

WFP gender policy (2022-2026)



Second informal consultation

7 October 2021

**World Food Programme
Rome, Italy**

Executive summary

WFP envisions a world with zero hunger where everyone has equal opportunities, equal access to resources and an equal voice in the decisions that shape their lives, including as individuals within households, communities and societies. For WFP, the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to fulfilling its mandate of saving lives and changing lives while ending global hunger.

The WFP gender policy (2022–2026) is informed by the lessons learned from the implementation and evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2015-2020). This new gender policy reaffirms WFP's commitment to undertaking the contextual analyses, design, implementation strategies and interventions necessary to stimulate transformational changes that reflect the specific food security and nutrition needs of people at all stages of the lifecycle in humanitarian, development and peace contexts.

WFP supports a people-centred approach that engages with and benefits from the views, preferences and priorities of affected populations while promoting diversity, inclusion and gender equality. WFP will help to establish appropriate and accessible mechanisms that help people shape their own lives and inform the delivery of assistance that considers their long-term aspirations while meeting their immediate needs. In addition, WFP will prioritize safety and dignity, avoid doing harm and help to facilitate access by all people – women, girls, men, boys and marginalized groups¹ – to services and assistance in line with and respectful of their choices and needs, working with partners to identify and address barriers to ensure that no one is left behind.

This policy mirrors WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2026 by committing to aligning approaches with WFP's other cross-cutting themes, including protection and accountability to affected populations and nutrition integration, and ensuring gender equality impacts and opportunities are integrated into WFP's programming on climate change, economic shocks and peace. The gender policy foresees programming that leverages WFP's reach and scale of operations, is based on an understanding of local settings and is promoted through empowered local actors.²

The gender policy (2022–2026) is geared towards all organizational units of WFP and recognizes the value and comparative advantage that WFP's expansive field presence offers for proactively advancing gender equality and women's empowerment around the world. All employees are expected to work with partners and beneficiaries to support a people-centred model of delivering assistance to and enabling participation by the individuals, communities and societies with whom WFP works.

¹ Throughout this document the term "marginalized groups" refers to people who face discrimination based on more than one attribute, including but not limited to sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, and find themselves to be on the margins of society with unequal access to or control over their basic needs, priorities, opportunities and experiences.

² In accordance with the localization agenda, this entails respecting, supporting and strengthening local leadership and capacity, including in women-led organizations and organizations advancing gender equality at the local level.

Context and rationale

1. **WFP envisions a world with zero hunger where everyone has equal opportunities, equal access to resources and an equal voice in the decisions that shape their lives, including as individuals within households, communities and societies.** This policy lays out WFP's strategic direction for gender equality and women's empowerment and defines the necessary changes and entry-points for mainstreaming gender in all types of WFP interventions.
2. WFP is unequivocally committed to promoting and protecting human rights and gender equality as recognized in the 1945 [United Nations Charter](#),³ the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#),⁴ the Beijing+25 outcomes and other [declarations and agreements](#).⁵ WFP complies with the 2018 United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP 2.0).⁶
3. The external evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2015–2020) confirmed the appropriateness of its strategic approach and resulted in a number of recommendations, including that WFP identify strategies for mobilizing consistent financial and human resources for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, including a cadre of professional gender advisers; that gender equality and women's empowerment be more strategically embedded within country-level policy and programming dialogues, reviews and country strategic plans; and that a high-level gender equality and women's empowerment steering group be established to ensure accountability for policy implementation.⁷
4. The present gender policy is solidly anchored in WFP's vision and mission as reflected in its strategic plan for 2022–2026, corporate results framework, financial tracking system, cross-cutting priorities and policies. It aligns with the strategic plan's five outcomes and four cross-cutting priorities, the latter of which include the enhancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
5. As the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, WFP has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to humanitarian, development and peace objectives⁸ through gender-transformative and conflict-sensitive programming that leverages local and strategic partnerships, builds the resilience of affected populations and proactively addresses factors that create or perpetuate gender inequality at all stages of

WFP strategic plan (2022–2026)

Outcomes

1. People are able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs
2. People have better nutrition, health and education outcomes
3. People have improved livelihoods and sustainable livelihoods
4. National programmes and systems are strengthened
5. Humanitarian and development actors are more efficient and effective

³ United Nations. 1945. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*.

⁴ United Nations. 2015. *Transforming our world. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-Women). *Intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming*.

⁶ UN-Women. *Promoting UN accountability*. (UN SWAP and UNCT-SWAP).

⁷ WFP. 2020. *Evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015–2020)*.

⁸ Also known as the triple nexus, this involves humanitarian, development and peace actors working together towards collective outcomes. See WFP. 2019. *Triple nexus: WFP's contributions to peace*.

the lifecycle.⁹ The gender policy foresees programming that leverages WFP's reach and scale of operations, is based on an understanding of local settings and is promoted through empowered local actors.¹⁰

6. WFP supports a people-centred approach that engages and benefits from the views, preferences and priorities of affected populations while promoting diversity, inclusion and gender equality. Diversity is the range of differences in attributes that may influence the likelihood that an individual or group of individuals is excluded from or overlooked by WFP interventions, including but not limited to sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, life experiences and value systems. Some aspects of diversity are visible while others are not. Respecting diversity and inclusion means creating a protective, inclusive and non-discriminatory environment that ensures that the rights of all affected people are upheld. WFP will help to establish appropriate and accessible mechanisms that empower people to shape their own lives and inform the delivery of assistance that considers their long-term aspirations while meeting their immediate needs. In addition, WFP will prioritize safety and dignity, avoid doing harm and help to facilitate the access of all people to services and assistance in line with, and respectful of, their choices and needs, working with partners to identify and address barriers to ensure that no one is left behind.
7. The analysis that informed the development of the WFP strategic plan (2022–2026) reveals that the world is not on track to achieve zero hunger by 2030. In 2019, 650 million people suffered globally from chronic hunger – 43 million more than in 2014. Approximately 60 percent of those people are women and girls.¹¹ With the COVID-19 pandemic this situation deteriorated drastically in 2020, with approximately 811 million people classified as chronically hungry.¹² Current projections show that 660 million people may still face chronic hunger in 2030 – 30 million more than predicted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³ In 2020, two billion people – one in every four people worldwide – did not have reliable access to sufficient food that was nutritious and safe.¹⁴
8. The intersection of malnutrition and inequality, including inequality caused by sex, age (incorporating all stages of the life cycle) and disability among other attributes,¹⁵ draws attention to the varying lifecycle nutritional requirements and highlights how food systems manifest or perpetuate deeply entrenched social, economic and political power imbalances within and between societies. Gender relations, including socially-constructed norms and biases that favour boys as future breadwinners, underestimate nutritional needs at various stages of the human lifecycle and view women and girls as a burden on families until they leave through marriage, often influence who goes hungry within households.¹⁶ Other social norms and cultural practices that contribute to imbalanced access to and

⁹ WFP. 2021. *Review of Progress on Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) into the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus Agenda*.

¹⁰ In accordance with the localization agenda, this entails respecting, supporting and strengthening local leadership and capacity, including women-led organizations and organizations advancing gender equality at the local level.

¹¹ [Women and Hunger Facts – World Hunger Education – World Hunger News](#).

¹² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2021. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2021: Transforming Food Systems for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Affordable Healthy Diets for All*.

¹³ "WFP strategic plan (2022-2026)" (Draft subject to approval by the Executive Board at its 2021 second regular session).

¹⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, WFP and World Health Organization. 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*.

¹⁵ Diversity is the range of differences in attributes including, but not limited to, sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, life experience and value systems. Some aspects of diversity are visible, while others are not.

¹⁶ [Inequality, Hunger, and Malnutrition: Power Matters – Issues in Focus \(globalhungerindex.org\)](#)

control over the means to achieving food security and nutrition include, but are not limited to, mobility restrictions on women and girls; inequality in access to information, services, technology and changing food markets; unequal decision making power at the household, community and institutional levels; women's and girls' extensive unpaid care and domestic work burden; and unequal access to and control of resources.

9. Each year, 12 million girls – 23 every minute – get married before the age of 18.¹⁷ Estimates suggest that this may increase by 13 million girls as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁸ Early child and forced marriage affects a girl's psycho-social, intellectual and physical development. Early marriage interrupts schooling, limits a girl's livelihood and career opportunities and increases the perpetuation of an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition stemming from early pregnancy, social isolation and a heightened risk of gender-based violence. Pregnancy and childbirth remain the leading causes of death among adolescent women age 15–19.¹⁹
10. Gender-based discrimination and inequality can limit women's and girls' access to information, knowledge and communication technology, affecting their ability to anticipate and prepare for shocks and adapt to change. Unequal power structures can restrict their participation in decision making, particularly at strategic levels related to food systems, food security and nutrition. Approximately one billion women are unable to gain access to formal financial products and services due to persistent barriers in access to identification documents, mobile phones, digital skills and financial literacy.²⁰ This inequality limits women's and girls' access to and control of the assets and resources necessary to adapt to socio-political changes and to be economic actors in their own right.
11. Men and boys also face gender-based discrimination and constraints stemming in large part from rigid socially-constructed gender norms relating to masculinity and patriarchy.²¹ Men and boys are also essential actors – vital stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners – across all policy and programme dialogues and design, implementation and monitoring activities. WFP will engage with men and boys alongside women and girls to challenge discriminatory social and cultural norms, stereotypes and biases in order to promote a more equitable sharing of resources and responsibilities among all individuals, within households and in the public sphere. Specifically, men and boys should be given the opportunity to advocate gender equality by showcasing positive forms of masculinity, including role modelling with regard to unpaid care and domestic work, and to act as individual drivers of social norms and behaviour change communication within households, communities and policy spaces.
12. Progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment is being eroded by the "3 Cs" – conflict, climate change and COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic in particular has exacerbated overall inequality, disproportionately affecting the poorest people:

¹⁷ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>; <https://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures/> If pre-pandemic trends continue, 150 million more girls will be married by 2030 – an average of 15 million girls each year (UNICEF, Child marriage database, 2020).¹⁷

¹⁸ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2020. *New UNFPA projections predict calamitous impact on women's health as COVID-19 pandemic continues*.

¹⁹ WHO. January 2020. *Adolescent Pregnancy Fact Sheet*. [Adolescent pregnancy \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/adolescent-pregnancy)

²⁰ https://btca-production-site.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/482/english_attachments/_Advancing_Womens_Digital_Financial_Inclusion_G20_GPFI.pdf?1606113263; https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/bridging-the-gender-digital-gap/; https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/WomensDigitalFinancialInclusioninAfrica_English.pdf

²¹ Such gender-based discrimination can manifest among men and boys through outcomes such as lower life expectancy due to poor health-seeking behaviour or increased exposure to violence and lower education levels due to pressure to enter the workforce and provide for their families, among other causes.

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- i) The most recent global food security and nutrition evidence reveals a pandemic-induced food insecurity gender gap, with 10 percent more women than men suffering food insecurity, compared to a 6 percent gap in 2019;²²
 - ii) Globally women and girls perform three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as their male counterparts, including by taking the lead on obtaining and preparing food within families. The burden of unpaid care work has been exacerbated by heightened pandemic-related lockdowns that have led to families spending more time at home eating, working and studying;²³
 - iii) Women, girls and other at-risk people have experienced an increase in gender-based violence as a result of the isolation, lockdowns, economic and psycho-social stressors and limited availability of responsive social services that have characterized the COVID-19 pandemic. This gender-based violence crisis unfolding behind closed doors has been labelled the “shadow pandemic”;²⁴
 - iv) Women are more likely to rely on precarious informal sector employment with no social protection, including in sectors directly linked to food systems, food security and nutrition-centred activities. United Nations projections suggest that the economic effects of COVID-19 will push an additional 47 million women and girls into extreme poverty in 2021, reversing decades of progress.²⁵
 - v) Women and girls remain disproportionately affected by climate change due to constraints on their roles as vital stakeholders in resource management, preparedness and mitigation activities; a lack of meaningful access to decision making and leadership forums on climate-related policies, programmes and emergency responses; and social and cultural norms that prevent them from gaining survival skills such as the ability to swim or to drive and from wearing clothing conducive to running, climbing and moving about in inclement weather and natural disasters such as floods.
 - vi) Conflict settings amplify inequality within and across societies, placing women and girls at greater risk of extreme poverty, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, poor health and sexual and gender-based violence due to their lack of meaningful participation in decision making as individuals within households and across society.

²² Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network. 2021. [Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions](#).

²³ MenCare. 2021. [State of the World's Fathers 2021: Structural Solutions to Achieve Equality in Care Work](#). [State of the World's Fathers 2021: Structural Solutions to Achieve Equality in Care Work – MenCare \(men-care.org\)](#)

²⁴ UN-Women. [The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19 \(website\)](#).

²⁵ Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Evidence Summary 7: Cross-cutting concerns.

Objectives, priorities and essential enablers

13. The gender policy (2022–2026) adopts a progressive approach in line with the leave no one behind pledge of the 2030 Agenda and the latest global trends and discussions on gender equality and women’s empowerment;^{26,27} strengthens the accountability of WFP country offices by providing strategic corporate direction to help position their commitments regarding gender equality; presents a revised theory of change that emphasizes the links between organizational processes and policy objectives that aim for more transformative change;²⁸ and defines the conditions necessary for WFP to sustain progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment through its programming and operations. The policy affirms that advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in a sustainable manner will occur through the work that WFP and its partners commit to in country strategic plans and operations. **The policy will be operationalized through three objectives:**
- I. Equitable access to and control over the means to achieve food security and nutrition**
 - II. Progress in advancing gender equality by addressing the root causes of gender inequality**
 - III. Economic empowerment of women and girls**
14. WFP will continue to invest in a **twin-track strategy by which gender mainstreaming** is understood to be the underlying approach to systematically integrating gender equality considerations into all WFP policies and programmes and **gender targeted actions** include measures that respond to needs identified through gender analysis that cannot be addressed through gender mainstreaming alone. Gender analysis guides the application of the twin-track strategy in a particular context by taking into consideration the diverse needs, opportunities and experiences of all stakeholders; how best to ensure the equitable and meaningful participation of the diverse people with whom WFP works; the priority that a specific country, region within a country or ethnic or other group may accord to customary law over constitutional law, particularly as they relate to gender inequality and harmful practices; and the most appropriate programme designs and implementation methodologies acknowledging the political, economic and socio-cultural context in which an intervention will be implemented. An inclusive and, conflict-sensitive gender analysis is more likely to result in interventions with long-term impact if it makes use of WFP’s twin-track strategy in response to the unique needs, opportunities and experiences of affected populations.²⁹

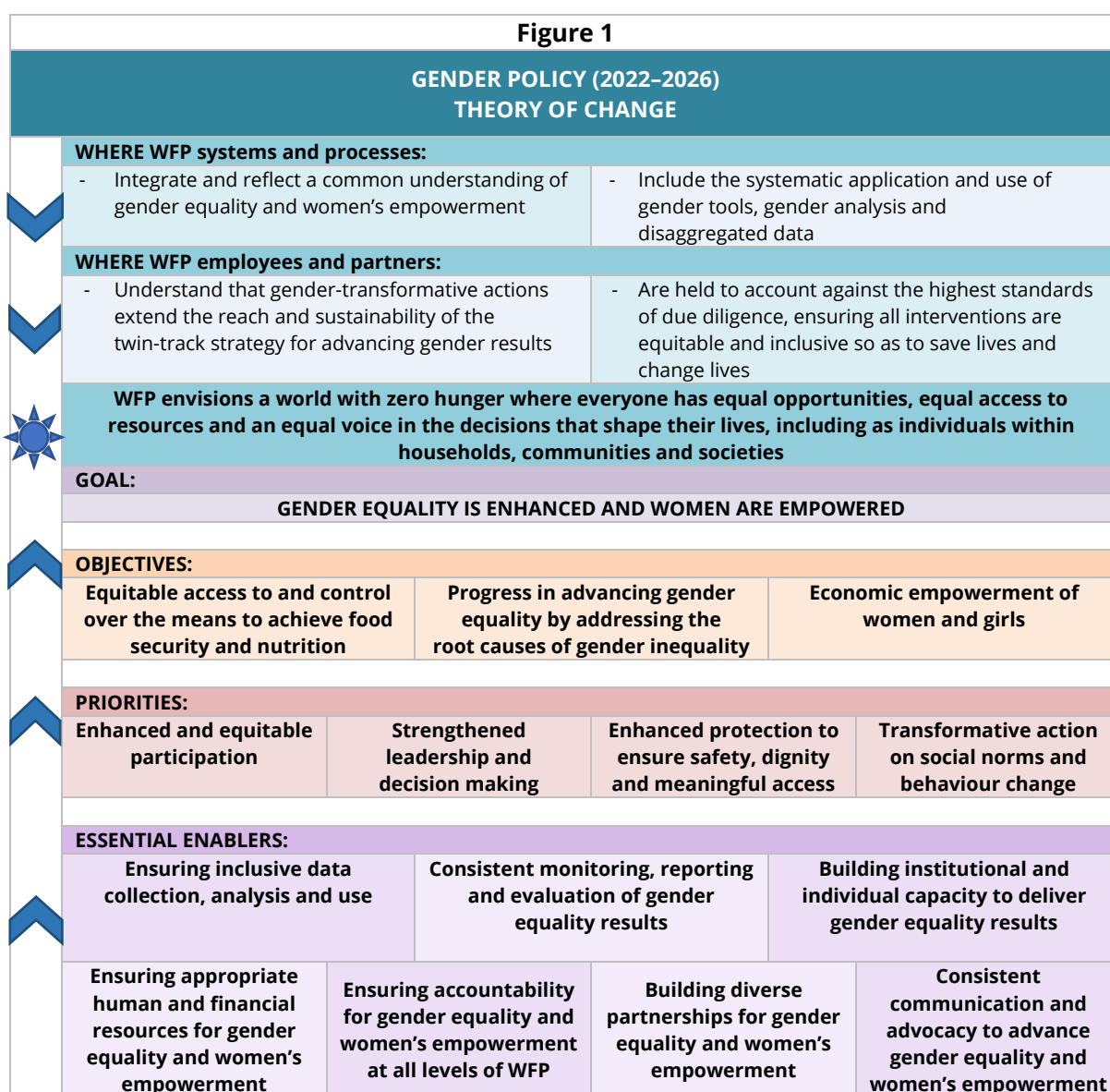
²⁶ For example, *Action Coalitions: A Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality* of the Generation Equality Forum calls for accelerated action on six themes: gender-based violence; economic justice and rights; bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; feminist action for climate justice; technology and innovation for gender equality; and feminist movements and leadership. The United Nations Decade of Action calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world’s biggest challenges, ranging from poverty and gender issues to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>).

²⁷ *Recommendations of the Gender Equality Advisory Council 2021 to the leaders of the G7*.

²⁸ See the evaluation of the gender policy for a comprehensive list of recommendations. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000115593/download/>.

²⁹ “WFP protection and accountability policy” (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2), para. 16.

15. Where appropriate, the twin-track strategy will be strengthened by applying a **gender-transformative** approach whereby an initiative, programme, policy or activity will focus on transforming unequal gender relations through interventions that challenge discriminatory gender norms, biases and stereotypes to promote shared power, control of resources, decision making and workload and support for the empowerment of all people, particularly women and girls. An analysis of the structural, political, economic, cultural and social barriers that influence an individual's access and rights to resources and services, their time use, including time spent on unpaid care work and their voice and participation in decision making will identify the key stakeholders and activities required to advance gender-transformative changes.
16. The theory of change presented in this policy (figure 1) reflects WFP's understanding of the central role of SDG 5 – "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" – in the achievement of sustainable results under SDGs 2 and 17. Further, the theory of change recognizes the influential role that socio-cultural norms play in determining how and when women, girls, men, boys and marginalized groups experience food security and improved nutrition in various contexts.



17. **Equitable access to and control over the means to achieve food security and nutrition.**

This objective recognizes the essential role of all WFP beneficiaries, including women and girls, as partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of all food security and nutrition interventions. Broadening WFP's analytical approaches to take into consideration intra-household food distribution dynamics and qualitative measurement tools will strengthen WFP's methodological approach to identifying and addressing the barriers experienced by diverse people when seeking access to and controlling the means of ensuring food security and nutrition. Specific attention will be paid to promoting time-saving and climate-resilient actions and technologies to improve livelihoods, protect biodiversity and redistribute the burden of unpaid work for women and girls. Through this objective, WFP seeks to ensure that all the diverse people with whom it works enjoy equitable access to and control over and benefit from humanitarian, development and peace interventions at all stages of the lifecycle. Actions will include:

- ensuring that food security and nutrition activities are designed, implemented and monitored through outreach to beneficiaries that are representative of all beneficiaries and are scheduled during times and in locations that facilitate the participation of all people;
- ensuring that data collection, analysis and use consider the individual food security and nutrition needs and experiences of each household member and all lifecycle stages;
- providing training and skills development to promote women's access to land, the creation of assets and the improvement of productive capacity in order to reduce the time spent on unpaid care work and build the profitability of women smallholder producer organizations;
- recognizing and responding through targeted action to the heightened food security risks experienced by women, girls and other diverse people and groups of people in environments where social cohesion is threatened, civil conflict is present, or environmental disaster has unfolded; and
- promoting gender-transformative approaches in national normative frameworks, governance structures, systems and services, as well as in national assessments and studies, through policy engagement and reform, investment in public sector capacity and provision of technical support.

Engaging men as key actors

In the State of Palestine, where nutrition activities were traditionally viewed as women's work, involving men as key actors led to improved project outcomes including heightened awareness of nutrition and gender concerns by both women and men and increased participation of women in project activities.

18. **Progress in advancing gender equality by addressing the root causes of gender inequality.**

WFP recognizes that the barriers affecting the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment are deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms, traditions, stereotypes, behaviours, conscious and unconscious biases and the intersectional dimensions of poverty and exclusion. Historically, concerns over mission creep have caused WFP, like many other organizations, to tread lightly when faced with deeply rooted normative and socio-cultural value systems. In 2021, however, it is clear that advances in food security are hampered by gender inequality and that the latter must therefore be tackled to achieve the former. Evidence of stagnating progress on

Leveraging school feeding

In Afghanistan, through working with fathers to mobilize community support for school feeding, and by linking school feeding to girls' enrollment, a 35 percent increase in girls' secondary education attendance was achieved in 2020 alone.

gender equality since the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led WFP to embrace the important role that progress towards SDG 5 will play in unlocking successful results under SDGs 2 and 17. Policy dialogue and country capacity strengthening at all levels play an important role in stimulating reflection on, and responses to, the social norms and behaviours that support or deter advances in gender equality. Working with partner governments at the national and subnational levels will be essential to ensuring strengthened capacity and enabling environments (e.g. legal, regulatory, policy and programmatic) for the promotion of gender equality. Understanding how factors intersect and interact and using that understanding to inform programme design and implementation are central to WFP's capacity to promote equitable results for all people. Dismantling the root causes of gender inequality creates the conditions necessary to respond with messaging and actions on empowering diverse women, girls, men and boys to dynamically advance gender equality at all stages of the lifecycle. Through this objective, WFP will commit to identifying the root causes of gender inequality and devising innovative approaches to dismantling the barriers that limit individuals from being recognized as beneficiaries, stakeholders and partners in their own right. This will include leveraging:

- school feeding programmes to increase girls' enrolment, attendance, learning and life skills knowledge, thereby enhancing their future livelihood opportunities while reducing harmful cultural practices such as early child and forced marriage and early pregnancy; integrating other health and nutrition dimensions within school feeding programmes such as sexual and reproductive health education can be particularly transformative;
- smallholder agriculture market support to equitably position women farmers in decision making and leadership positions at all stages of the food value chain, including access to technology, productive assets and finance;
- conflict and peace programming to ensure that women participate as equal actors in and contributors to peace dialogues and associated humanitarian and peace programming at both the local and national levels, where including gender-sensitive feedback mechanisms within humanitarian and emergency response programmes is central to providing critical support to survivors of gender-based violence;
- nutrition programmes as educational opportunities that empower men and boys to identify their roles in unpaid care work such as food purchasing, preparation and intrahousehold distribution by individual nutritional requirement; and,
- cash-based programmes to initiate dialogue regarding non-violent communication and coping strategies that mitigate gender-based violence and other harmful practices within households and societies.

19. **Economic empowerment of women and girls.** Advancing the economic empowerment of women and girls requires greater awareness of their blocked economic potential due to varying degrees of access to legal rights and documentation; limited access to productive assets, finance and technology; the burden of unpaid care work; under-representation in leadership and political spheres; and persistent gender-based violence. WFP recognizes the important role that men and boys play as partners and leaders in stimulating dialogue and providing an opportunity for women and girls to participate meaningfully and competitively as economic actors in their own right. With COVID-19 widening the global gender gap from 99.5 years in 2019 to 135.6 years in 2020,³⁰ it is more important than ever that all people have equitable access to the skills training and inclusive work environments necessary to shift from precarious and informal employment, to formal sector employment and better remunerated roles as equals with their peers. Many people, including women and girls, continue to encounter pervasive barriers to gaining access to technology, financial services and risk-related insurance.³¹ Through this objective, WFP will support equitable access to technology, including financial services, to enhance economic empowerment via programming that:

Empowering women

In Bangladesh, the enhancing food security and nutrition programme provided cash-based transfers to women in Cox's Bazaar as part of an integrated approach to poverty reduction that facilitated women's participation in livelihoods training, savings groups and dialogue with village leaders.

- explores appropriate and balanced nutrition, e.g., training to enable community support workers to collect and monitor digitized data, food value chain pricing and marketing activities;
 - builds resilience, e.g., the critical role that women and girls play in the stewardship of natural resources, in early warning systems and in recovery efforts, including with regard to water, trees, soil, crops and methods for the drying, storage and packaging of food supplies;
 - builds market-relevant skills through food for training and food for assets activities, e.g., building collateral to enable access to financial services, productive assets, budgeting and digital financial literacy;
 - introduces innovations in, e.g., the energy, telecommunications, e-commerce, banking and insurance sectors to boost the competitiveness of women's and girl's livelihoods; and
 - entrenches gender-responsive communication, advocacy and outreach within economic empowerment activities, e.g., SMS and application-based technologies relevant to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, lifecycle stage nutrient requirements, market prices, seasonal crop-related harvesting, entrepreneurship skills training, value chain participation, financial management tools and other information.
20. The three gender policy objectives are further articulated through **four priority areas: enhanced and equitable participation; strengthened leadership and decision making; enhanced protection to ensure safety, dignity and meaningful access; and transformative action on social norms and behaviour change.** These are the core components of WFPs gender mainstreaming approach across each of the policy objectives. Further, each of the four priority areas independently offers entry-points for gender-targeted and gender-transformative action. These four priorities describe how

³⁰ World Economic Forum. 2021 Global Gender Gap Report. *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. ([weforum.org](https://www.weforum.org)).

³¹ Plan International. *Bridging the gender digital divide* (website).

WFP will implement its operations at all levels and emphasize the critical ingredients for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Effective application of the four priorities will require the systematic collection, analysis and use of qualitative and quantitative data to inform programming. These priority areas are inter-connected, complementary and essential for achieving each of the three policy objectives.

- i) **Enhanced and equitable participation** – ensuring WFP interventions are designed, implemented and monitored with the equitable and meaningful participation of all people – women, girls, men, boys and marginalized groups. Equitable³² participation is based on an understanding of the structural inequality³³ and barriers that prevent some individuals from having their voices heard and promoting specific opportunities for meaningful and systematic dialogue.³⁴ WFP recognizes that in some instances, men's lack of participation in non-traditional unpaid care roles such as caregiver, cook and cleaner may be rooted in social norms defining masculinity within a particular context. Experience has shown that building trust among the people with whom WFP works, combined with effective and inclusive action, is essential to winning over leaders and their communities. This is essential for ensuring equitable participation and sustainable and safe access for people in need of assistance. WFP will therefore apply gender-transformative, participatory and inclusive methodologies to foster reflection, dialogue and change, particularly with men and boys as they play a critical role in supporting the equitable participation of women and girls in humanitarian, development and peace programming across each of the three policy objectives.
- ii) **Strengthened leadership and decision making** – ensuring that WFP interventions are designed, implemented and monitored in such a way that all people, and in particular women and girls, are able to participate and be represented in decision making and leadership activities in proportion to their numbers. WFP supports self-determination such that people have increased power to take up leadership roles and make decisions about their personal, household, community and societal food security and nutrition needs and opportunities within the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Working with diverse international, national and local partners, including men and boys, will be essential for transforming attitudes and behaviour regarding increased access to leadership and decision making opportunities for all people across each of the three policy objectives.

³² The pursuit of equity means being fair to all people regardless of sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, life experience or value systems. WFP [Gender Toolkit](#).

³³ Structural inequality is based on attributes that include, but are not limited to, sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

³⁴ Priority 2 aligns with the WFP protection and accountability policy, which references “systematic engagement with affected populations, internal and external accountability measures and inclusion ... ensuring that affected communities, especially individuals most at risk, have a role in shaping and informing humanitarian and development action, whether this is delivered or enabled by WFP through support and capacity strengthening of governments and partners. “[WFP protection and accountability policy](#)”. (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2).

- iii) **Enhanced protection to ensure safety, dignity and meaningful access** – ensuring that WFP interventions are designed, implemented and monitored in such a way that they promote the protection principles of safety, dignity, meaningful access, accountability and empowerment of all people. WFP acknowledges the structural norms and power dynamics that disempower and discriminate against women, girls and at-risk people and fuel gender-based violence as a means of power and control of one person over another, as a weapon of war in unstable environments, as an economic strategy evident through early child and forced marriage and as a negative coping mechanism in times of heightened crisis. The prevention of gender-based violence through identifying and addressing its drivers must be included across all areas of WFP interventions. WFP will work with men and boys to ensure the voices, priorities, experiences and opportunities of women, girls and at-risk people are represented in protection-related dialogue and activities at the national and subnational levels in the context of humanitarian, development and peace activities across each of the three policy objectives.
- iv) **Transformative action on social norms and behaviour change** – ensuring that WFP interventions use the findings of country-level gender analyses to inform the design of transformative actions that challenge structural inequality and restrictive social norms to stimulate behaviour changes. WFP will work with local, national and international partners to strengthen the voice, agency and leadership of its diverse beneficiaries by dismantling the barriers that affect their capacity to speak out for self-determination and to lead as individuals and equal representatives of their households, communities and societies. WFP will help establish appropriate and accessible mechanisms that enable reflection and the reframing of social norms, values and behaviours to support inclusive and equitable policy dialogue and programming regarding the roles and opportunities of all affected people as individuals in societies. Understanding how a shift in social norms and behaviour can support human capital development in all spheres can be a central driver for country capacity strengthening, political participation and economic growth and prosperity. Pursuing transformative action on social norms and behaviours is both complementary and integral to achieving each of the three policy objectives.
21. This policy recognizes that there is a need for clear and strategic gender entry points for organizational change and leadership through which country offices, regional bureaux and WFP employees around the world will be empowered to take action. This includes embracing a broader analytical framework that integrates an intersectional understanding of the multiple socio-demographic characteristics affecting people's ability to address individual and household nutrition requirements. WFP acknowledges that women, men, girls and boys are not homogenous groups³⁵ and that their needs, priorities, opportunities and experiences vary based on various biological, physical, environmental, economic, social, cultural and political factors and situations. Tools, knowledge products, human resources and training will accompany this policy's **essential enablers**, which stress the importance of collaboration, coordination and aligned commitment for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment by and through WFP. The essential enablers are:
- a) **Ensuring inclusive data collection, analysis and use**
 - b) **Consistent monitoring, reporting and evaluation of gender equality results**
 - c) **Building individual and institutional capacity to deliver gender equality results**

³⁵ Not all women, girls, men and boys can be viewed as being the same when undertaking a WFP design analysis. Grouping individuals based on their biological sex will lead to inaccurate assumptions about their needs.

- d) **Ensuring appropriate human and financial resources for gender equality and women's empowerment**
 - e) **Ensuring accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels of WFP**
 - f) **Building diverse partnerships for gender equality and women's empowerment**
 - g) **Consistent communications and advocacy to advance gender equality and women's empowerment**
22. **Ensuring inclusive data collection, analysis and use.** Where WFP plays a lead role in data collection, analysis and use it will seek to transform robust sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data into useable information and knowledge, informing strategic decision making and action that best respond to a variety of humanitarian and development needs.³⁶ Efforts to determine food security and nutrition needs at the household level must break from traditional data collection methodologies that centre on the "head of household" and focus instead on the intra-household dynamics of food security and nutrition, the what, when, how much and who with regard to the control of individual household member food consumption at each meal on each day, taking into account sex, age (considering lifecycle dimensions) and disability. Transforming disaggregated or intra-household data into programme designs and methodological approaches is a key building block for WFP in transforming gender relations and examining the impact of gender inequality on food system, food security and nutrition programming. Working with government and other partners to share disaggregated data related to food security and nutrition and building relevant capacity will be central to generating an evidence base on WFP's contribution to advancing gender equality. Meaningfully measuring transformative gender actions requires the collection, analysis and use of qualitative and quantitative data as a basis for better understanding, identifying and responding to inequality. Through this policy WFP commits to:
- the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other socio-demographic attributes where possible and as relevant and appropriate; and
 - providing technical assistance to local and national governments and partnering with academic institutions, NGOs, local women's organizations and national research institutes to collect high-quality qualitative and quantitative data and carry out assessments and analyses of gender inequality, food security and nutrition.
23. **Consistent monitoring, reporting and evaluation of gender equality results.** This policy recognizes the important role of consistent and accurate monitoring, reporting and evaluation in identifying, understanding and communicating WFPs gender equality results alongside building an evidence base of lessons learned and associated knowledge products to inform future programming. Most notably, this policy seeks to develop a gender results reporting pathway that aligns field-based results with the highest-level corporate gender objectives. Through this policy, WFP commits to:
- developing and disseminating a gender results measurement framework that maps the SMART results chain between country-level gender activities and the corporate results framework's gender indicators.
24. **Building individual and institutional capacity to deliver gender equality results.** This policy recognizes the critical importance of continued investment in capacity building and strengthening for employees, partners and beneficiaries with a focus on

³⁶ WFP strategic plan (2022–2026).

building expertise and skills in, and understanding of, gender-transformative approaches. WFP is a leader in humanitarian response operations globally. Leveraging this position to encourage other humanitarian actors and coordination bodies to strengthen gender technical capacity and associated resourcing would ensure that emergency response operations are gender-sensitive and incorporate gender-transformative actions where appropriate. Gender actions must be consistent between headquarters, regional bureaux, country offices and technical units and be grounded in and reflective of field-based realities. Through this policy, WFP commits to:

- updating the gender capacity development plan and disseminating it to employees, country offices, regional bureaux, development partners including national and local governments, NGOs and civil society organization and beneficiaries – the diverse women, men, girls and boys with whom WFP works.

25. **Ensuring appropriate human and financial resources for gender equality and women's empowerment.** WFP acknowledges that advances in gender equality occur over a longer time period than typical technical inputs and activities. The behavioural change theory behind shifting social norms and tackling deeply entrenched gender-based stereotypes, discriminatory practices and conscious and unconscious bias requires access to and commitment from a dedicated and consistent cadre of skilled gender advisers who can initiate transformative dialogue and actions and remain present while they evolve and take root. With increasing emphasis placed on the delivery of gender results by WFP partners, this policy will be guided by a realistic assessment of the human and financial requirements for effective implementation at the global, regional and country office levels. In keeping with the findings of the evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015–2020), in 2022 WFP will take steps to ensure the establishment of gender units in regional bureaux headed by P-4 or P-5 fixed-term staff members or equivalent. Through this policy, WFP commits to:

- developing and securing management support of an implementation and resourcing plan that will inform human and financial resource allocations and commitments necessary to implement this policy effectively; and
- achieving WFP's commitment to the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP) of allocating 15 percent of country programme funds to advancing corporate gender commitments.³⁷

26. **Ensuring accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels of WFP.** This policy recognizes that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is central to fulfilling WFP's mandate of saving lives and changing lives while achieving an end to global hunger. Accountability for delivering gender results is the responsibility of all WFP employees and partners in alignment with a people-centred model of delivering equitable results. Leadership and accountability for results will also be put at the forefront of the implementation of this policy by requiring that country directors, regional directors and headquarters management deliver consistent gender messages in line with this policy and are held accountable for doing so through corporate reporting processes. Through this policy, WFP commits to:

- developing and implementing a senior management accountability mechanism with annual reporting that demonstrates both a clear understanding of

³⁷ The gender resourcing plan and results measurement framework will support WFP in finalizing a gender resource tracking approach to account for financial commitments and associated results.

WFP's gender commitments, and a concerted effort to promote and report on targeted and transformative gender actions;

- developing and implementing a gender staffing, recruitment and reporting architecture to formalize gender expectations at all levels of the organization across its humanitarian, development and peace work and in response to partner requests for an enhanced field presence of technical gender advisers; and
- developing and implementing a recognition programme for country offices and individual employees that pursue innovative or proactive approaches and activities that advance concrete gender equality results.

27. **Building diverse partnerships for gender equality and women's empowerment.**

This policy recognizes the critical importance of systematic and strategic partner engagement – with the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework agencies, with bilateral, foundation and private sector donors, with national and local governments, with international and national non-government organizations and with civil society and other local organizations. Transformative gender results are only achievable if WFP engages with its partners strategically, respectfully and meaningfully on a full range of gender equality issues, including by promoting the participation of women-led organizations and organizations advancing gender equality. Central to gender mainstreaming will be the integration of gender priorities into local partnership agreements and technical programmatic areas to ensure that opportunities are identified at the design stage. The meaningful engagement of women and girls and partnerships with men and boys, both as individuals and through organizations prioritizing the rights and interests of diverse people, offers the potential to redress gender inequality and promote transformational change. Through this policy, WFP commits to:

- developing and disseminating a gender partnership guidance note that will support programmes and units in conveying WFP's gender commitments; confirming gender requirements in field-level partnership agreements based on relevant local realities; encouraging and providing incentives for a range of partnerships with local organizations; and providing a platform for dialogue on gender resourcing opportunities.

28. **Consistent communication and advocacy to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.**

This policy recognizes the critical importance of clear, concise and culturally appropriate gender communications. WFP will promote a behavioural change approach to communications, advocacy and outreach, placing an emphasis on raising awareness of, and developing strategies for, ensuring common and consistent messaging on this policy's objectives, priorities and essential enablers. Through this policy, WFP commits to:

- developing and disseminating a gender communication and advocacy plan that includes, at a minimum, standard corporate gender messaging and products, as appropriate; adaptable advocacy, outreach and engagement approaches; and, the development of knowledge products and case studies for enhancing advocacy, outreach and communication on WFP's gender success stories.

Risks

29. **Strategic risk.** Improving WFP's understanding of why and how gender equality is central to achieving greater food security and nutrition for all beneficiaries underpins this policy. Senior management at all levels, but particularly at the country level, plays a central role in reinforcing WFP's commitment to ensuring a common understanding and collaboration on gender results with all employees. A lack of organizational understanding can inadvertently perpetuate gender-based stereotypes and reinforce barriers to equitable participation, leadership and decision making and threaten personal safety and security. Mitigating against this risk will include the provision of appropriate tools and training and thereby prepare all employees to identify and respond to strategic gender opportunities as they arise.
30. **Programmatic risk.** Addressing social norms and behaviours can be highly controversial depending on context, environment and culture. First and foremost, WFP is guided by the "do no harm" principle. Behavioural change is a lengthy process that can be initiated in small, culturally appropriate, pieces, assuming that staff are well prepared to undertake gender analysis and empowered to consider innovative context-specific entry-points for gender dialogue. For example, by discussing end goals, such as achieving sufficient household nutrition, and by guiding beneficiaries in the identification and analysis of imbalances within their own households, staff can empower beneficiaries to make positive changes on their own. Where explicit gender actions are deemed controversial because they may place intended beneficiaries at greater risk, WFP officers are encouraged to engage with gender advisers in country offices, regional bureaux or the Gender Office to seek support in introducing equality, diversity and inclusion concepts.
31. **Financial risk.** The successful implementation of this policy will require dedicated human and financial resources to ensure appropriate staff capacity and programme budgets. There is extensive evidence supporting early gender analysis as a means of moderating budgetary implications and thus allowing for greater gender results with less investment as compared to programming that must be adjusted mid-course to integrate gender activities.³⁸ Essential to mitigating the financial risk of gender as an additional activity, country offices must apply the findings of their country strategic plan gender analyses to budgeting and forecasting exercises; collecting, analysing and using inclusive data sets; ensuring that sufficient gender expertise is engaged at all stages of the programming cycle; and exploring potential adjustments to existing country strategic plans and programmes in order to maximize gender results.
32. **Reputational risk.** Failure to implement the WFP gender policy (2022–2026) at the country or regional level or across technical units will affect WFP's reputation as a progressive leader in gender equality. Ensuring a full staff complement in the Gender Office, within targeted technical units and across the regional bureaux and country offices coupled with capacity building will provide WFP employees and partners with resources to support implementation of the policy.

³⁸ See the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap reports and McKinsey Global Institute's Power of Parity reports.

Implementation

33. Alignment of actions and frameworks to ensure policy coherence will be guided by the Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department. WFP will explicitly incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment into its suite of enterprise risk management tools (e.g., Executive Director assurance statement, corporate risk register, annual performance plan), to ensure accountability for policy implementation. Gender equality and women's empowerment considerations are well reflected in the strategic plan for 2022–2026 and its accompanying corporate results framework, including specific indicators for measuring management performance and accountability. The Gender Office director will provide annual progress updates to the Executive Board on the implementation of this policy.
34. This policy will be supported by an implementation and resourcing plan, a gender results measurement framework and the development of six regional gender strategies. The headquarters-based Gender Office will collaborate and coordinate closely on policy implementation via technical assistance and capacity building activities with other technical units, the regional bureaux and country offices. It is expected that this policy's effectiveness will be reviewed through an independent evaluation to be conducted between four and six years after its approval.

Gender concepts

| Concept | Definition ¹ |
|------------------------------|--|
| Diversity | Diversity refers to how various values, attitudes, cultural perspectives and beliefs intersect with sociodemographic characteristics such as sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, health, social and economic status and skills, among others. Some aspects of diversity are visible, while others are not. ² This term acknowledges that people may experience diverse priorities, needs and opportunities which affect their capacity to actively participate in or benefit from WFP interventions. |
| Empowerment | The process of building capacity through which an individual can make choices and make decisions about their own life. |
| Gender and sex | Gender refers to socially constructed roles for women and men, while sex refers to the biological differences between males and females. Gender roles are learned, changeable over time and variable within and between cultures. Gender often defines the duties, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and privileges that individuals experience in any given context. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being men and women and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. A more fulsome definition of gender considers differences in sexual orientation and gender identity beyond the binary understanding of the biological difference between males and females. |
| Gender equality | Gender equality refers to the equal exercise of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards by women, men, girls and boys. It does not mean that women, men, girls and boys are the same, but that their exercise of rights, opportunities and life chances is not governed by whether they were born female or male. |
| Gender equity | Gender equity refers to fairness to women and men, girls and boys, which may entail positive measures to redress existing imbalances and ensure equal rights and opportunities. The preferred terminology within the United Nations is gender equality, rather than gender equity. Gender equity denotes an element of interpretation of social justice, usually based on tradition, custom, religion or culture, which most often works to the detriment of women. Such use of equity in relation to the advancement of women has been determined to be unacceptable. |
| Gender mainstreaming | Gender mainstreaming refers to a strategy for achieving gender equality and is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community to realizing progress on women's and girl's rights as a subset of human rights to which the United Nations dedicates itself. It is not a goal or objective on its own. It is a strategy for achieving greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys. |
| Gender transformative | An initiative or approach (e.g., law, policy, programme, etc.) is gender transformative if it is focused on transforming (e.g., changing) unequal gender relations by challenging deeply entrenched gender norms, biases and stereotypes in order to promote shared power, control of resources and decision making and support for women's empowerment. |
| Inclusion | Inclusion refers to a needs- and rights-based approach to programming that seeks to ensure that all affected people have knowledge and agency on an equal basis, access to basic services and a voice in the design and implementation of those services. ³ |
| Protection | Protection refers to activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the intrinsic rights of all individuals in accordance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, taking into account differences in age, gender, disability and other intersectional dimensions of poverty and inequality. |

¹ The gender concepts herein were drawn from the *WFP 2019 Gender Toolkit* and the UN-Women Training Centre online *Gender Equality Glossary*.

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2018. *UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity*.

³ "WFP protection and accountability policy" (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2).

| Concept | Definition ¹ |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Targeted gender actions | Targeted gender actions are special measures that respond to needs identified through gender analysis that cannot be addressed through gender mainstreaming alone. ¹ Where a gap in gender equality clearly marginalizes a group of people in comparison to others in terms of access to or benefit from food security and nutrition assistance, targeted actions for that group will be necessary. |
| Women's empowerment | <p>Women's empowerment is the process whereby women obtain and exercise agency in their lives and have equal access with men to resources, opportunities and power. To be empowered, women must have not only capabilities and equal access to resources and opportunities that equal those of men, but also the ability to use them 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 not undermine, the possibilities for women's empowerment.</p> <p>An important element of women's empowerment is women's economic empowerment. Economic empowerment is a cornerstone of gender equality that refers to both women's ability to succeed and advance economically and to their power to make and act on economic decisions.</p> |