International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. We work in response to the expressed wishes of local communities, and we respect the dignity of people, their culture, religion and customs.
5. **Transparency and accountability:** We are accountable to those whom we seek to assist. We ensure that our assistance is transparent. We will not tolerate any corruption, theft or misuse of development or humanitarian supplies or equipment.
6. **Sustainability and preparedness:** We tailor our activities to local circumstances and aim to enhance locally available resources. We strengthen local capacities (civil society, business community, local authorities, etc) to address current needs and to prevent or prepare for future emergencies.
7. **Consultation and participation:** We seek to involve communities in the design, planning, management, implementation and evaluation of programmes implemented for their benefit.
8. **Coordination:** We coordinate our activities with government and all relevant stakeholders at every level.
9. **Access:** We request as a basic requirement, unrestricted access to all people in need of assistance. We expect relevant authorities to expedite the accreditation of staff and the customs clearance of humanitarian goods and services.
10. **Security and safety:** We request all parties concerned to protect and promote the safety, security and freedom of the agencies and their staff. We do not accept staff to be subjected to violence, abduction, harassment or intimidation. Our vehicles should not be used to transport persons or goods that have no connections with our work.

²⁷ Embassies of Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway Switzerland, United States, Korea, Australian Government/AusAid, High Commission of Britain, Canadian High Commission, United Nations