



## GENDER AND PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

### IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

The national response to the COVID-19 pandemic in India has necessitated action on multiple fronts, one of the most urgent being the provision of food and other essential support to the millions of informal sector workers and wage labour who suddenly found themselves without jobs and incomes. Government and non-government agencies are providing on-ground support to fulfil these needs. **However, it is critical for response actions to consider differentiated impacts on vulnerable groups, girls, boys, women and men.**

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian agency with the mandate to ensure targeted food and cash assistance to millions of people across 83 countries. This brief summarizes WFP's Gender and Protection Guidance in the context of COVID-19 and aims to support organizations conducting COVID relief operations in India to ensure that no one is left behind.

### WHY GENDER AND PROTECTION MATTER IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- During crises, women and girls are often at greater risk food insecurity and malnutrition due to social and cultural norms. In addition:
- Women and girls face greater risk of mental stress and gender-based vio-

lence (GBV) during lockdown, due to restricted movements, loss of income and other frustrations which lead to increased domestic workload and abusive behaviour of some household members.

- Women and men both are at risk of losing livelihoods and incomes.
- Women and girls' reproductive health and hygiene needs may not be met.
- Women and girls have poorer access to water, sanitation and hygiene as compared to men.
- Factors such as disability, ethnicity, gender identity, being a female head of household, and poverty can exacerbate economic vulnerability and food insecurity during the crisis.
- Persons with disabilities are more likely to lose their job during lockdown and experience greater difficulties returning to work post-crisis.

### WHAT WE MUST DO

#### Learn

- Undertake a **gender, age and protection analysis** of the targeted population while designing response to identify the differing risks and barriers, and also the required mitigating measures for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, disabled and the elderly.

- Consult with targeted beneficiaries including different gender and age groups, leaders and representatives of different vulnerable groups (women, youth, disabled peoples, etc.)  
⇒ A **community perception survey** can be useful in understanding community perceptions about COVID-19 and also how the communities prefer to share and receive information, including access to and use of technologies for communications.
- **Essential:** Ensure strict adherence to data privacy and protection guidelines for data processing (collection, management and sharing).

## Plan and Deliver

In order to make COVID responses more effective and impactful for all people, the following actions should be considered:

- Include **both women and men** in all response teams and ensure their participation in decision making.
- Collect disability, sex and age disaggregated **data for responsive monitoring** to understand how the programme impacts women, men, girls and boys and persons with disability differently, and why?
- Based on the gender and protection analysis, with age and disability as key elements of it, undertake required **programme adjustments**. For example, adjust distribution timings to ensure no risk or increased work burden on any beneficiary.
- Consider and address **additional needs**, such as improving women's access to sanitary items, dignity kits, pre-and post-natal healthcare and contraception.
- Check that **gender-based violence** (GBV) referral pathways are in place; and if not, collaborate with partners to establish referral mechanisms and support networks and ensure that contact numbers and referral guidance is easily available.

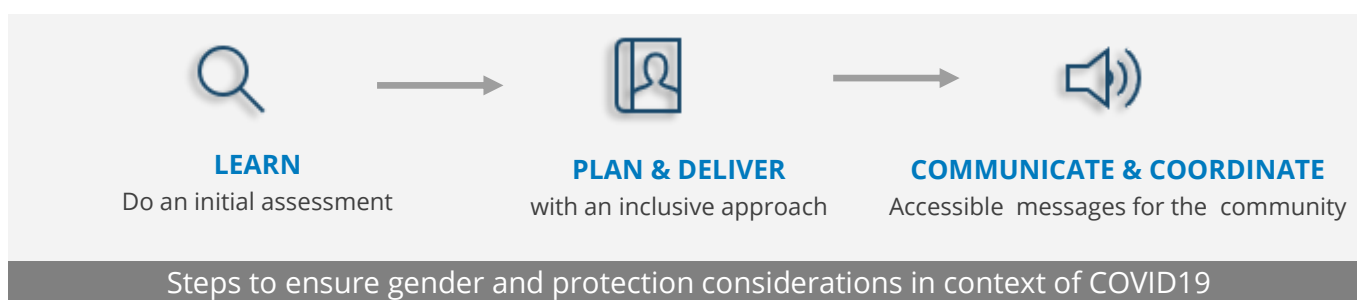
- **Beneficiary protection:** Ensure that safe and accessible complaints and feedback mechanisms (such as helpline or free text) are functioning.
- **Inclusive approach:** Ensure active outreach to take services to and collect feedback from people with disability, elderly, destitute women, etc.
- **Respond** to the needs and risks that the (diverse) women and men identify and experience.

## Communicate and Coordinate

- Provide information in a manner that is easily **accessible** to all women, men, girls & boys in the targeted population. This could be written (pamphlets, posters), audio (announcements, radio jingles) or digital (videos).
- **Tailor messages** according to age, literacy, language and safe access to ICT (mainly mobile phones and the internet), which will vary by age, gender and ability.
- Use **different mediums** for messaging, so that women and men of different ages, abilities and circumstances can directly receive the information (and check that this is happening). For example, radio jingles are useful to reach a poorly literate community with women with less access to digital media.
- **Partner with organizations** experienced with gender equality or human rights-based programming and that can reach diverse groups in affected populations.
- Ensure that all frontline workers, NGO and CSO personnel, particularly those involved in food distribution operations are aware of the gender impacts of COVID-19 and are **equipped** to respond appropriately.

### Sources:

WFP Gender Office (2020). *Gender and COVID-19*.  
WHO, IFRC, OCHA (2020). *COVID-19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement*.  
United Nations (2020). *A disability-inclusive response to COVID-19*.  
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