WFP GENDER POLICY AND STRATEGY

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN ADDRESSING FOOD AND NUTRITION CHALLENGES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty at its roots begins with women. Hunger breeds insecurity and often exacerbates circumstances that lead to conflict and crisis, and creates situations where women and girls are often victims of abuse, rape and violence. In situations of desperate poverty, access to food is power. WFP works in careful and innovative ways to ensure women are empowered — and protected in food distribution and access."

Josette Sheeran, WFP Executive Director

Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: it is estimated that 60 percent of the world's chronically hungry people are women and girls; 20 percent are children under 5. Achieving gender equality remains crucial to reach the poverty and hunger goals of the Millennium Declaration.

The Strategic Plan (2008–2011) provides an opportunity to review WFP's gender policy and improve the way in which gender is addressed in its programming. The positive measures focusing on women established by previous WFP policies need to continue, but a more holistic approach to gender is required to improve the balance in relationships between genders and in families.

This document sets out a framework for mainstreaming gender more fully in WFP's policies and programmes: it identifies priorities and actions that build on WFP's comparative advantages such as its unique field presence and extensive partnerships, incorporates the findings of a recent evaluation of its gender policy and indicates ways in which WFP can work more constructively to protect women, especially in refugee camps.

WFP seeks to create an enabling environment for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women to support partner countries in addressing food and nutrition challenges. Ultimately this will increase the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes addressing poverty and hunger.

DRAFT DECISION

The Board approves the gender policy described in the document "WFP Gender Policy and Strategy" (WFP/EB.1/2009/5-A) and:

- reaffirms its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- recognizes the importance of an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and is committed to actions, programme priorities and institutional support measures referred to in the document; and
- pledges to advocate for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 1. WFP's mission can only be achieved if all household members are equal in terms of opportunities, access to resources and services and participation in decisions. With regard to gender, the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2011) highlights the link between gender and hunger and reaffirms WFP's commitment to work at all levels to ensure gender sensitivity and equality. The new Strategic Plan calls for WFP to adapt its tools to context and meet identified needs in a more appropriate and flexible manner. It also provides an opportunity for WFP to review its gender policy and improve how gender is addressed in its programming.
- 2. A recent evaluation of WFP's gender policy concluded that "... unlike many United Nations and donor agencies, WFP [has gone] beyond rhetoric to require specific, strategic actions at the operational level. This resulted in increased visibility and inclusion of women and laid strong foundations for gender mainstreaming."²
- 3. This document builds on the strengths of the former (2003–2007) gender policy and sets out a framework for the continued mainstreaming of gender into WFP's policies, operational processes and programmes at all levels. It identifies priority actions to create an enabling environment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women with a view to increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes addressing extreme poverty and hunger. A time-bound action plan will be developed, with realistic and measurable targets; country offices will incorporate measurable gender actions into their workplans.

RATIONALE

4. Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: it is estimated that 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls; 20 percent are children under 5.3 Achieving gender equality remains crucial to reaching the poverty and hunger goals of the Millennium Declaration.

5. In recognition of the need to expedite the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the United Nations adopted a gender mainstreaming

¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2006. Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, p. 1. "Gender equality, or equality between women and men, refers to the equal enjoyment by females and males of all ages and regardless of sexual orientation, of rights, opportunities, socially valued goods, resources and rewards. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male."

² WFP. 2008. "Summary Report of the End-of-Term Evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2003–2007): Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security" (WFP/EB.2/2008/6-B).

³ United Nations. 2007. "Report of the Secretary-General: Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger, including through the Global Partnership for Development" (E/2007/71). New York. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) the number of undernourished people as of December 2008 was 963 million (see: www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/8836/icode/).

- policy and strategy in 2006,⁴ which provides a common framework for the United Nations system.
- 6. WFP's gender policies recognize that gender inequality affects hunger and poverty, and focus on women's roles in ensuring household food security. Research shows that improving the status of women results in positive outcomes for women and their families. Improvements in women's education have been linked to reductions in child malnutrition rates;⁵ household food security tends to improve if women are given equal access to resources with men.⁶
- 7. Measures focused on women must therefore continue in WFP operations. But a more holistic approach to gender is needed that improves the balance in relationships between genders and in families. This is partly a result of new challenges and opportunities for gender equality: for example, changes in the dynamics of the HIV/AIDS pandemic have prompted WFP to scale up its response and to pay particular attention to mainstreaming a gender dimension into HIV/AIDS programming.⁷
- 8. WFP's mission is becoming increasingly difficult as a result of climate change: most hungry people live in developing countries that are expected to be most affected by climate change and have minimal capacity to adapt.⁸ The gender aspect of climate change has started to receive some attention in recent years.
- 9. High food prices and the current global financial crisis exacerbate vulnerability to food insecurity⁹ and are negating some gains made in addressing food and nutrition insecurity. The implications are different for men and women, so care is needed in designing policies and actions to address the situation.
- 10. Violence against women and girls has escalated in recent years, resulting in a global call for action. Much of this violence is occurring in conflict and post-conflict countries where WFP has large operations. The Secretary-General's study of violence against women sets out its forms, consequences and costs. ¹⁰

⁴ United Nations. 2006. "United Nations System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Focusing on Results and Impact" (CEB/2006/2). New York.

⁵ Smith, L.C. and Haddad, L. 2000. *Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: A Cross-Country Analysis*. Washington DC, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

⁶ IFPRI. 2000. Women: the Key to Food Security: Looking into the Household. Washington DC.

⁷ WFP. 2006. Getting Started: HIV, AIDS and Gender in WFP Programmes. Rome.

⁸ WFP and Columbia University. 2008. *Climate Change in West Africa: Recommendations for Adaptation and Mitigation*. New York.

⁹ FAO. 2008. "Soaring Food Prices: Facts, Perspective, Impact and Actions Required" (HLC/08/INF/1). Document from the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. 3–5 June 2008.

 $^{^{10}}$ United Nations. 2006. Report of the Secretary-General: In-Depth Study on all Forms of Violence against Women (A/61/122). New York.

WFP'S EXPERIENCE IN MAINSTREAMING GENDER

WFP's Comparative Advantages

- 11. WFP has a strong base from which to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women: the focus on women in its previous policies has increased awareness of and respect for women as partners and beneficiaries.²
- 12. WFP's extensive field presence is an important comparative advantage that provides a unique opportunity to use knowledge of local conditions to design and implement programmes that are appropriate and sensitive to local culture.
- 13. WFP's partners governments, non-governmental organizations, multilateral organizations and communities also provide a sphere for advocating gender equality and the empowerment of women. There is potential for mobilizing complementary resources and expertise from partners.
- 14. The development of this WFP gender policy and strategy draws on these comparative advantages. It has been informed by the evaluation of WFP's gender policy (2003–2007), consultations with partners and field staff, desk reviews of partners' policies, the Enhanced Commitments to Women (ECW), and baseline and follow-up surveys.¹¹

Achievements and Challenges

- 15. WFP's past gender policies have resulted in several achievements:
 - i. The focus on women and girls has given them visibility as beneficiaries and contributors to household food security.²
 - ii. Women's access to food has increased considerably as a result of making women the holders of food entitlements.
 - iii. Women's equal participation in decision-making bodies has been promoted by establishing a 50 percent minimum for their participation in food committees.
 - iv. Girls' access to education has been enhanced by extra rations to encourage parents to send girls to school.
 - v. Women now have greater access to training through food-for-training (FFT) schemes.
 - vi. The collection of sex-disaggregated data has become routine.
- 16. There are, however, challenges still to be addressed:
 - i. There is evidence that increasing the representation of women in food-related bodies does not automatically result in increased participation in decision-making.

 $^{^{11}}$ WFP. 2007. Gender Focal Point Survey. Desk Review of the ECW Implementation and Views from WFP Gender Focal Points/Teams. Rome.

- ii. Issuing ration cards in women's names does not necessarily give them control over household rations because control is determined by the capacity to negotiate and decide the use of food.¹²
- iii. A "one-size-fits-all" approach to ECW may have limited field-based innovation and reduced the impetus to carry out gender analysis to adapt programmes to their context.
- iv. Limited understanding of gender issues among field staff has sometimes led them to perceive gender issues as relating only to women.² More research and improvements in programme design are necessary.
- 17. Achieving gender balance in staffing remains a challenge, particularly in managerial positions. This is addressed in WFP's human resource policy and strategy.¹³

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Vision

18. This gender policy and strategy aims to create an enabling environment in WFP for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women that is reflected in its policies, programmes and actions to support partner countries in addressing food and nutrition challenges.

Principles

- 19. Gender equality is not merely socially desirable: it is critical to the reduction of poverty and hunger¹⁴ and therefore linked to the achievement of WFP's Strategic Objectives. WFP will continue to seek opportunities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women to fulfil its mandate in food and nutrition security.
- 20. The gender policy and strategy builds on previous gender policies, and is guided by:
 - the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2011), which emphasizes WFP's role in supporting countries in addressing hunger and undernutrition;

¹² See WFP case studies to assess the implementation of women's control of food in relief food distributions (ECW IV) and participation in decision-making (ECW V) in Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zambia, June–September 2004.

¹³ "Preparing for Tomorrow Today: Strategy for Managing and Developing Human Resources (2008–2011)" (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-C/Corr.1)

¹⁴ Morrison, A., Raju, D. and Sinha, N. 2008. Gender Equality is Good for the Poor. Poverty in Focus, 13: 16–17.

- the principles of the United Nations policy and strategy on gender mainstreaming, ¹⁵ Resolution 2006/36 of the Economic and Social Council and other norms and standards; ¹⁶
- the core values of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and respect in WFP's humanitarian principles;¹⁷
- the principle of "do no harm", which is the commitment to prevent actions that cause harm to any beneficiary:¹⁸ it may include ensuring that distribution sites are safe and taking care not to overburden women or expose them to violence, sexual exploitation or abuse; and
- the principles of the gender and development approach, which encompasses the social, economic, political and cultural forces that determine how men and women might benefit from and control resources and activities; the approach focuses on gender relations with a view to achieving sustainable improvements in the status of women.
- 21. The evaluation of the 2003–2007 gender policy identifies issues to guide this new policy. These are: i) restoring a gender mainstreaming mandate; ii) re-orienting the institutional approach to enable context-led approaches; and iii) marshalling operational resources.

Goals

22. The goals are:

- to strengthen and maintain an institutional environment that supports and encourages gender mainstreaming;
- to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of WFP programmes addressing hunger in partner countries; and
- to promote the integration of a gender perspective into the food and nutrition policies, programmes and projects of partner countries and cooperating partners.

¹⁵ United Nations. 2006. *United Nations System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Focusing on Results and Impact* (CEB/2006/2). New York. The main elements are: i) accountability; ii) results-based management; iii) oversight functions – monitoring and evaluation (M&E), audit and reporting; iv) human and financial resources; v) capacity development; and (vi) coherence, coordination, knowledge and information management.

¹⁶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995); United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women and peace and security (2000; 2008); The Millennium Declaration (2000); the Declaration of the World Food Summit; five years later (2002); the Secretary-General's bulletins/directives on sexual exploitation and abuse (2003).

¹⁷ "Humanitarian Principles" (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C), p. 8.

¹⁸ CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. 2004. *The Do No Harm Handbook. The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict*, p. 19. Cambridge, MA, USA.

Expected Outcomes

- 23. The expected outcomes are:
 - increased knowledge and skills among WFP staff for addressing gender in policy development and programming;
 - improved and sustained gender mainstreaming in WFP programmes and activities; and
 - increased capacity in partner countries to incorporate a gender perspective into food and nutrition policies, plans and projects.

STRATEGY

- 24. A dual strategy of targeted actions¹⁹ and gender mainstreaming²⁰ will be applied to achieve the expected outcomes. Targeted actions will be carried out in the context of WFP's field-level programming on the basis of gender analysis; gender will be mainstreamed at the programme and institutional levels.
- 25. Because women are often disadvantaged, these actions will more often favour them. This does not preclude action for men and boys if required.

Priority Areas of Action: Building on Strengths and Addressing the Challenges

26. Country offices will be required to integrate a gender perspective into their programmes on the basis of specific gender challenges. This policy establishes immediate commitments that will be integrated into WFP programming and priorities, and the actions and institutional support mechanisms to be put in place.

Immediate Actions

27. There are measures that can be taken immediately as part of existing programmes and with current capacity. WFP therefore commits itself to:

- continuing to provide food assistance for pregnant and lactating women, children under 5 and adolescent girls;
- continuing to make women the food entitlement holders and ensuring that they are not put at risk of abuse or violence as a result of this policy;
- ensuring equal representation of women, including the elderly, in bodies related to food and nutrition; country offices will establish targets on the basis of local context;

¹⁹ IASC. 2006. *Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action*. New York. See p. 3: Targeted actions "should compensate for the consequences of gender-based inequality such as the long-term deprivation of rights to education or health care. This is important as in many situations women and girls are more disadvantaged than men and boys [...] but there are a number of situations where boys or men will be targeted for action, for example when boys are the target of recruitment for armed conflict...".

²⁰ United Nations. 1999. (A/52/3/Rev.1), p. 24: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action [...] in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of [...] policies and programmes [...] so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

- facilitating the formation of women's committees in camps to enable women to make decisions and be heard in relation to food and nutrition security; and
- continuing to improve access to education and reducing the gender gap in primary and secondary education, using take-home rations as an incentive.

NEW PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

28. As part of this gender policy and strategy, WFP also plans to introduce several new programming priorities that promote a gender-sensitive perspective in its operations.

Addressing Gender-Related Protection Challenges

- 29. WFP will continue to promote the protection of its target population and staff members in accordance with the Secretary-General's special measures on sexual exploitation and abuse,²¹ and Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women and peace and security. WFP will work to prevent violence against women, girls and children in its operations, and in complex emergencies will seek to do the following:
 - Reduce the burden on, and improve the safety of, women and girls in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. Firewood is often collected exclusively by women and girls,²² who may walk long distances outside the camps with heavy loads and at personal risk. As part of inter-agency efforts, in camps WFP will: i) mobilize resources to provide fuel-efficient stoves to the most vulnerable women; ii) use its food assistance to support income-generating activities for women and girls; and iii) support the creation of safe and private spaces for women and girls.
 - Identify additional opportunities in WFP operations to improve the protection of women and girls. This will include: i) using food assistance to engage men and boys to foster understanding of the links between gender inequality and hunger, involve them in activities to protect women and children from violence and reduce burdens on women, and share childcare responsibilities; ii) making WFP distribution sites safe for women and girls; and iii) using WFP's field presence and national staff to encourage local initiatives aimed at ending violence against women and girls.

Integrating a Gender Perspective into HIV/AIDS Programmes

30. Addressing gender inequality is fundamental to reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV and AIDS. WFP will continue to support an inter-agency response to the pandemic, and will seek to: i) use its food assistance to increase awareness of the links between HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, gender-based violence and food

²¹ United Nations Secretariat. 2003. "Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" (ST/SGB/2003/13). New York.

²² Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. 2006. *Beyond Firewood: Fuel Alternatives and Protection Strategies for Displaced Women and Girls*. New York. According to this study, cooking fuel is rarely provided by the humanitarian community; it is even rarer for men to collect wood.

insecurity; and ii) work with partners to promote the involvement of men and boys in HIV/AIDS prevention, mitigation, treatment, support and caregiving.

Breaking Gender Barriers through Improved Mother-and-Child Health and Nutrition Programmes

31. Mother-and-child health and nutrition (MCHN) programmes can break gender barriers in childcare by including men and boys in nutrition and health education activities. WFP will: i) continue to collaborate with partners to provide an essential package of non-food interventions for pregnant and lactating women, children under 5 and adolescent girls; and ii) involve men and boys in activities to raise awareness of MCHN, improve their knowledge of and commitment to maintaining the nutrition and health of mothers and children, and increase their participation in childcare; and iii) promote the development and use of ready-to-use foods that meet nutritional needs and save time and fuel, especially in camps.

Promoting Gender Equality through WFP-Supported School Feeding

32. There is evidence of the positive impact of school feeding on addressing the gender gap in education. WFP will continue to use take-home rations as an incentive for girls' enrolment and will use school feeding as an entry point to promote gender equality during children's formative years and address the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and HIV transmission with innovative learning and advocacy methods.

Promoting Positive Gender Relations and Supporting Sustainable Livelihoods through Food for Work and Food for Training

33. Food-for-work (FFW) and FFT programmes will be designed to take into account the different needs of women, men, young people and the elderly. WFP will ensure: i) that women and men participate equally in identifying FFW and FFT activities on the basis of their different needs and priorities; ii) that women and men have equal access to benefits through FFW and FFT programmes that are designed in a participatory process; support systems such as childcare will be considered in the design to improve women's access to the benefits; and iii) that a monitoring system is put in place to ascertain whether women are empowered in terms of decision-making and of benefiting from WFP assistance to improve their livelihoods; the system should include qualitative data.

Cash Transfer and Voucher Programmes and Cash for Work

34. Cash transfer and voucher programmes and cash-for-work (CFW) programmes will be designed that ensure that women benefit equally with men, without negative implications. WFP will ensure: i) that cash transfer and voucher programmes take into account the needs of women and children, including food and nutrition security and the potential for domestic violence over the control of cash or vouchers; and ii) that a monitoring system is put in place to ascertain whether women are

empowered by cash transfer and voucher programmes through decision-making and improved livelihoods.

Purchase for Progress

35. Purchase for Progress (P4P) projects will take into account the fact that most small farmers are women and most traders are men in countries where WFP buys food locally. WFP will ensure: i) adequate representation of women farmers by establishing minimum targets for their participation in line with country contexts; this will include working with traders and farmers' associations to ensure that women are equitably represented in management positions and that women farmers benefit directly from cash payments for their produce; and ii) that a monitoring, evaluation and reporting system is in place at the country level to track women's participation.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

36. The following measures will support implementation of programme actions at the corporate level.

Capacity Development

37. WFP will: i) ensure that staff develop the capacity to incorporate a gender perspective into their work: for example, gender-sensitive content will be incorporated into the training for country directors in 2009; and ii) support capacity development among governments and other partners by including them in country-level training to develop capacity to address gender in food and nutrition plans and policies.

Accountability

WFP will: i) improve its accountability systems and revise its accountability tools to incorporate gender perspectives into workplans, risk-management profiles, M&E Indicator Compendium, the Performance Competency tools, and Enhancement (PACE) programme and the Strategic Results Framework; senior managers will provide leadership and have primary responsibility for implementing this gender policy and strategy; ii) hold governments and other cooperating partners accountable for gender programming in field-level agreements and Memoranda of Understanding; iii) establish an M&E and reporting system to measure progress in gender mainstreaming; and iv) enforce and monitor its policy on sexual harassment and abuse of power, in accordance with the United Nation's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Advocacy

39. WFP will work to raise awareness of the importance of promoting gender equality and empowering women to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security. Its extensive field presence and network of partners provide a unique opportunity for advocacy at different levels. WFP will develop a communication and advocacy strategy that will give staff and partners a better understanding of the links between gender inequality, hunger and the sharing of responsibilities.

Gender Mainstreaming in Operations

40. WFP will make it mandatory to incorporate a gender perspective into operations. To help country offices to mainstream gender, WFP will: i) launch a Gender-Friendly Country Office Initiative, whereby country offices will be rewarded for compliance with the measures set out in this policy and strategy; and ii) mobilize resources to establish a Gender Innovations Fund to help country offices implement innovative activities that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Partnerships

41. Regional and country offices will establish and strengthen partnerships with governments and international, regional and local organizations to address gender issues. WFP will support inter-agency coordination and knowledge sharing.

Research

42. WFP will collaborate with academic institutions on research to improve its policies and programmes and will collaborate with partners in assessing the impacts of its interventions.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

43. Gender mainstreaming requires a corporate approach.²³ This will entail changes in some core processes and may require the establishment of new ones, which will have implications for human and financial resources. WFP will therefore invest in specialist staff and capacity-building and will provide resources for gender mainstreaming.

²³ "Gender Policy (2003–2007)" (WFP/EB.3/2002/4-A), p. 12.

- 44. Several benefits are likely to accrue to WFP as a result of this policy and strategy:
 - 1. The link between gender and hunger means that addressing gender inequality is critical to the reduction of poverty and hunger, and therefore central to WFP's mission.
 - 2. Gender mainstreaming will improve the effectiveness and sustainability of WFP programmes in partner countries.
 - 3. Improved gender analysis will enable WFP to respond to local contexts and design more responsive programmes.
 - 4. Gender balance in WFP's human resources is not just a matter of equity: it enhances performance. A staff that is diverse in culture and gender enhances performance by expanding the pool of skills, talents and ideas.²⁴

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²⁴ Amariles, F., Peralta, G. and Johnson, N. 2006. *Linking Diversity to Organizational Effectiveness: Lessons from a Culture Study at CIAT*. Institutional Learning and Change Brief 12. Maccarese, Italy, Institutional Learning and Change Initiative.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CFW cash for work

ECW Enhanced Commitments to Women

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FFT food for training

FFW food for work

IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee

IFPRI International Food Policy Research Institute

M&E monitoring and evaluation

MCHN mother-and-child health and nutrition

P4P Purchase for Progress

PACE Performance and Competency Enhancement