



WFP Gender Policy

2015–2020



World Food Programme



Engaging men is crucial for achieving Gender
Equality and Women's Empowerment



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EQUITY

DISAGGREGATED DATA

SEX

WOMEN MEN

GENDER

NEEDS ROLES

EQUALITY

OPPORTUNITIES

GIRLS BOYS

CAPACITIES

GENDER-ANALYSIS

RIGHTS

DECISION-MAKING

WFP MANDATE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This gender policy builds on WFP's many successes in the field, where its gender transformative approach to food assistance programmes and policies helps bridge the gender gap in food security and nutrition. As the product of broad consultations with WFP stakeholders, the policy reflects the collective voice of WFP.

WFP's ability to achieve its Strategic Objectives depends on its capacity to deliver food assistance that addresses the different needs and priorities of the women, men, girls and boys whom it serves. A world with zero hunger can be achieved only when everyone has equal opportunities, equal access to resources, and equal voice in the decisions that shape their households, communities and societies.

The goal of this policy is to enable WFP to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into all of its work and activities, to ensure that the different food security and nutrition needs of women, men, girls and boys are met. To achieve this goal, the policy establishes four objectives:

- 1. Food assistance adapted to different needs.** *Women, men, girls and boys benefit from food assistance programmes and activities that are adapted to their different needs and capacities.*
- 2. Equal participation.** *Women and men participate equally in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender-transformative food security and nutrition programmes and policies.*
- 3. Decision-making by women and girls.** *Women and girls have increased power in decision-making regarding food security and nutrition in households, communities and societies.*

- 4. Gender and protection.** *Food assistance does no harm to the safety, dignity and integrity of the women, men, girls and boys receiving it, and is provided in ways that respect their rights.*

The policy uses a twin-track strategy and establishes minimum standards for achieving its objectives. Collecting, analysing and using sex- and age-disaggregated data is the first step in designing sound food assistance programmes and policies. Gender considerations can then be mainstreamed into all phases of the programme cycle, from the initial needs assessment to the final evaluation. When gender and age analysis indicates that one population group is particularly vulnerable or at risk, actions targeting that group can be promoted.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are everybody's business. All WFP employees are responsible and accountable for implementing the gender policy and working towards its objectives. This document details the changes that need to take place in human resources, capacity development, communications, knowledge and information, partnerships, financial resources, evaluation and oversight throughout WFP.

A senior-level management mechanism will be established to monitor progress towards achievement of the policy's goal and objectives. Success of the gender policy will be measured by the changes it brings to the lives of the women, men, girls and boys served by WFP.

INTRODUCTION

1. For WFP, the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to fulfilling its dual mandate to end global hunger and save lives. To achieve its Strategic Objectives and meet the United Nations Secretary General's Zero Hunger Challenge, WFP must systematically address the different needs and capacities of women, men, girls and boys in all of its work.
2. WFP is unequivocally committed to delivering on the intergovernmental mandates of the United Nations system to promote and protect human rights and gender equality, as declared in the 1945 [United Nations Charter](#), the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals and other [declarations and agreements](#). WFP pledges to meet the requirements of the standards incorporated in the eight gender-related indicators of the [Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review](#) and to exceed requirements for all 15 indicators of the [United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women](#) (UN SWAP).
3. As the world commemorates Beijing+20, WFP looks back on 20 years of its own policies and programmes for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in food assistance. WFP's [2009 gender policy](#) introduced a shift from a women-centred approach⁴ to a broader analysis of the challenges and opportunities in the lives of the women, men, girls and boys whom WFP assists. The policy emphasized men's roles in change, and highlighted the importance of understanding gender relations. Current WFP programmes provide strong evidence of a gender- rather than a woman-focused approach,

especially Purchase for Progress and school feeding initiatives. This gender policy (2015–2020) builds on these developments, highlighting good practices from the field and innovative gender transformative approaches⁵ that respond to local contexts, and encouraging the sharing of these practices.

Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours and expectations; sex refers to anatomical and biological characteristics defining males and females. Awareness of gender is important for WFP's work because gender roles can vary among cultures and change over time, and WFP food assistance can support positive changes.¹

Gender equality is the state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements. For WFP, promoting gender equality means providing food assistance in ways that assign equal value to women and men while respecting their differences. The treatment of women and men should be impartial and relevant to their respective needs.²

Women's empowerment is the process through which women achieve choice, power, options, control and agency in their own lives. It is a goal in its own right. To be empowered, women must have not only equal capabilities and equal access to resources and opportunities to those of men, but also the ability to use these rights and opportunities to make choices and decisions as full and equal members of society. For WFP, this means that food assistance policies and programmes must create conditions that facilitate, and do not undermine, the possibilities for women's empowerment.³

4. A significant shift in gear is still needed for WFP “to meet its global and institutional commitments to addressing gender issues, and implement its mandate fully and equitably.”⁶

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are preconditions for effective and sustainable development and the enjoyment of universal human rights.

All programme guidance and policy decisions must therefore be designed to support women, men, girls and boys in reaching their potential. Operations that are not based on sound gender analysis are likely to be less effective because they risk failing to reach a large part of the population, often the most vulnerable, or not responding appropriately to specific needs. Such operations can even expose beneficiaries to additional risks, including life-threatening gender-based violence (GBV).

5. This policy lays out the strategic direction for all of WFP, defining the necessary changes and minimum standards for ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment in all types of intervention, from emergency to safety net and recovery programmes. It foresees programming and actions that are based on national and local contexts and led by people working in the field – for WFP, the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment must be context-specific and based on an understanding of the local situation. The policy will therefore be complemented by:

- a framework for developing regional, country and subnational implementation strategies adapted to different contexts and WFP activities/programmes. The strategies – expected to be completed by 31 December 2015 and shared with the Board at its

first 2016 session – will include country - or region-specific results with associated targets and indicators for tracking progress;

- a gender toolkit providing technical guidance on mainstreaming gender in all WFP programmes; and
 - a plan for disseminating the policy to employees, partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
6. Development of the policy was guided by recommendations from the evaluation of the 2009 gender policy, which called for: I) adequate time for broad and deep consultations; II) a review of partnerships; III) guidance from high-level steering groups; and IV) scrutiny from the Board. This policy document is based on consultations with WFP employees in all categories and geographical regions, and a comprehensive review of research into the links between gender and food security and nutrition. Its formulation has benefited from the inputs of an external and internal reference group and three consultations with the Board. This bottom-up and participatory approach helps to ensure that the policy reflects WFP’s collective voice.

7. *The policy is addressed to all WFP employees, to ensure that they: I) understand their own roles in and responsibilities for its implementation; and II) have the skills and confidence to address gender equality and women’s empowerment issues across WFP’s work.*

8. The gender policy is connected to all of WFP’s other policies and programmes.

Within its mandate, WFP will use food assistance to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment while delivering results for the women, men, girls and boys it serves.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in WFP's Work



Women and men participate equally in nutrition programmes

9. Worldwide, women generally have the main responsibility for household food security and nutrition.⁸ However, women and girls continue to face discrimination in access to and control over food – from production to consumption – improved livelihoods, education and health. Women and girls are also more exposed to GBV than men and boys. There is evidence that

underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition – poor access to nutritious food, inadequate mother-and-child care practices, and poor access to health, water and sanitation services – which affect the lives of women, men, girls and boys differently. For example:

- Food preferences, taboos and consumption patterns have

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