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# APPLYING AN AGE, GENDER, DISABILITY & DIVERSITY LENS IN FORCED DISPLACEMENT CONTEXTS

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## Considerations and Recommendations for the World Bank Group and Other Investors

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### Executive Summary

Developing sustainable solutions to forced displacement requires the meaningful participation of everyone impacted, particularly those most affected by forced displacement themselves: refugees and IDPs in all their diversity.

Beyond the moral imperative, inclusion and non-discrimination are rooted in international humanitarian law and human rights law.<sup>11</sup> Respecting the rights of all refugees and IDPs therefore should be central to all projects financed by the WBG and other investors.

Evidence has shown that exclusion—based on age, gender, including sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, and other characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, economic status, displacement status, or statelessness—is

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<sup>11</sup> For example, see non-discrimination principle in international humanitarian law (IHL), ICRC’s data base on customary IHL: [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul\\_rule88](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule88) or for international human rights law (IHRL), see CEDAW Article 1 on discrimination against women, or CRPD Article 29 on the participation on persons with disabilities in public and political life.

not only unjust, it also increases poverty and impedes economic growth.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, taking a non-discriminatory and inclusive approach is vital to achieving the WBG’s twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

This paper highlights some of the WBG’s existing guidance and best practices on age, gender, disability, and diversity as well as resources specifically tailored to displacement settings. The paper is not intended to be an exhaustive resource, but rather an overview on potential ways to overcome silos in inclusion work and make responses more effective.

To amplify existing guidance and best practices, the WBG and other investors should:

- ▶ Require all its programs and funded initiatives and those of partners to include age, gender, disability, and other diversity considerations.
- ▶ Meaningfully consult with diverse populations and their representative organizations and coordinate with other stakeholders.
- ▶ Collect, analyze, and utilize quality data that is disaggregated by sex, age, and disability at a minimum. Additional factors should be based on context.
- ▶ Ensure internal knowledge sharing, expertise, and sufficient resources for WBG’s staff advising on age, gender, disability, and other diversity factors to ensure a coherent approach.
- ▶ Utilize existing tools developed for displacement settings, such as UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy.

## THE ISSUE:

### Centering age, gender, disability, and diversity is vital to sustainable solutions

#### Mainstreaming Inclusion Across WBG Projects in Forced Displacement and FCV contexts

The WBG has a deep well of tools and resources on integrating an age, gender, disability, and diversity lens that should be better applied to and adapted for its forced displacement projects, including:

- ▶ The WBG’s [Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework](#) and the [Gender Strategy](#) (2016-2023).

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<sup>12</sup> For example, see, Sebastian Backup, ILO study “The price of exclusion: The economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work” (2009) or Gaëlle Ferrant and Alexandre Kolev, OECD Study, The economic cost of gender-based discrimination in social institutions (2016).

- ▶ A series of helpful good practice notes on participation and data collection as it relate to **gender**; non-discrimination and **disability**; and non-discrimination and **sexual orientation and gender identity**, to make projects more inclusive.
- ▶ The WBG’s **Environmental and Social Framework** (ESF) and the Bank Directive on “**Addressing Risks and Impacts on Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups**” espouse a due diligence approach for WBG projects to prevent discrimination or adverse impacts on marginalized groups who could face barriers in accessing development benefits. The Directive considers “age, gender, ethnicity, religion, physical, mental or other disability, social, civic or health status, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic disadvantages or indigenous status, and/or dependence on unique natural resources” of individuals and groups. While displaced persons are not included on this list, the ESF outlines critical opportunities for diverse stakeholders to feed into project design and push for more inclusive projects. With the ESF focusing more on borrowers’ responsibilities and the Directive more on WBG staff, it is important for both to translate into improved project design and implementation and ensure that disaggregated risks and project impacts are mitigated for displaced groups.
- ▶ The WBG has Global Advisors on Disability, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and a Global Director for Gender who lead the implementation of the respective strategies in programs and partnerships. It is important for staff within the Bank to learn more about how to operationalize inclusion for greater impact in forced displacement settings.
- ▶ **Commitments** the WBG made at the Global Disability Summit in 2018, such as ensuring that all WBG-financed education programs and projects will be disability-inclusive by 2025.

The creation of these WBG initiatives and capacities has undoubtedly pushed the agenda further on disability, SOGI, and gender, yet these issues have not been consistently mainstreamed into the IDA18 RSW for Refugees and Host Communities projects.

## A Broader Definition of Inclusion

Where inclusion has been considered in IDA18 RSW projects, the focus has been on one aspect of inclusion, such as children with disabilities or women’s empowerment. For example, in Lebanon, a WBG **project** on “health resilience”, targeting displaced Syrians in Lebanon and poor Lebanese, includes the percentage of female beneficiaries and children fully vaccinated as indicators of progress, but not how the project will benefit persons with disabilities. Without a specific reference to how persons with disabilities will benefit, specified targets to meet or data collection that needs to occur, persons with disabilities will most likely be left out.

In Bangladesh, a WBG **project** providing “health and gender support” implemented by the Ministry of Health and Welfare has a detailed stakeholder engagement **plan**, which also recognizes the need for GBV analysis against members from the transgender community. However, the implementation status and results **report** only specifies women and girls and other children and doesn’t include information on responses to individuals with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics.

Gender has also been a theme for the last two International Development Association (IDA) financing cycles, but tailoring projects that focus on one standalone group does not suffice. More systematic and explicit references to age, gender, disability, and other aspects of diversity could help ensure consideration of overlooked groups among refugees and IDPs, such as older people, indigenous groups, stateless persons, or persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics. This is particularly relevant in displacement settings where community support systems and protection mechanisms break down or are overwhelmed.

## **An Intersectional Approach**

In addition, WBG projects could better examine how different identities intersect with each other and result in overlapping and complex vulnerabilities. The WBG's [Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence \(FCV\) 2020-2025](#) aptly recognizes that “intersectional approaches may be needed to address multiple forms of vulnerability.” Such an intersectional approach requires an understanding of how various aspects of a person’s social and political identities combine to result in unique modes of discrimination/privilege and enhance/reduce risk. Reducing these complex risks in forced displacement settings often requires a multi-sectoral response that address the root causes of systemic discrimination and inequality.

An intersectional approach is especially urgent when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in refugee settings. Manifestations of stigma have also been well-documented in previous health emergencies, for example, harassment, exclusion, and abandonment of or violence against individuals or population groups believed to be “carriers” as well as social rejection of individuals believed to be infected or recovering from contagion. As already evident in the COVID-19 context, women as caregivers, indigenous people, LGBTQ+ people, older persons, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, IDPs and health workers are particularly being stigmatized.

Even when access to health care for migrants, refugees and IDPs is guaranteed by States, discriminatory restrictions of movement, stigmatization, and xenophobic attitudes and practices can serve as real barriers to health and other essential services, or people may fear reaching out to gain them. The WBG should ensure that any public health and economic responses to COVID-19 are age, gender, disability, and diversity inclusive, including when it comes to the distribution of a vaccine. These good practices should be applied to displacement settings, to prevent existing inequalities from being exacerbated.

## **Existing Helpful Tools for Displacement Settings**

There are several tools to ensure inclusion in displacement settings, such as the [IASC Guidelines on Including Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Settings](#), [IASC Gender Handbook](#), the [Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV](#) and the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).

The U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) also adopted an [Age, Gender, and Diversity Policy](#) (AGD), which applies to all UNHCR’s operations and with mandatory compliance. The policy offers guidance on operationalizing an AGD approach, including by requiring all country operations to employ participatory methodologies at each stage of operations. The WBG and other investors should utilize these tools in displacement contexts to complement their own existing efforts and enhance risk mitigation strategies.



## CONSIDERATIONS:

### Ensure an inclusive approach

The WBG initiatives, such as the Refugee Policy Review Framework (RPRF), present an opportunity to review whether national policies are also inclusive and tailored to diverse refugees and IDPs. Providing a robust analysis on power imbalances and structural barriers on how these affect diverse displaced populations is key when considering a new investment or reviewing a policy. The WBG and other investors should consider the following questions when pursuing an AGD approach:

- ▶ Does the project or policy acknowledge and address the different needs and capacities of girls, boys, women, men, including persons with diverse SOGI and people with disabilities, in all their diversity?
- ▶ How does the project or policy ensure that refugees and IDPs in all their diversity can benefit and will not be harmed, e.g., is information accessible to refugees and IDPs with hearing or vision disabilities or does it reach adolescent girls?
- ▶ How does the project or policy contribute to the promotion of safety and dignity, enjoyment of human rights, and the provision of accessible and quality services, including mental health and sexual and reproductive health care for everyone?
- ▶ Were diverse local communities and civil society, including refugee- and IDP-led organizations, disability and LGBTIQ+ advocates meaningfully consulted, and their feedback incorporated, as well as under-represented groups such as adolescents, youth, and older persons, through the life-cycle of the project? How will the successful inclusion of diverse populations be assessed?

If marginalized groups are overlooked and excluded, investments will not contribute to long-term solutions. Approaches that are not intersectional and do not consider the full context are likely to leave refugees and IDPs furthest behind. For instance, incentives to eliminate barriers in the labor market for refugees will not benefit refugees who belong to ethnic minorities if national laws discriminate against them. Remote programs might not be accessible to adolescent girls because they do not have access to the Internet. Individuals with diverse SOGI might not access health care because of harassment and homophobic attitudes. Schools that are not accessible to children with diverse disabilities will hinder them from pursuing an education.

The WBG and other investors play a critical leadership role in forced displacement contexts and can directly influence national systems and programs to be more inclusive, reflective of best practices and representative of the populations being served. Taking an age, gender, disability, and diversity sensitive approach when addressing forced displacement will lead to more effective interventions and prevent the WBG and other investors from reinforcing discriminative systems and negative attitudes that lead to greater marginalization of displaced populations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Leave no one behind

Building on existing guidance and good practices, the WBG and other investors should:

### Policy and Funding

- ▶ **Require all projects and initiatives to include age, gender, disability, and other diversity considerations** in analysis, design, implementation, monitoring, and assessments, and evaluation.
- ▶ **Support host countries to ensure their national policies espouse an intersectional approach** that is age, gender, disability, and diversity-sensitive and include refugees and IDPs in all their diversity. Reducing these complex risks in forced displacement settings often requires a multi-sectoral response that addresses the root causes of systemic discrimination and inequality.
- ▶ While the RPRF considers the gender dimension of policies, **considerations related to age and disability should be integrated** as well.

### Stakeholder Engagement

- ▶ **Meaningfully consult with diverse populations and their representative organizations, respecting their leadership and expertise**, to help understand the challenges diverse communities face, what is needed to overcome those challenges, and ensure that solutions are designed and implemented inclusively.
- ▶ **Coordinate with other stakeholders and existing initiatives** to avoid duplication and ensure a multifaceted humanitarian response that takes into consideration the age, gender, and disability of the displaced populations.

### Evidence Generation and Knowledge Sharing

- ▶ **Collect, analyze, and utilize quality data that is disaggregated by sex, age, and disability at a minimum**, to help understand different protection needs, both at country level and globally. Other factors such as sexual orientation should be based on context, collecting data should not put people at risk.
- ▶ **Ensure internal knowledge sharing, expertise and sufficient resources for WBG's staff advising on age, gender, disability, and other diversity factors to ensure a coherent approach is applied to forced displacement contexts.** The WBG should also consider making existing frameworks mandatory, such as the Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework, which is currently non-binding and would be a valuable resource for adaptation for and application in forced displacement contexts.

- ▶ **Utilize existing tools for displacement settings such as UNHCR’s AGD policy to complement WBG’s internal guidance** to help operationalize an AGD approach unique to displacement contexts. The WBG should also consider **supporting and joining existing initiatives that advocate for gender sensitive humanitarian responses**, such as the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.