



Promoting gender equality through cash

Existing gender inequalities mean that crises affect women, men, girls and boys differently.

Cash is a tool that is increasingly used to empower people to meet their essential needs in local markets. Understanding the relationship between gender and cash-based assistance in humanitarian crisis contexts will help WFP support gender equality and women's empowerment through cash programming; and avoid causing harm and entrenching gender inequalities.

As WFP is delivering an ever-increasing portion of its assistance in cash-based transfers every year – US\$1.7 billion in 2018 (35 percent of its total portfolio) – it is making deliberate efforts to:

- Encourage Country Offices to integrate gender within a rigorous **programme design** phase; and
- **Gather evidence** of how integrated programming using cash-based transfers can achieve gender outcomes.

WHAT WE KNOW

Our evidence indicates that cash can contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment if context-specific gender dimensions of cash are included in the programme design. Context, purpose, duration, amount, conditionality and complementary activities are some of the factors that influence whether cash-based transfers contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Findings from a 2018 WFP [multi-country study](#) (Bangladesh, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, Mali and Rwanda) on the potential of cash-based initiatives to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment indicate that cash can lead to equitable and empowering impacts for women and men, girls and boys, and that gender equality outcomes can positively influence food security and nutrition outcomes.

The multi-country study documented examples where cash programming had the following impacts (i) reducing or preventing violence; (ii) strengthening decision-making, autonomy and mobility; (iii) increasing skills and knowledge; (iv) improving livelihoods and income earning capacities; (v) reducing social exclusion and increasing social capital; and (vi) promoting women's leadership.

HOW CAN A PROGRAMME THAT USES CASH SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY?

At a minimum, interventions using cash can be designed and implemented for equitable outcomes – where women and men fairly benefit from the positive changes brought about by initiative that uses CBT assistance. While cash transfers in themselves cannot enhance incomes and capabilities; or address inequities and inequalities, they can help achieve these outcomes, if they include activities and services that address the multiple dimensions of inequality and disempowerment. Integrated programmes include, for example, capacity strengthening, social and behaviour change communication, access to services (e.g. financial, health) and investments in women's social capital, leadership and livelihoods.

A programme using cash must involve undertaking comprehensive analyses and consultation on gender and related issues of protection that inform the design; as well as gender-responsive monitoring, with tracking towards equitable and empowering changes.

MITIGATING SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

WFP is well-placed to leverage its partnerships with financial service providers (FSPs) to help ensure that services are increasingly designed to effectively serve vulnerable people, while also protecting them from risks of abuse and power by FSPs who might not be adhering to humanitarian principles.

Understanding the varied financial needs and capabilities of beneficiaries, financial literacy, protection of beneficiaries both in terms of data protection and privacy, clear communication on cash delivery mechanisms and the cash-out process, and promotion of beneficiary rights are requisite and integral elements of programme design, along with due diligence and contracting of financial service providers.

WFP and UNHCR are implementing a joint project to identify and mitigate risk of abuse of power by private sector service providers in the delivery of cash assistance to vulnerable populations. This includes influencing positive practice on behalf of FSPs (trainings, feedback mechanisms, reward and punitive practices) and humanitarian agencies, focusing on improved beneficiary sensitization and communication, providing programme guidance and tools, and working with national regulators on the normative framework.