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EAST, HORN OF AFRICA AND GREAT LAKES (EHAGL) REGION

GENDER EQUALITY, 2024 ANNUAL UPDATE

1.0 BACKGROUND

UNHCR's efforts to promote Gender Equality are guided by its policy on [Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\) 2018](#). For UNHCR, gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all affected people and that the interests, needs and priorities of all are respected, regardless of their gender. UNHCR acknowledges that gender inequalities, which are compounded in contexts of displacement, disproportionately disadvantage women and girls, but that men and boys are also impacted by entrenched gender-based discrimination. This recognition forms the basis for UNHCR's adoption of the five (5) core actions on gender equality within the AGD policy, which affirm the entitlement of women and girls to:

- **Participate equally and meaningfully** in all decision-making, community management and leadership structures, as well as community-based committees.
- Be provided with **individual registration and documentation**, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.
- Have **equal access to and control** over provision and management of food, core-relief items and cash-based interventions.
- Have equal access to **economic opportunities**, decent work and good quality education and health services.
- Have access to comprehensive **Gender based Violence (GBV)** prevention and response services.

The AGD policy core action one (1) equally commits that, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming. The UNHCR 2024 regional dashboard indicates that women and girls make up [more than 47 per cent of displaced persons](#) in the region, and in some contexts, such as the armed conflict in Sudan, women and children have represented up to a staggering [90 per cent of those displaced](#).¹ Forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls face multiple barriers, gender inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination that are aggravated in displacement. Women and girls, when empowered, have the potential to be powerful agents of change who can transform communities, countries and the entire world. Despite progress made over the past decade in health, education and representation in parliaments, many women and girls continue to be held back from realizing their full potential by gender and socio-economic barriers.

¹ *Building a Gender-Equal Africa - UN Women East and Southern Africa Strategic Plan 2022-2025*

In 2024, the EHAGL Regional Director signed up as an International Gender Champion -Nairobi chapter. He committed to forge **dynamic partnerships with displaced women-led organizations** and to advance **girls and young women's access to education**, particularly at secondary and higher education levels. At the same time, he committed to enhancing **gender parity in the recruitment and retention of national and professional officer positions** within the Regional Bureau. Additionally, he pledged to uphold the organization's commitment towards zero tolerance to gender-based violence, gender bias and sexism.

The Year 2024 also recorded some high investments in capacity building efforts for staff, RLOs (Refugee Led Organizations) and other partners in Gender Equality within the EHAGL region. Forty gender equality focal points across the region were trained in gender markers and mainstreaming Gender equality in programming. An additional twenty-four (24) staff under the Prospects 2.0 program were sensitized on gender integration in program specific pillars of intervention in collaboration with regional partners including UNICEF and ILO. In Collaboration with UN Women, the region trained 30 staff and partners under Prospects program in Ethiopia, on gender integration in humanitarian action. Six Women led organizations in the region participated in the digital gender inclusion bootcamp aimed at addressing access, affordability, safety, and digital skills barriers for refugee women and girls.

2.0 GENDER PARITY ACROSS KEY SERVICES

2.1 Access to Education

Despite enabling legislation and policy across the EHAGL region, significant challenges in accessing education for refugees persist. While 68 per cent of refugees are enrolled in primary education, **only 21 per cent transition to secondary school and a meagre 2 per cent enroll into tertiary education²**.

The Gross Enrollment Rates (GER)³ between 2021 and 2023 in EHAGL region at primary education level stood at an average of 72 % for males and 64% for Females, while at secondary level, it was reported to be 25% for males and 16% for females. The GER at tertiary level reduced further to 3% for males and 0.9% for Females. GER would essentially exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late entrants, and grade repetition as reflected in Rwanda and Tanzania in the table below.

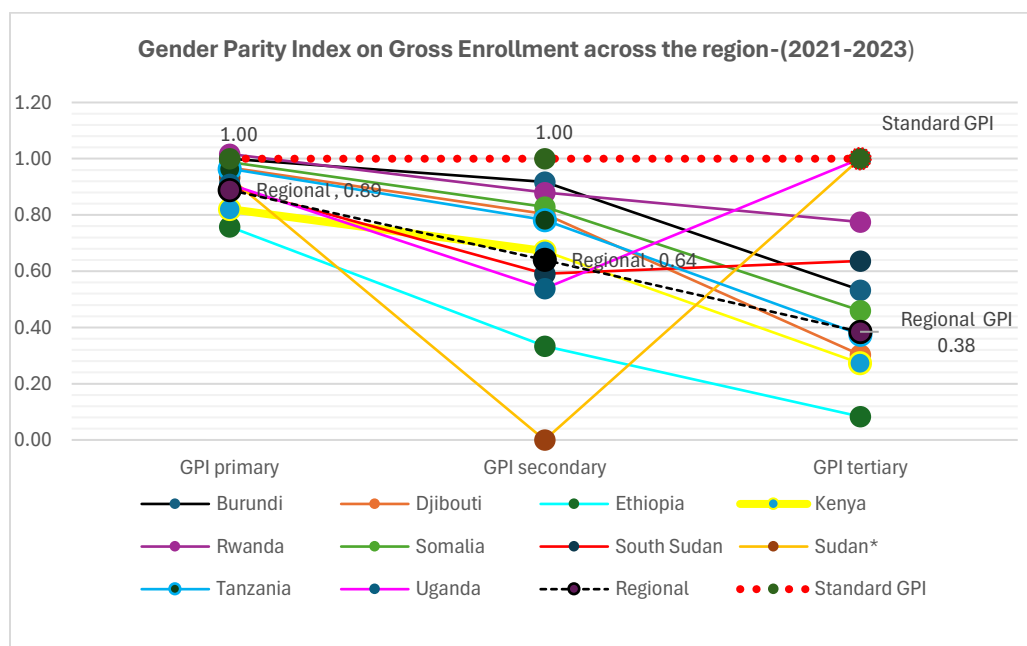
² Education Newsletter - UNHCR EHAGL Q3 & Q4 2024

³ This indicator measures the number of students enrolled in specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official population age range corresponding to the respective same level of education.

Table 1: Gross Enrolment Rates across different education levels

Country/Level	Primary level Gross Enrolment Rate		Secondary level Gross Enrolment Rate		Tertiary level Gross Enrolment Rate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Burundi	73%	73%	61%	56%	1.50%	0.80%
Djibouti	64%	62%	51%	41%	3.30%	1.00%
Ethiopia	58%	44%	21%	7%	3.60%	0.30%
Kenya	95%	78%	70%	47%	9.90%	2.70%
Rwanda	118%	120%	75%	66%	4.00%	3.10%
Somalia	84%	83%	35%	29%	5%	2.30%
South Sudan	60%	54%	22%	13%	1.10%	0.70%
Sudan ⁴	30%	28%	-	-	0.30%	0.30%
Tanzania	141%	136%	46%	36%	0.80%	0.30%
Uganda	100%	91%	13%	7%	0.80%	0.80%
Regional Average GER	72%	64%	25%	16%	2.6%	1%

Gender Parity Index (GPI)⁵ across the different levels of education is <1 with less females enrolling compared to males especially in the secondary and tertiary levels. The EHAGL regional GPI average is **0.89 at primary school** level, which reduces to **0.64 at secondary school** level and further declines to **0.38 at tertiary level**. Burundi and Rwanda operations have the highest GPI at secondary education level while Uganda and Sudan have a GPI of 1.00 at tertiary level.



⁴ There were no available statistics for Sudan at the secondary school level

⁵ The GPI is calculated by dividing the female gross enrolment ratio by the male gross enrolment ratio for the different levels of education. A value of 1 indicates that the country has achieved gender parity in access to education. A closer value to 1 indicates that the country is closer to gender parity.

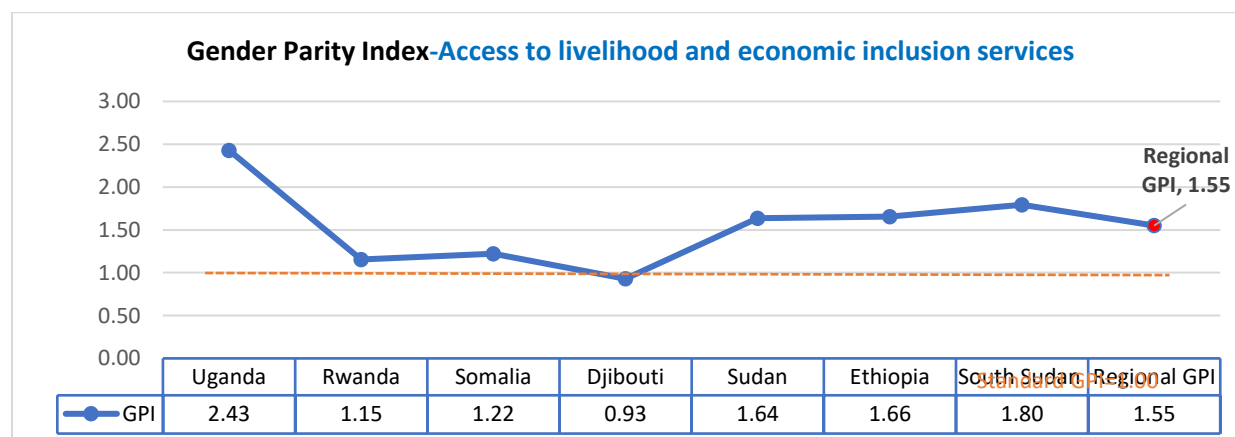
2.2. Access to Livelihoods and economic inclusion

On average, 70% of targeted community members that accessed livelihood opportunities and other economic inclusion services in 2023 and 2024 were Females. All the reporting country operations attained gender parity index of 1 except Djibouti. Uganda operation had the highest proportion of females reached, at 71% as indicated in the table below.

Country	Female	Male	Totals	Percentage Females
Uganda	478,519	196,947	675,466	71%
Rwanda	1,091	945	2,036	54%
Somalia	1,622	1,326	2,948	55%
Djibouti	275	296	571	48%
Sudan	42,225	25,785	68,010	62%
Ethiopia	2,923	1,766	4,689	62%
South Sudan	8,572	4,775	13,347	64%
Total	535,227	231,840	767,067	70%

Table 2: Number of people reached with livelihoods services, 2023-2024 (Available data)

The region achieved **Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 1.55**, indicating that more females received livelihood and economic inclusion interventions compared to Males. Initiatives undertaken over the two years include green entrepreneurship, self-employment in sustainable agriculture support, and wage employment facilitation.

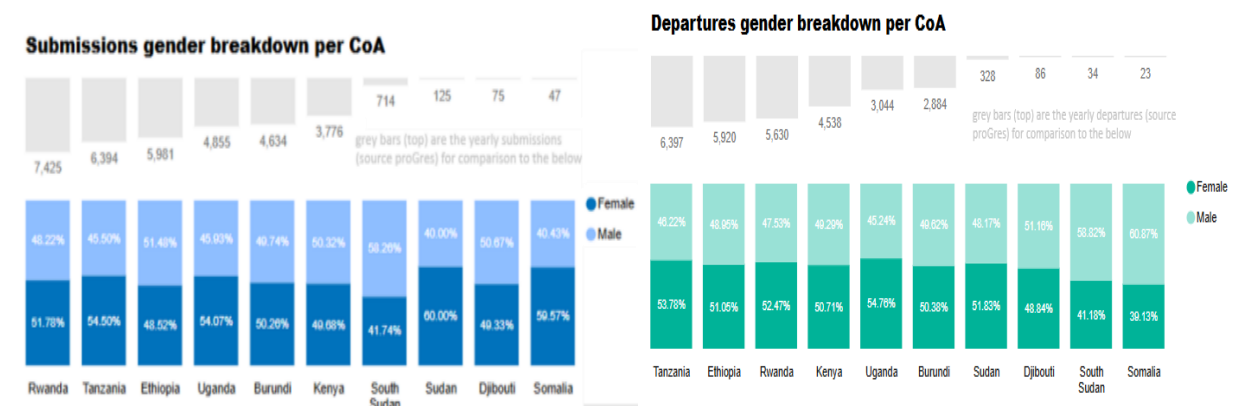


⁶Achieving gender inclusion and encouraging active participation of women in highly conservative communities poses significant challenges. Societal norms often restrict joint meetings or training sessions for men and women. Additionally, some women may be hesitant to engage or fully participate, particularly when training is facilitated by male trainers. These cultural dynamics highlight the need for strategic, culturally sensitive project planning and implementation to ensure inclusivity and meaningful participation

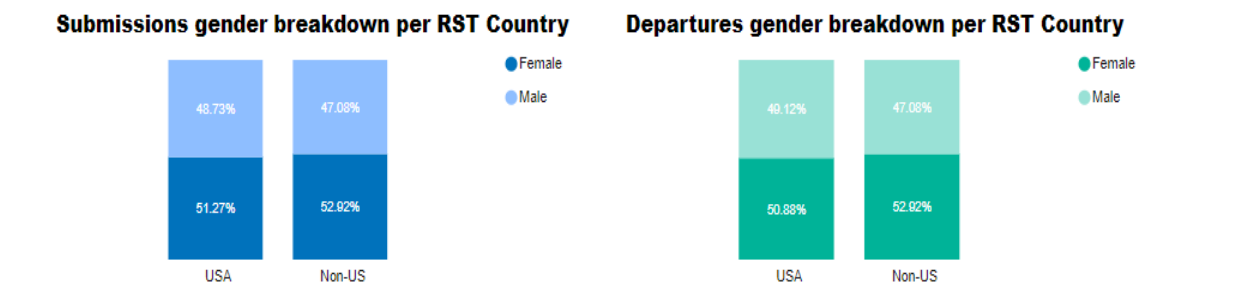
⁶ 2025 Mastercard foundation: Sudan response UNHCR grant report

2.3 Access to Resettlement opportunities

Of the total Resettlement (RST) submissions made in 2024 from the countries of asylum, 52% were females while 48% were male. Sudan and Somalia operations submitted the highest proportion of Females (60%). Regarding departures on Resettlement,49.4% were females, with the highest proportion of females reported by Uganda and Tanzania at 54%.

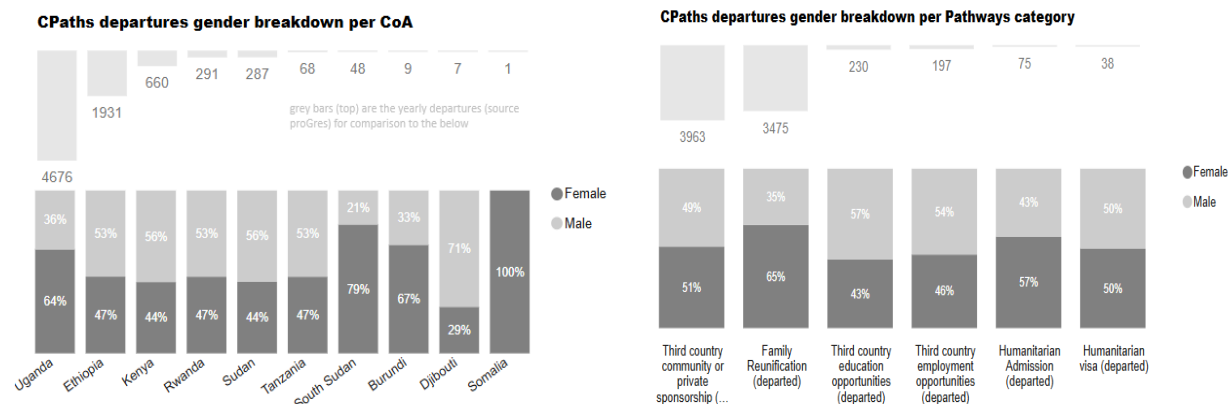


Regional Gender Parity Index on access to resettlement services is **1.08 for submissions** and **0.98 for departures**. This indicates that almost equal number of Males and Females access the opportunities. On the same note, the gender breakdown for submissions and departures to US and Non-US Countries are approximately the same, which could be an indication that the gender parity index will likely not be affected by the discontinuation of the US Resettlement program for 2025.



2.3 Access to Complementary Pathways

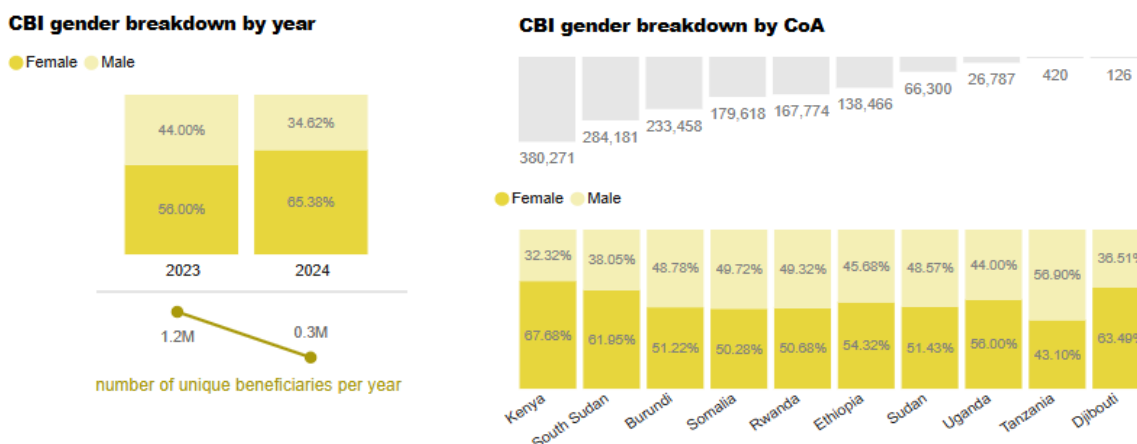
The graphs below reflect the breakdown of departures per country of asylum under Complementary Pathways (CPaths) for the year 2023 and 2024. Uganda had most complementary pathways departures (4,676) of which 64% were females. South Sudan had the highest proportion of females, 79% accessing complementary pathways. **Gender Parity Index for Complementary pathways was 1.38**, indicating a higher number of females who accessed opportunities within the two years reported. Private sponsorship and family reunification pathways recorded the most departures, with a percentage of 51% and 60% being females respectively, while education and employment opportunity pathways recorded less than 50% of females.



2.4 Access to Cash Based Interventions (CBI)

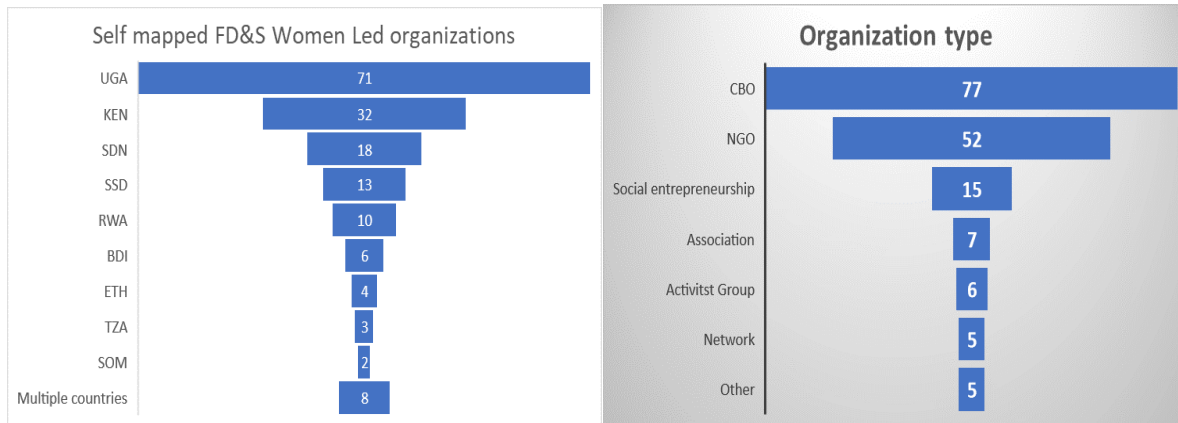
A total of 1,204,968 individuals were reached with Cash-Based Assistance in 2023 compared to 272,433 at mid-year of 2024. Gender Parity Index in 2023 was 1.27 with 56% of those reached being female. This **increased to a GPI of 1.86** in mid-2024 with a females' proportion of 65%. **All country operations attained at least a GPI of 1** except Tanzania operation that had a Gender Parity Index of 0.76.

Based on data reported by countries of asylum in 2023 and by mid-year 2024, Kenya had most females accessing cash assistance (67.68%) followed by Djibouti (63.49%) and South Sudan (61.95%). These were reported to be higher because of the cash assistance advanced for hygiene kits that targets only females.



2.5 Meaningful engagement of women

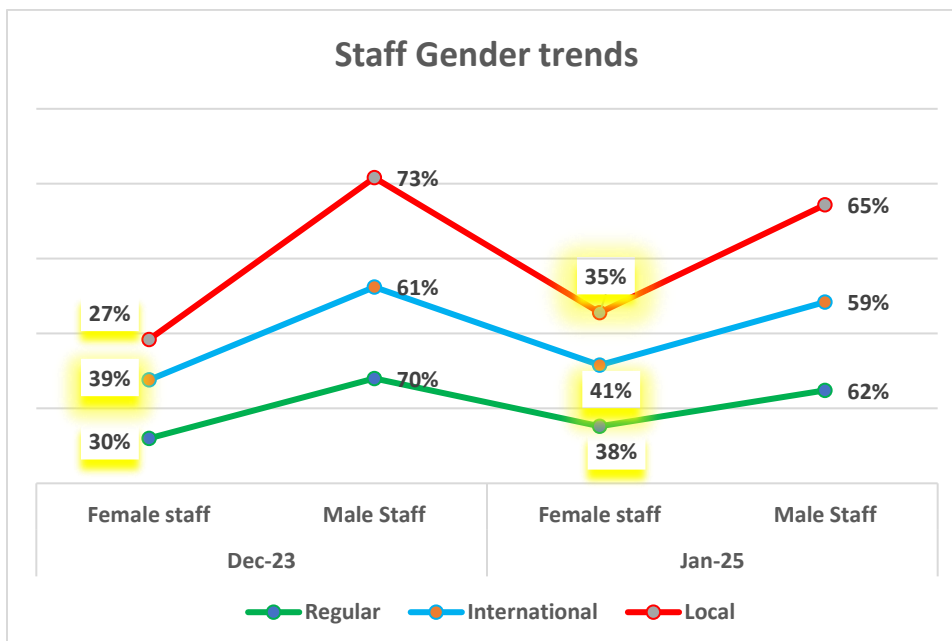
The EHAGL region documented 167 self-mapped Women Led Organizations (WLOs) out of which, 46% (77) are community based while 31% categorized themselves as National NGOs. EHAGL region is collaborating with UN women and Women Led Organizations in establishing a regional level WLOs engagement platform, whose broad objectives include **amplifying the voices** of women and girls, **strengthening capacity** of women to respond to humanitarian crisis including climate crisis and **enhancing collaboration**.



Six WLOs from Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan participated in the global digital gender equality bootcamp facilitated by Division of International Protection (DIP). The main learning from the bootcamp was understanding the critical nature of identifying and addressing gaps in digital gender inclusion. The Bootcamp highlighted how these gaps significantly affect women's participation in digital use and how they perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. Understanding these gaps is crucial because they directly impact women's ability to participate in the digital world, access educational resources, seek employment opportunities, and engage in social networks. If left unaddressed, these gaps can further widen the digital divide and exacerbate existing *inequalities*. The Bootcamp culminated in each participant organization pitching their forward-thinking ideas to bridge the digital gender divide.

3.0 REGIONAL STAFFING GENDER TRENDS

The EHAGL region across all country operations and the RB has higher male staff (Average 65%) compared to Females (Average 35%). There is a higher gap between males and females amongst local staff compared to international staff. The Gender Parity Index however **increased from 0.48 in 2023 to 0.62 in January 2025**, indicating continued efforts in the region to ensure Gender parity.



4.0 SELECTED GENDER EQUALITY PROMISING PRACTICES IN COUNTRY OPERATIONS

Operation	PROMISING PRACTICE
South Sudan	529 women were trained in English language , besides other entrepreneurial skills. This has immensely enabled, especially Sudanese refugees, to communicate in English and integrate in South Sudan society. Women are equally increasingly interested in male dominant trades like plumbing, electrical engineering and computer training despite the gender norms and biases.
Rwanda -Mahama Camp	Itetero Day care - an initiative by Save the Children International (SCI) to establish a Day care center for mothers engaged in business activities. Mothers can leave their babies aged above 6months, which enables them to work without worry. They pay 25,000Rwf (for 25 children). The operation is managed by refugees and almost entirely self-sufficient
Uganda-Rwamwanja	Extended Reproductive Health and Rights initiatives including Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) education, family planning and maternal health services, Distribution of hygiene kits, including sanitary products for women and girls. This has immensely improved access to essential health services for women and girls.
Uganda-Nakivale	Safe riders/boda boda riders forum : Motorcycles are purchased by the protection partner and given to riders who pay instalments until they own the motorcycles. The initiative is to boost both self and household livelihood opportunities, in addition to providing emergency transport support to female survivors of violence and pregnant women to hospitals to access timely services. With the forum having only 10% of female riders, sensitization of other females to participate is ongoing.
Rwanda-Mugombwa camp	PFR (Prison Fellowship Rwanda), a UNHCR partner, has conducted digital career counselling for women to improve gender equality in digital literacy . In Mugombwa camp, 33 women aged 18-59received training in digital literacy with a success rate of 88%. The operation is currently supporting this group to create an RLO whose mandate will be to support groups in Mugombwa to write their CVs, create a blog, and apply for scholarships and online jobs .

5. EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES TOWARDS ENHANCING GENDER PARITY ACROSS SERVICES

- In 2025, the global community will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), widely known as **Beijing +30**. This is an opportunity to engage with partners and our communities in rallying the commitments made and document the practices for scaling up or replication within the region and beyond.
- The EHAGL Regional Director personal commitments and pledges towards Gender equality and gender parity as an International Gender champion-Nairobi Chapter will ensure prioritization of gender equality conversations, design of targeted projects and enhancing mainstreaming amongst partners and within UNHCR's sustainable programming.
- Engagement with UN Women, partners and Women Led Organizations is an opportunity to establish a functional regional Women led organizations platform in which voices of women and girls could be enhanced and targeted actions formulated within the existing refugee response plans.
- EHAGL region thematic area teams will analyze the Gender Parity Index scores and engage with partners towards improving the index progressively. This will improve quality of Age, Gender and Diversity disaggregated data and will enable effective decision making and design of UNHCR programs.

Contact: For more information about Gender Equality in EHAGL region please contact: Katie Ogwang -SCBPO at Ogwangk@unhcr.org or Lydia Atiema-GE officer at Atiema@unhcr.org