

# **WFP Gender Policy 2022**



**Third informal consultation**

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## 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.

This new WFP gender policy builds on WFP's many successes in bridging the gender gap in food security and nutrition. As a product of broad consultations with WFP stakeholders, the policy reflects the collective voice of WFP. WFP's ability to achieve its strategic objectives depends on its capacity to deliver food and nutrition assistance that addresses the different needs, priorities and experiences of the women, men, girls and boys with whom it works. **The goal of this policy is to ensure that gender equality is advanced and women are empowered.**

The new policy is informed by the lessons learned from the implementation and evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2015-2020). Experience has shown that the former gender policy's objectives have been internalized as the core principles guiding gender integration across WFP's programming. The new gender policy reframes and expands upon these areas, now known as the four priorities: 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 structural barriers. In setting these priorities, WFP has raised the ambition of the new policy's objectives in order to address the systemic barriers that continue to exacerbate gender inequalities in food security and nutrition. Those objectives are:

- I. Achieve equitable access to and control over food security and nutrition.**
- II. Address the root causes of gender inequalities that affect food security and nutrition.**
- III. Advance the economic empowerment of women and girls in food security and nutrition.**

WFP supports a people-centred approach. This means that WFP promotes diversity, inclusion and gender equality by seeking to respond directly to the views, preferences and priorities of affected populations. WFP will create participatory environments that empower people to shape their own lives and deliver assistance that considers their long-term aspirations while meeting their immediate needs. While emergency settings create risks that can exacerbate inequalities, the collapse of social, economic and political structures can also often create unique opportunities for change. Through this policy, WFP acknowledges that both the "do no harm" principle and advances in gender equality and women's empowerment are central to any humanitarian response.

Taking gender into account in planning and providing emergency and humanitarian assistance enables WFP to identify opportunities for transforming gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers in order to reduce inequalities. It also helps WFP to prioritize safety and dignity, avoid doing harm and facilitate access to services and assistance in line with and respectful of the choices and needs of the diverse<sup>1</sup> people with whom WFP works. This will involve working closely with international, national and local partners to identify and address barriers to ensure that no one is left behind.

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<sup>1</sup> 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, sexual orientation, gender identity, life experiences and value systems.

The operationalization of WFP's gender commitments falls along a continuum. On one end of the continuum WFP is guided by the principle of "do no harm", where WFP deploys gender-sensitive responses that prevent and mitigate potential negative impacts on affected people. On the other end, WFP supports approaches that interpret gender in terms of social relations rather than social roles and seeks to transform the underlying gender-based discriminatory practices, social norms and structural barriers – or root causes – of gender inequalities. Due to the diversity of contexts in which WFP operates, the range of gender actions along this continuum will vary by country and by activity within a country. This policy mirrors WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 by committing to aligning approaches with WFP's other cross-cutting themes, including protection and accountability to affected populations, nutrition integration and environmental sustainability. The gender policy foresees programming that leverages WFP's reach and scale of operations, is based on an understanding of local settings, is guided by gender analysis that considers the multiple sociodemographic characteristics that influence engagement and is promoted through empowered local actors.<sup>2</sup>

This gender policy is geared towards all organizational units of WFP. It 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 which WFP works. The policy's effectiveness will be reviewed through an independent evaluation conducted between four and six years after its approval. The evaluation findings will inform further implementation of, or revisions to, the gender policy.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

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## 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](#),<sup>3</sup> 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](#),<sup>4</sup> the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's commitment to "leave no one behind", the Beijing+25 outcomes and other [declarations and agreements](#).<sup>5</sup> WFP complies with the 2018 United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP 2.0).<sup>6</sup>
3. The 2019 progress report on the Agenda for Humanity, the outcome document of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, found that efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment and to prevent and end gender-based violence continued to be overlooked as operational priorities in crisis contexts. Further, where gender equality objectives had been expressly integrated into humanitarian response planning, the actions were consistently deprioritized and under-funded. While emergency settings create risks that can exacerbate inequalities, the collapse of social, economic and political structures can create unique opportunities for change. Through this policy, WFP acknowledges that advances in gender equality and women's empowerment are central to any humanitarian response. Gender mainstreamed approaches seek to engage meaningfully with and respond to the diverse needs of the beneficiaries with whom WFP works. Taking gender into account in planning and providing emergency and humanitarian assistance allows WFP to identify opportunities for transforming gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers in order to reduce inequalities while ensuring that no one is left behind.
4. The evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2015–2020) confirmed the appropriateness of its strategic approach and resulted in a number of recommendations, including that gender equality and women's empowerment be more strategically embedded within country-level policy and programming dialogues, reviews and country strategic plans; that WFP identify strategies for mobilizing consistent financial and human resources for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, such as a cadre of professional gender advisers; and that a high-level gender equality and women's empowerment steering group be established to ensure accountability for policy implementation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations. 1945. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. 2015. *Transforming our world. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

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

<sup>6</sup> UN-Women. *Promoting UN accountability*. (UN SWAP and UNCT-SWAP).

<sup>7</sup> WFP. 2020. *Evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015–2020)*.

5. The present gender policy is solidly anchored in WFP's vision and mission as reflected in its strategic plan, 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. This policy's focus on gender results in programming reflects the maturity of the policies, processes, business ownership and accountabilities that guide the organization. It is both complementary to and in alignment with WFP's protection and accountability policy, the Executive Director's circular on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and the WFP people policy, which lay out complementary commitments to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment while taking into consideration accountabilities for gender mainstreaming and the safeguarding of beneficiaries and employees, while promoting gender parity and inclusive workplaces.<sup>8</sup>
6. As the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, WFP has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to humanitarian, development and peace objectives<sup>9</sup> through gender- and conflict-sensitive programming that leverages local and strategic partnerships, builds the resilience of affected populations and proactively addresses factors that create and perpetuate gender inequality at all stages of the lifecycle.<sup>10</sup> The gender policy foresees programming that leverages WFP's reach and scale of operations, is based on an understanding of local settings, is guided by gender analysis that considers the multiple sociodemographic characteristics that influence engagement and is promoted through empowered local actors.<sup>11</sup>
7. WFP supports a people-centred approach. This means that WFP promotes diversity, inclusion and gender equality by seeking to respond directly to the views, preferences and priorities of affected populations. Humanitarian situations in particular have devastating and differential consequences for specific individuals and groups. For WFP, addressing these differential needs, priorities and experiences requires an understanding of the diverse factors affecting participation and access. Diversity considers 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, 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 create participatory environments that empower people to shape their own lives and deliver 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

#### WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025) Outcomes

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

<sup>8</sup> WFP. OED2014/020.

<sup>9</sup> 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*.

<sup>10</sup> Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (IAHE). 2021. *Review of Progress on Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) into the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus Agenda*.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

access to services and assistance in line with and respectful of the choices and needs of the diverse people with whom WFP works.<sup>12</sup> This will involve working closely with international, national and local partners to identify and address barriers to ensure that no one is left behind.

8. The intersection of malnutrition and inequality, including inequality caused by sex, age and disability among other attributes,<sup>13</sup> draws attention to the varying lifecycle nutritional requirements and highlights how food systems can indirectly manifest or perpetuate 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.<sup>14</sup> Other social norms and cultural practices that contribute to imbalanced access to and control over the means for 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; and the extensive unpaid care and domestic work burden experienced by women and girls.
9. Addressing gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers requires an understanding of the negative impacts that they have on the lives of women and girls, as well as men and boys in particular contexts. Sustainable advances in gender equality and women's empowerment are only achievable when women and men come together as agents of change to deconstruct socially defined gender norms relating to patriarchy, masculinity and femininity.<sup>15</sup> As the roles and responsibilities of men and boys are also influenced by these social norms, it is essential that they be viewed as key 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 gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers in order to promote a more equitable sharing of resources and responsibilities among all individuals, within households and in the public sphere. Men and boys should be given the opportunity to advocate gender equality by showcasing positive forms of masculinity, including the role modelling of unpaid care and domestic work, and by driving social norms and behaviour change communication within households, communities and policy spaces.
10. Like other humanitarian actors such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), WFP has observed that during times of crisis pre-existing gender inequalities can be exacerbated such that individuals experience greater discrimination in access to humanitarian and development assistance. There is abundant evidence confirming that women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises compared to men and boys. This manifests in symptoms such as reduced life expectancy, decreased incomes and livelihood opportunities, increased risks of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, and limited opportunities to participate in decision making affecting their lives. In these same scenarios, however, families often face irreversible decisions regarding the gender roles that men and boys are required to play to protect their interests as individuals, heads of

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<sup>12</sup> WFP. 2020. *WFP Protection and accountability policy*.

<sup>13</sup> In this context, "attributes" refers to the range of differences 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.

<sup>14</sup> *Inequality, Hunger, and Malnutrition: Power Matters – Issues in Focus* ([globalhungerindex.org](http://globalhungerindex.org)).

<sup>15</sup> Santos, R. F., *Challenging Patriarchy: Gender Equality and Humanitarian Principles* (2019).

households and members of particular communities. As a leader in emergency response and humanitarian assistance, recognizing the differential impacts of crises upon women and girls, men and boys enables WFP to adopt a gender-sensitive approach at the outset that responds to diverse beneficiary needs. WFP's emergency responses and humanitarian assistance seek to redress inequalities by creating the conditions for more transformative work that advances gender equality, including through partnerships with other United Nations entities, NGOs and local partners such as women- and gender-equality-centred organizations.

11. The analysis that informed the development of the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025 revealed 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 were women and girls.<sup>16</sup> With the COVID-19 pandemic this situation deteriorated drastically in 2020, with approximately 811 million people classified as chronically hungry.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> In 2020, 2 billion people – one in every four people worldwide – did not have reliable access to sufficient food that was nutritious and safe.<sup>19</sup>
12. Each year, 12 million girls – 23 every minute – get married before the age of 18.<sup>20</sup> Estimates suggest that this may increase by an additional 13 million girls as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>21</sup> According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), from 2014 to 2020, 36 percent of girls and 6 percent of boys living in least developed countries were married by the age of 18.<sup>22</sup> Early child and forced marriage affect's psychosocial, intellectual and physical development. For girls, early marriage interrupts schooling, limits 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. Globally, pregnancy and childbirth remain the leading causes of death among adolescent girls age 15–19.<sup>23</sup> For boys early marriage may also interrupt schooling, thereby limiting livelihood and career opportunities; is linked to higher HIV/AIDS rates due to decreased sexual and reproductive health knowledge; and increases negative coping strategies such as addiction and gender-based or other violence stemming from not being adequately prepared to support a household.
13. 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 in times of crisis. Unequal power structures can restrict their participation as economic actors in decision making, particularly at strategic levels related to food systems, food security and nutrition. Approximately 1 billion women are unable to gain access to formal financial products and services due to persistent

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<sup>16</sup> [Women and Hunger Facts – World Hunger Education – World Hunger News](#).

<sup>17</sup> 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*.

<sup>18</sup> *WFP strategic plan (2022-2025)* (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2).

<sup>19</sup> 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*.

<sup>20</sup> <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).

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2020. *New UNFPA projections predict calamitous impact on women's health as COVID-19 pandemic continues*.

<sup>22</sup> [Child marriage - UNICEF DATA](#).

<sup>23</sup> WHO. January 2020. *Adolescent Pregnancy Fact Sheet*. [Adolescent pregnancy \(who.int\)](#).

barriers in access to identification documents, mobile phones, digital skills and financial literacy.<sup>24</sup> This inequality limits women's and girls' access to and control of the assets and resources necessary to adapt to sociopolitical changes and to be economic actors in their own right.

14. Progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment is being eroded by the "3 Cs" – conflict, climate change and COVID-19 - which are independently or in a compounding manner exacerbating overall inequalities:
  - 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.<sup>25</sup> All crises, whether related to the pandemic, conflict or the climate crisis, have proven to affect the agricultural productivity of women disproportionately due to gender-based norms and structural barriers affecting their meaningful participation as formal or informal sector actors.<sup>26</sup> This decreased productivity directly influences the income and food security of their households because increased income for women has long been associated with improved food consumption and nutrition status of household members. Reduced access to economic resources pushes women to resort to negative coping strategies to meet their personal and household food security and nutrition needs.<sup>27</sup>
  - 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.<sup>28</sup>
  - iii) There has been an unprecedented increase in gender-based violence as a result of the isolation, lockdowns, economic and psychosocial 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".<sup>29</sup>
  - 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.<sup>30</sup>
  - 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

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<sup>24</sup> [https://btca-production-site.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/482/english\\_attachments/\\_Advancing\\_Womens\\_Digital\\_Financial\\_Inclusion\\_G20\\_GPFI.pdf?1606113263](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://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/bridging-the-gender-digital-gap/); [https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/WomensDigitalFinancialInclusioninAfrica\\_English.pdf](https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/WomensDigitalFinancialInclusioninAfrica_English.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network. 2021. *Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*.

<sup>26</sup> CARE. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition. 2020.

<sup>27</sup> WFP Gender Office. 2021. Individual data driving relevant response to COVID-19. Rome.

<sup>28</sup> MenCare. 2021. *State of the World's Fathers 2021: Structural Solutions to Achieve Equality in Care Work*.

<sup>29</sup> UN-Women. *The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19 (website)*.

<sup>30</sup> Corporate Emergency Evaluation of WFP's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Evidence Summary 7: Cross-cutting concerns.



responses; increased workloads due to the need for longer journeys to gather food, fuel and water; and social and cultural norms that deter them from learning certain survival skills such as swimming, driving and climbing. Conflict settings amplify inequalities 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. For men and boys, conflict settings increase the risk of recruitment by armed groups and heightened pressure to support their families economically, often causing boys to drop out of school.

## Objectives, priorities and essential enablers

15. This gender policy 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;<sup>31,32</sup> 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;<sup>33</sup> 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.
16. Hunger cannot be eliminated solely through the introduction of more food. Rather, the factors inhibiting a person's ability to obtain food and appropriate nutrition by sex and lifecycle stage must be taken into consideration in the design of food security and nutrition programming. The gender equality for food security (GE4FS) measure is a globally recognized instrument that explores the connection between empowerment and food security. GE4FS findings note that empowerment reduces the probability of a person experiencing food insecurity; that the effect of empowerment on food insecurity is similar for women and men; and that, on average, men are more empowered than women. These findings confirm that women, who face greater barriers to social, economic and political empowerment, are more likely to experience food insecurity than men. The GE4FS measure notes that decision making, financial self-sufficiency, reproductive freedom, freedom from violence and unpaid labour must all be addressed to reduce inequalities, including with regard to food insecurity.<sup>34</sup> As a result, WFP's new gender policy recognizes the importance of empowering beneficiaries to tackle the systemic barriers that continue to exacerbate gender inequalities in food security and nutrition.

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<sup>31</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> *Recommendations of the Gender Equality Advisory Council 2021 to the leaders of the G7*.

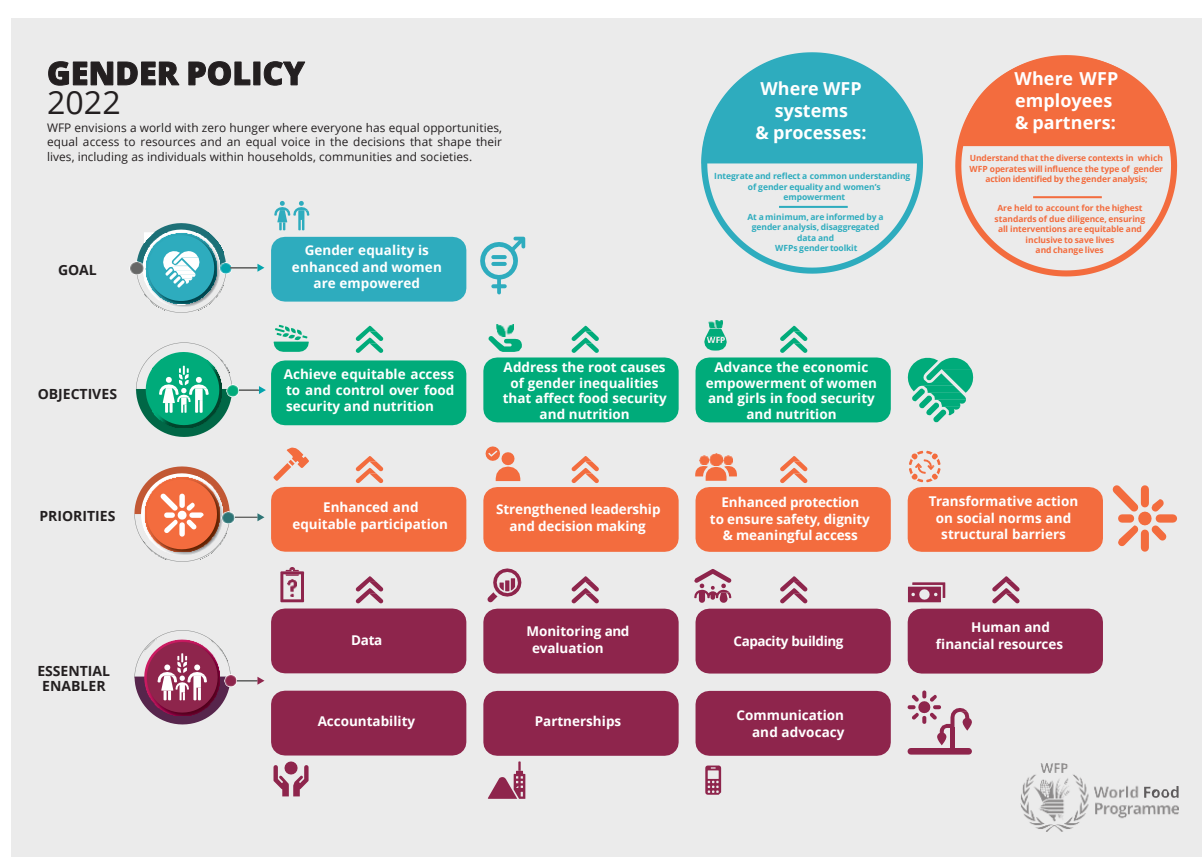
<sup>33</sup> See the evaluation of the gender policy for a comprehensive list of recommendations. ([https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document\\_download/WFP-0000115571](https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000115571)).

<sup>34</sup> WFP Gender Office. 2020. *The Power of Gender Equality for Food Security: Closing another gender data gap with a quantitative measure*. Rome

17. Essential to the implementation of this policy is the consolidation of WFP's field-based partnerships with other United Nations entities including the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA, the United Nations Population Fund and the other Rome-based agencies. Whether WFP assumes a leadership or supportive role in advancing common gender commitments will depend on the comparative advantage and presence of each entity on the ground. To ensure continuous and complementary dialogue, WFP will strengthen its involvement in the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality; the United Nations Sustainable Development Group's gender working group; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's gender reference group; the Rome-based agencies' gender working group; and others as appropriate. Furthermore, WFP will develop new and strengthen existing partnerships with gender-mandated organizations, feminist organizations and women's civil society organizations in humanitarian settings. This will include joint advocacy efforts with strategic humanitarian partners aimed at increasing the visibility of and funding for gender in the humanitarian cluster system and other such interagency humanitarian coordination bodies.
18. To accelerate WFP's progress in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, this policy will seek to overcome the systemic barriers that continue to exacerbate gender inequalities in food security and nutrition through the pursuit of three ambitious objectives:
  - I. **Achieve equitable access to and control over food security and nutrition.**
  - II. **Address the root causes of gender inequalities that affect food security and nutrition.**
  - III. **Advance the economic empowerment of women and girls in food security and nutrition.**
19. The operationalization of WFP's gender commitments falls along a continuum. On one end of the continuum WFP is guided by the principle of "do no harm", where WFP designs gender-sensitive responses that prevent and mitigate potential negative impacts on affected people. On the other end of the continuum, WFP will support approaches that interpret gender in terms of social relations rather than social roles with the goal of transforming the underlying gender-based discriminatory practices, social norms and structural barriers – or root causes – of gender inequalities. WFP will continue to invest in a **twin-track strategy**. **Gender mainstreaming** will be the underlying approach for systematically integrating gender equality considerations into all WFP policies and programmes. **Gender targeted actions** will include explicit measures that respond to the needs, capacities and interests identified through gender analysis that cannot be addressed through gender mainstreaming alone. Due to the diversity of contexts in which WFP operates, the range of gender actions along this continuum will vary by country and by activity within a country. Therefore, the sociocultural, economic and political contexts that affect WFP programme design and delivery will inform how programming, including through WFP's country strategic plans (CSPs), will support gender actions along this continuum.
20. At a minimum, activities supported by WFP programming will be informed by a gender analysis that takes into consideration the context in which the activity will be implemented; 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; and 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 it relates to gender inequality and harmful practices. At the country level, a gender analysis can help to identify the most progressive entry point along the continuum for each strategic outcome while informing the design of specific CSP activities. When country contexts change – particularly in emergency settings – the gender analysis will be consulted and possibly adjusted in order

to determine the most appropriate course of action given the new context. This will ensure that programme adjustments remain responsive to the specific needs of beneficiaries. Understanding the important role that the gender analysis plays in identifying context-specific gender entry points will underpin WFP partnerships and promote collaboration with other actors committed to addressing the root causes of gender inequalities.-

21. The theory of change presented in this policy (figure 1) reflects WFP's understanding of the integral role of Sustainable Development Goal 5 – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” – in the achievement of lasting results under Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 17. Further, the theory of change recognizes the influential role that gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers play in determining how and when women, men, girls and boys as individuals, and diverse groups of people, are able to achieve food security and improved nutrition in various contexts.



22. **Achieve equitable access to and control over 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 food security and nutrition interventions. Factors inhibiting a person's ability to obtain and control food and appropriate nutrition, by sex and lifecycle stage, must be taken into consideration in the design of food security and nutrition programming. WFP acknowledges the importance of empowering beneficiaries to tackle the systemic barriers affecting their food security. This extends to broadening WFP's monitoring approach to gain a better understanding of intra-household food distribution dynamics, including through the use of qualitative measurement tools. This richer analysis of the gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers affecting access to and control over intra-household resources will strengthen WFP's capacity to transform gender relations and shift how gender inequalities influence food systems, food security and nutrition programming. WFP will seek to remove

the barriers that individuals face when seeking access to and control over food security and nutrition. Specific attention will be paid to promoting time-saving and climate-resilient actions and technologies that improve livelihoods, protect biodiversity and redistribute the burden of unpaid work such that all of the diverse people with whom WFP works can experience improved food security and nutrition. Actions will include:

- providing unrestricted cash-based transfers through beneficiary-owned accounts (e.g. bank or mobile money accounts), particularly in the name of women, together with digital financial literacy training, which contributes to ensuring ownership of, access to and control over the resources needed to achieve food security and nutrition;
- ensuring that data collection, analysis and use consider the individual food security and nutrition needs and experiences of each household member at all stages of the lifecycle;
- providing training and skills development to promote women's access to land, creation of assets and profitability, including of women smallholder producer organizations, which will require efforts to redistribute unpaid care work among household members in order to liberate time for women to focus on improving their productive capacity;
- providing timely targeted support to women, girls and other groups of people in situations where social cohesion is threatened, civil conflict is present, or environmental disaster has unfolded, recognizing that this capacity to respond in a timely manner will depend on the relevance of the existing gender analysis; and
- transforming social norms related to gender roles and relations in food-security- and nutrition-related national normative frameworks, governance structures, systems and services, including national assessments and studies, through policy engagement and reform, investment in public sector capacity and provision of technical support.

23. **Address the root causes of gender inequalities that affect food security and nutrition.**

WFP recognizes that the barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment are deeply rooted in gender-based discrimination, social norms, traditions, stereotypes, behaviours, conscious and unconscious biases, structural barriers like unequal power relations and the intersectional dimensions of poverty and exclusion. Gender inequalities that limit the meaningful participation of women and girls in food systems decision making and economic opportunities continue to underpin food and nutrition insecurity for the diverse people with whom WFP works. Historically, concerns over mission creep have caused WFP, like many other organizations, to tread lightly when faced with deeply rooted normative and sociocultural value systems. Transforming unequal power relations between diverse groups of people is a change process that is dynamic and unpredictable. This requires the explicit engagement of multiple actors including, but not limited to, men and women programme beneficiaries as agents of change. Systematically engaging men and boys alongside women and girls is an essential pre-condition to building understanding and reaching consensus about dismantling the harmful root causes of gender inequality. Transforming unequal gender relations through interventions that challenge gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers is essential to promoting shared power, control of resources, decision making and workload. 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 progressively transform gender dynamics. Through this objective, WFP will commit to undertaking gender analyses that identify the root causes of gender inequalities that block certain 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 by providing cash or food entitlements as incentives for continued participation. This approach can be transformative for girls by enhancing their future livelihood opportunities; reducing their exposure to harmful cultural practices such as early child and forced marriage and early pregnancy; and introducing other health and nutrition education on matters such as sexual and reproductive health and care ;
- 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, while concurrently empowering men and boys to identify their roles in supporting women farmers' economic activities by among other things, redistributing unpaid care work;
- conflict and peace programming to ensure that women, girls, men and boys participate as equal actors in and contributors to peace dialogues and associated humanitarian and peace programming at the local and national levels. Integral to this is the inclusion of a gender--sensitive feedback mechanism within humanitarian and emergency response programmes that ensures that beneficiaries have a voice while concurrently offering critical support to survivors of gender-based violence;
- support for national social protection programmes and systems that integrate actions intended to challenge prevailing social norms and transform gender relations so that women, girls and other specific groups are able to meaningfully participate in household financial decision making;
- cash-based programmes that deliberately target women with services beyond the entitlement itself to increase women's influence over decision making within and outside the household, including with regard to obtaining an accepted form of national identification card with which to secure other basic services, vote and participate in society; a bank or mobile money account that establishes a credit history and includes access to formal financial services and products; and technology and connectivity for access to information and knowledge. These actions support the empowerment of women as economic actors in their communities.

24. **Advance the economic empowerment of women and girls in food security and nutrition.** Advancing the economic empowerment of women and girls requires knowledge and understanding of the barriers affecting their social, economic and political empowerment at all levels, e.g., access to legal rights and documentation, 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 supporting women and girls in participating competitively as economic actors in their own right. COVID-19 increased the time required to close the global gender gap from 99.5 years in 2019 to 135.6 years in 2020.<sup>35</sup> This makes it more important to ensure equitable access to skills training and dynamic work environments that support a shift from precarious and informal employment to more stable and formal employment for women and girls. Creating the conditions for women and girls to compete for livelihood opportunities as equals alongside men and boys is essential to elevating their economic empowerment and accelerating the achievement of food security and nutrition for their households. Through improved knowledge of the local

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<sup>35</sup> World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*.

contexts in which WFP works, gender analyses and other targeted actions will seek to position women and girls as social, economic and political actors in their own right. Actions will include programming that:

- explores livelihood opportunities where women engage in and control the delivery of appropriate and balanced nutrition, e.g. by training to enable community support workers to collect and monitor digitized data and women farmers to influence food value chain pricing, food production and marketing activities;
- supports women and girls in driving the resilience agenda, e.g. by recognizing the critical role that women, girls and women's cooperatives and other associations play in the stewardship of natural resources, in early warning systems and in recovery efforts regarding water, trees, soil and crop, mitigation measures and methods for the drying, storage and packaging of food supplies;
- builds market-relevant skills through food assistance for assets, food assistance for training and other livelihood activities, e.g. by strengthening WFP's work in building women's digital financial inclusion through enhanced access to collateral, productive assets and financial literacy and services;
- introduces innovation to bolster livelihoods and competitiveness, e.g. by increasing access to and use of renewable energy, telecommunications, e-commerce (including informal e-commerce) and financial and insurance products; and
- entrenches gender-responsive communication, advocacy and outreach within economic empowerment activities, e.g. through 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.

25. 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 structural barriers.** These are the core components of WFP's gender mainstreaming approach across each of the policy objectives. Furthermore, the priority areas independently offer entry points for gender-targeted actions and measures intended to transform gender relations. A gender analysis undertaken for a specific CSP activity might identify one of the priority areas as a deficit area worthy of greater focus by WFP. Where participation by a particular group is lacking, WFP may adopt targeted actions to encourage meaningful participation by the excluded group. Where individuals or groups of individuals are not involved in decision making or represented in leadership roles relevant to an activity, WFP will design a targeted action to address the need. Likewise where individuals face barriers due to safety, dignity, meaningful participation, social norms or gender-based discrimination, a gender analysis would help WFP to define and develop targeted actions to address the situation. These four priorities thus describe the core components of how WFP will integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into and across its operations at all levels. Monitoring the effective application of the four priorities will require the systematic collection, analysis and use of qualitative and quantitative data at the country level. These priority areas are interconnected, complementary and essential for achieving each of the three policy objectives.

- i) **Enhanced and equitable participation** – ensuring that WFP interventions are designed, implemented and monitored with the equitable and meaningful

participation of all people, in particular women and girls. Equitable<sup>36</sup> participation is based on an understanding of the attributes<sup>37</sup> and structural barriers that prevent some individuals from having their voices heard and meaningfully engaging in dialogue, with far-reaching implications.<sup>38</sup> In this context, participation goes beyond the numbers to exploring the impact that enhanced and equitable participation has on the lives of programme beneficiaries. 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. Working with men and boys alongside women and girls is essential for ensuring equitable participation and sustainable and safe access of all people to WFP's assistance. WFP will apply participatory and inclusive methodologies to foster reflection, dialogue and change, particularly with men and boys since 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 system, food security and nutrition needs and experiences. Working with diverse international, national and local partners, including men and boys, will be essential for transforming attitudes and behaviours that promote opportunities for women, girls and other groups to assume leadership and decision making roles in humanitarian, development and peace contexts across each of the three policy objectives.
- 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 that structural norms and power dynamics disempower and discriminate against diverse 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. Complementary to, and in alignment with, WFP's protection and accountability policy, preventing and mitigating gender-based violence through identifying and addressing the structural or contextual drivers remains at the forefront of WFP's work. WFP will partner with men and boys to ensure the voices, priorities, experiences and opportunities of women, girls and other affected populations are represented in protection-related dialogue and activities at the national and subnational levels in the

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<sup>36</sup> 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](#).

<sup>37</sup> In this context the term "attributes" includes, but is not limited to, sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

<sup>38</sup> 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).



context of humanitarian, development and peace activities across each of the three policy objectives.

- iv) **Transformative action on social norms and structural barriers** – ensuring that WFP interventions use the findings of country-level gender analyses to inform the design of transformative approaches that challenge gender-based discrimination, norms and structural barriers and stimulate behaviour changes. WFP will work with local, national and international partners to strengthen the voices, 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 inclusive approaches that enable reflection and the reframing of social norms, values and behaviours to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. Pursuing transformative action on social norms and structural barriers is integral to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of humanitarian, development and peace activities across each of the three policy objectives.
26. 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 can be empowered to deliver gender results. This includes ensuring a common understanding of the multiple sociodemographic characteristics affecting people’s ability to address individual and household food security and nutrition requirements. WFP acknowledges that women, men, girls and boys are not homogenous groups<sup>39</sup> and that their needs, priorities, opportunities and experiences vary based on biological, physical, environmental, economic, social, cultural and political factors and contexts. Tools, knowledge products, human resources and training are among this policy’s **essential enablers**, which stress the importance of collaboration, coordination and aligned commitment to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. The essential enablers are:
- i) **Ensuring participatory quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis and use.**
  - ii) **Consistent monitoring, reporting and evaluation of gender equality results.**
  - iii) **Building individual and institutional capacity to deliver gender equality results.**
  - iv) **Ensuring appropriate human and financial resources for gender equality and women’s empowerment.**
  - v) **Ensuring accountability for gender equality and women’s empowerment at all levels of WFP.**
  - vi) **Building diverse partnerships for gender equality and women’s empowerment.**
  - vii) **Consistent communications and advocacy to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.**

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<sup>39</sup> 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.



27. **Ensuring participatory quantitative and qualitative 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 that informs strategic humanitarian, development and peace activities.<sup>40</sup> Where WFP relies on data collected by other partners such as UNHCR, UNICEF, NGOs or national governments, WFP will leverage its support to enhance the collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data. 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. Further, interviewing only heads of households silences the voices of women and undervalues the knowledge and experience they bring to programme design and implementation. Translating disaggregated and intra-household data into programme designs and methodological approaches is a key building block for WFP in working to transform gender relations and examine the impact of gender inequality on food systems, food security and nutrition programming. Meaningfully measuring actions intended to transform gender relations requires the collection, analysis and use of qualitative and quantitative data as a basis for better understanding, identifying and responding to inequalities. Through this policy WFP commits to:
- the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other sociodemographic attributes where possible and as relevant and appropriate; and
  - providing technical assistance to local and national governments and partnering with academic institutions, local women’s organizations, national research institutes and NGOs to collect high-quality qualitative and quantitative data and carry out assessments and analyses of gender inequality, food security and nutrition.
28. **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 and communicating WFP’s gender equality results while generating an evidence base of lessons learned and associated knowledge products to inform future programming. Through this policy, WFP acknowledges the need for a balanced approach to monitoring interventions that captures both the quantitative and qualitative realities of diverse beneficiaries. Partnering within and across WFP at all levels alongside innovative partnerships in the field will enable the testing of appropriate qualitative analytical monitoring and reporting approaches. Most notably, this policy seeks to develop a gender results pathway that will align field-based results with high-level corporate gender indicators. Through this policy, WFP commits to:
- developing and disseminating a gender results pathway that maps a SMART<sup>41</sup> results chain between country-level gender activities and the corporate result framework’s gender indicators.
29. **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. However, training activities must focus on building the skills necessary to initiate actions intended to transform gender relations and power constructs and generate more inclusive, equitable and sustainable results. WFP is a leader in humanitarian response operations globally. Leveraging this

<sup>40</sup> *WFP strategic plan (2022-2025)* (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2).

<sup>41</sup> SMART refers to objectives or goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

position to partner with other humanitarian actors and coordination bodies to strengthen gender technical capacity and associated resourcing will ensure that emergency response operations are gender-sensitive and explore the dismantling of root causes that hinder advances in gender equality. Gender actions must be driven by field-based realities and be consistent between headquarters, technical units, regional bureaux and country offices. 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, civil society organizations and beneficiaries – the diverse women, men, girls and boys with whom WFP works.
30. For the purpose of ensuring clarity, the resource-related essential enabler will be divided between human and financial resources. **Ensuring appropriate human resources for gender equality and women’s empowerment.** In keeping with the findings of the evaluation of the Gender Policy (2015–2020), in 2022 WFP will take steps to operationalize recommendation 6 of that evaluation, which states: “WFP should invest in dedicated, professional gender advisors at headquarters and regional bureaux and build a cadre of experienced gender advisors to work in its country offices.” This recommendation is rooted in the comparative advantage offered by the United Nations system in efforts to initiate dialogue and promote actions that transform the social norms that continue to disadvantage and silence certain individuals, such as women and girls, and other diverse groups of people. The behavioural change theory behind shifting deeply entrenched gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers in addition to conscious and unconscious bias requires access to and commitment from a specialized, dedicated and consistent cadre of skilled professionals. Ensuring sufficient representation of staff with specialized training in gender equality, women’s empowerment and behavioural change approaches is essential for achieving WFP’s gender commitments. Specialized gender advisers can support WFP in leading on transformative dialogue and actions with partners to redress gender inequalities in a sustainable manner. To that end, WFP regional bureaux and country offices will be expected to increase their complement of long-term and full-time employees with expertise in gender equality and women’s empowerment.<sup>42</sup> Complementary to this, in emergency and humanitarian settings WFP recognizes the essential role that women gender advisers - local and international - play in facilitating participatory outreach and meaningful dialogue with diverse beneficiaries including women and girls. In addition, as an equal opportunity employer WFP recognizes its unique opportunity to advance equitable and inclusive human resource practices across multiple and diverse field offices. In alignment with WFP’s people policy, and where the individual safety of employees is not compromised, WFP will promote equitable and inclusive employment opportunities at all levels.
31. **Ensuring appropriate financial resources for gender equality and women’s empowerment.** WFP acknowledges that advances in gender equality occur over a longer time period than advances in other more focused technical areas and activities. As a result, this policy seeks to examine certain assumptions regarding the resources required to achieve gender equality results through humanitarian, development and peace work. A 2020 inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls found that while funding requests for gender equality positions and gender programming was on the rise, only 39 percent of the funding requested for projects targeting women and girls were received, compared to 69 percent for other types of projects. With increasing emphasis placed on the delivery of gender results by WFP partners,

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<sup>42</sup> This will be further developed in the policy’s implementation and resourcing plan.

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.

32. To ensure appropriate human and financial resources for gender equality and women's empowerment through this policy, WFP commits to:

- developing and securing management support for an implementation and resourcing plan that will inform human and financial resource allocations and commitments necessary to implement this policy effectively;
- developing and implementing a gender staffing, recruitment and reporting architecture that clarifies the technical resource requirements and accountability mechanisms for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across all levels of WFP, in alignment with workforce planning exercises;
- achieving WFP's commitment to exceed the requirements for the resource allocation performance indicator of the UN SWAP (indicator 9).<sup>43</sup>

33. **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. In keeping with the findings from the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of gender in the humanitarian, development and peace nexus,<sup>44</sup> advancing gender results sustainably cannot be ensured without a highly visible and institutionalized leadership and accountability approach to gender results. This will feature at the forefront of this policy's implementation by requiring that country directors, regional directors and headquarters management deliver consistent and aligned corporate gender messages, report on gender results (along the gender results pathway to be developed) and are held accountable for doing so through corporate reporting processes. Through this policy, WFP commits to:

- ensuring oversight and senior management accountability for policy implementation through the WFP gender equality and women's empowerment steering group;
- 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.

34. **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 intentionally integrating women-led organizations and organizations advancing gender equality in design processes, advisory roles and management structures. Policy dialogue and country capacity strengthening at all levels is essential for stimulating reflection on, and responses to, the social norms and structural barriers that support or deter advances in gender equality. Working with

<sup>43</sup> UN-Women. *Promoting UN accountability. (UN SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)*.

<sup>44</sup> IAHE. 2021. *Review of Progress on Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) into the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus Agenda*.

partner governments at the national and subnational levels, alongside local partners, is a means to ensuring strengthened capacity and enabling environments (e.g. legal, regulatory, policy and programmatic) for the promotion of gender equality. Of equal importance is intensifying field-level collaboration with other United Nations entities focused on delivering gender-responsive programming that challenge the root causes of inequalities, particularly in humanitarian and emergency responses.<sup>45</sup> Central to gender mainstreaming will be the integration of gender priorities into local partnership agreements and technical programmatic areas to ensure that opportunities for non-traditional partnerships are identified early. The meaningful engagement of women and girls and partnerships with men and boys, both as individuals and through local organizations prioritizing the rights and interests of diverse people, offers the potential to redress gender inequalities and promote transformative 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; establishing a mechanism for assessing the capacities of NGOs and civil society organizations, including local women-led and women-centred organizations, as potential field-based delivery partners; 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.

35. **Consistent communications 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 to internal and external audiences. 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 enhanced advocacy, outreach and communication on WFP's gender success stories.

## Risks

36. **Strategic risk.** Underpinning this policy is the need to improve WFP's understanding of why and how gender equality is central to achieving greater food security and nutrition for all beneficiaries in all programming contexts. Senior management at all levels, but particularly at the country level, play 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, reinforce barriers to equitable participation, leadership and decision making and threaten personal safety and security. Steps to mitigate this risk will include the provision of appropriate tools and training to empower all employees to identify and respond to strategic gender opportunities as they arise.
37. **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

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<sup>45</sup> Increased partnerships to advance gender equality with UNHCR, OCHA, UNICEF, UNFPA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and others including the World Bank, have extended the reach and impact of school feeding programmes by transforming the lives of boys and girls.

“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 a robust 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, employees 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.

38. **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.<sup>46</sup> 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 programme cycle; and exploring potential adjustments to existing country strategic plans and programmes in order to maximize gender results.
39. **Reputational risk.** Failure to implement the WFP gender policy 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 the effective implementation of the policy.

## Implementation

40. 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 2022–2025 and its accompanying corporate results framework, including specific indicators for measuring management performance. The Gender Office director will provide annual progress updates to the Executive Board on the implementation of this policy.
41. This policy will be supported by an implementation and resourcing plan, a gender results measurement framework and revisions to the 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. The evaluation findings will inform further implementation of, or revisions to, the gender policy.

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<sup>46</sup> See the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap reports and McKinsey Global Institute’s Power of Parity reports.

## Gender concepts<sup>1</sup>

Concept	Definition <sup>2</sup>
Agency	The capacity of an individual, or a group, to make choices and to act on the choices made.
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. <sup>3</sup> 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 girls' 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	A gender transformative approach focuses 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, decision making and support for women's empowerment. Integral to a gender transformative approach is moving beyond the individual to address the root causes that perpetuate gender inequality, which include unequal power relations, gender-based discrimination, social norms and structural barriers, as well as policies and practices.

<sup>1</sup> These gender concepts are subject to change based on the planned review of the WFP Gender Toolkit.

<sup>2</sup> The gender concepts herein were drawn from the *WFP 2019 Gender Toolkit* and the UN-Women Training Centre online [Gender Equality Glossary](#).

<sup>3</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2018. *UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity*.

Concept	Definition <sup>2</sup>
<b>Inclusion</b>	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. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Protection</b>	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.
<b>Targeted gender actions</b>	Targeted gender actions are explicit measures that respond to needs identified through gender analysis that cannot be addressed through gender mainstreaming alone. <sup>1</sup> Where a gap in gender equality clearly marginalizes an individual or 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 individual or group will be necessary.
<b>Women's empowerment</b>	<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>

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<sup>4</sup> *WFP protection and accountability policy* (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2).

**Acronyms**

CSP	country strategic plan
GE4FS	gender equality for food security
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment