
Global Gender Meeting and Workshop

1-3 December, 2009, Cairo, Egypt



“Senior managers will provide leadership and have primary responsibility for implementing this gender policy...WFP will harness the extensive experience of its Gender Focal Points by transforming them into a gender advocacy network.”

--WFP Gender Policy 2009

Over 80 WFP Gender Focal Points from 70 field offices and headquarters gathered in Cairo December 1-3, 2009 for a three day workshop to transform WFP’s Gender Focal Point system into the Gender Advocacy Network (GAN) as part of the new strategy outlined in the 2009 Gender Policy and 2010-2011 Corporate Action Plan. Participants discussed gender advocacy strategies, shared information on best practices, challenges, opportunities and developments in the agency’s gender work, and launched the GAN. The workshop was also the occasion to recognize and celebrate participants’ achievements to date in promoting gender equality and empowering WFP women beneficiaries.

In their revised role, Gender Advocates are responsible for raising awareness of the importance of gender equality to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security. Their tasks include mobilizing the support of both men and women in challenging the status quo in gender relations and recruiting other advocates who will also work to bring the voices of marginalized women and men into WFP operations. Gender Advocates will also provide information, coaching, and support to other WFP staff and partners.

“WFP is moving accountability from Gender Focal Points only to all actors: gender mainstreaming is everyone’s responsibility.”

--Isatou Jallow, Chief of WFP’s Gender Service

Each day of the workshop was dedicated to a set of discussions on a different aspect of gender advocacy. After each discussion, participants engaged in group exercises and were given the space to share experiences.



Over 80 WFP Gender Advocates gathered in Cairo to launch the Gender Advocacy Network (GAN)

The workshop is the starting point for the GAN, which will expand in size and in its ability to push for gender mainstreaming. Through frequent communication and meetings, members will continue to share best practices and strategies to advocate for gender equality and gender mainstreaming within WFP operations and actively connect new members, both inside and outside the organisation.

Day 1: G is for GENDER

The meeting was opened by Isatou Jallow, Chief of WFP's Gender Service, who commended the participants for their dedication and successes in promoting gender equality over the past decades, often under difficult circumstances and with limited resources. She then provided an overview of the objectives of the meeting and of the role and responsibilities of the proposed Gender Advocacy Network.

Did you know?

An ice breaker game titled “*Did you know?*” was played throughout the workshop. Participants were asked to write down an accomplishment in their gender work. At regular intervals throughout the three days, an accomplishment was selected and read out to the group, helping participants to become better acquainted with each other's work.

“Did you know that Dara Darbandi was responsible for the implementation of the gender policy in Iran in 2004? This project was selected as one of the best practices in WFP in 2005.”

The day was then dedicated to refreshing participants' knowledge of gender concepts and analysis. A plenary group discussion provided an overview of the history of gender work and advocacy at WFP, and stressed the importance of maintaining continuity in gender mainstreaming in WFP programmes while implementing new programming priorities. WFP Consultant and Workshop Facilitator Marcia Greenberg directed the discussion, emphasizing the importance of collecting sex-

disaggregated data and reiterating the fact that gender analysis is a three step process- Observation, Analysis and Problem-Solving through Innovation, which one should carry out through the lenses of the four Rs – Roles, Responsibilities, Relations and Respect.

Participants then engaged in several practical exercises in which they mapped gendered relationships in their work environment and analyzed situations in WFP operations from a gender perspective. This exercise was designed to improve their ability to observe, analyze and innovate using the methods discussed earlier. It also provided an opportunity for them to share their individual experiences, insights and perspectives.



Workshop participants engage in group exercise

Another exercise carried out in small groups involved analyzing three hypothetical situations Gender Advocates could encounter within the context of WFP operations. Participants were asked to analyze the situation from a gender perspective and offer innovative solutions. This exercise provided a valuable opportunity for participants to draw from their past experiences and apply their knowledge in new ways.



WFP Consultant Marcia Greenberg in Front of the Gender Milestones Timeline

To close the day, a timeline of gender milestones in WFP and the UN was unveiled starting with the Third UN Conference for Women in Nairobi in 1985, to the launch of the GAN. Participants were invited to add their own personal achievements and milestones onto the timeline.

Day 2: 'A' is for ADVOCACY

The second day focused on exercises and discussions aimed at improving the effectiveness and sustainability of participants' gender advocacy strategies as well as their advocacy planning and implementation skills.

The discussions concentrated on advocacy opportunities within the context of WFP operations and touched upon sensitizing management, educating beneficiaries and partners, and rallying allies in a variety of contexts including other UN agencies, NGOs, local governments, community groups, religious leaders, and others. The importance was underlined.

What is Advocacy?

- Advocacy is a political process that involves the coordinated efforts of people to change existing practices, ideas and distributions of power and resources that may exclude women and other disadvantaged groups.
- Advocacy deals with specific aspects of policy-making, as well as values and behaviour that perpetuate exclusion and subordination.
- Advocacy is about changing specific decisions affecting people's lives and changing the way decision-making happens, e.g. developing it into a more inclusive and democratic process.

Ms. Greenberg explained that advocating means to reach out and explain a point of view. For an advocacy strategy to be successful and sustainable, the targeted audience should choose, and not feel obligated, to accept the advocate's point of view. She also highlighted the importance of designing solutions that are both innovative and adapted to the local context, of rallying allies, and of being patient as results may not be instantaneous.

Using advocacy to involve men in gender mainstreaming was one of the main topics of the day. Presenters stressed that while the primary aim of many WFP gender mainstreaming programmes is to empower women beneficiaries, it is essential to enlist the support of men and give them the same level of information in order to ensure sustainable interventions. To be effective, program and project design should take the needs and priorities of both genders into consideration and benefit them equally. Enlisting men's support also decreases the chance of any backlash in response to women beneficiaries' empowerment. The goal of gender mainstreaming in the context of WFP's work is not to change the power balance but to achieve food security.



One of the teams practices its skit

Participants then engaged in a two-part exercise, the first consisting in forming short advocacy scenarios derived from a set of words and the second in creating a skit based on these scenarios. The skits included advocacy scenarios about putting an end to female genital mutilation in a particular country, enabling women to receive rations at a distribution site, raising awareness of the Gender Advocacy Network in a country office, and raising funds from development partners.

For the last exercise of the day, participants were given a set of scenarios describing challenging situations that could potentially be resolved through advocacy. They were asked to analyze the situation, identify partners and obstacles and suggest the best course of action in their view.

Day 3: ‘N’ is for NETWORK

Following a review of the previous two days’ sessions, participants began a discussion on the role the Gender Advocacy Network would play in gender mainstreaming at WFP, including expected results and what success would mean for the network.

The draft terms of reference (TORs) for the GAN and for individual Gender Advocates were presented, outlining that the network would focus on improving partnerships through enhanced communication and collaboration, and emphasising the importance of respect between women and men to prevent violence, combat hunger, and to promote household and community food security. The TORs stated that the success of the GAN relies on three elements: (1) members (the Advocates) who are committed to gender mainstreaming as a means of strengthening WFP’s mission, and promoting gender equality, (2) linking and supporting Advocates to enhance capabilities and results, and (3) sharing information and experiences on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in addressing food and nutrition challenges.

The TORs also stated that the Gender unit in HQ would lend its support to all of the GAN’s activities, including providing its members with technical support and other mechanisms to enhance analysis and advocacy, coordinating a network listserve, collecting and disseminating best practices, and monitoring the accomplishments of the GAN.

Presenter Kofi Owusu-Tieku, Senior RBM officer in HQ, then emphasized the importance of measuring results. Indicators are a yardstick for measuring results against realistic targets. They allow one to review progress and adapt interventions for better results. He also highlighted the importance of a positive, energetic and result-driven outlook, and of being alert to opportunities.

Regional Director Daly Belgasmy delivered an inspirational closing speech right before the launch ceremony of the network. He said that being a Gender Advocate went beyond one’s work and was part of a person’s everyday life. He mentioned that the dedication and passion of the Gender Focal Points had led to some amazing results, such as the creation of the highly successful school feeding programme in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Finally, the GAN was officially launched by the chief of the Gender service, with pledges of commitment from the participants.

In their own words: Gender Advocates on the key to success

“Be sensitive to the context... include elements of passion, commitment and possibility.”
- Sultan Mehmood, Pakistan

“To become a successful Gender Advocate one must have strong attributes- advocacy, support and knowledge brokering, and know how to communicate these attributes.”
--Kofi Owusu-Tieku, HQ

“The key is to believe you can make a difference.”
--Baicon Macaraya, Philippines



On y va ensemble!
(We’re all in this together!)
Kadidia Sako, Gender Advocate, Bamako

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