WHY ‘LEARNING BY DOING’

Confucius: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

‘Learning by doing’ is included as an action in the Gender Transformation Programme because it is an effective means through which WFP staff can:
- acquire new knowledge about gender;
- apply the knowledge to their current work;
- experiment and adapt tools and approaches for integrating gender in their areas of responsibility; and
- learn from, and be supported by, colleagues.

It is important to remember that ‘learning by doing’ is one means of broadening knowledge and skills that should be used along with other capacity development modalities, such as e-courses, brown bag sessions, Gender Community discussions, reading journals, mentoring and in-person workshops.

WHO

‘Learning by doing’ initiatives can be developed for any WFP staff member or group of staff.

For the Gender Transformation Programme, the target group are staff with decision-making and management responsibilities, whether relating to programmes, operations or organisational matters (e.g. HR).

Led by an office’s GTP Core Team, or designated member, a participatory and inclusive process should be followed when developing a ‘learning by doing’ programme. This means ensuring that all participating staff members understand what is involved and contribute to defining the content and process (schedule, facilitation, homework etc.).

Participating in a ‘learning by doing’ programme should be registered as an official learning activity in staff performance / work plans.

WHAT

‘Learning by doing’ involves acquiring new knowledge and skills through:
- a) thinking about and discussing information and ideas about a particular subject directly related to daily work;
- b) undertaking actions (doing something) to apply the ideas;
- c) making observations and reflecting on the results; and
- d) integrating the new learning into work practices.

‘Learning by doing’ requires staff to (a) be open to new ideas and ways of doing things, and (b) allocate time to meet on a regular basis and reflect.

Rather than passive recipients, staff have the opportunity to test out different approaches to mainstreaming gender in their work; identifying the most useful ways of creating the foundation and processes for gender transformative results in food security and nutrition.

The ‘learning by doing’ benchmark in the Gender Transformation Programme is a type of “action learning” and “appreciative inquiry”; inquiring, acting, reflecting, learning.
‘Learning by doing’ programmes can be created at any point and for any length of time.

As staff need time to put ideas into practice and then reflect on what they learn, a ‘learning by doing’ programme should be of at least three months duration, up to six months (or longer if commitment and resources allow).

The group learning sessions – for reflecting on actions taken and receiving new information – can be held every two or three weeks; or four weeks, depending on the learning actions.

### HOW

1. Designate one or more staff members to coordinate the ‘learning by doing’ programme.
2. List the staff who will participate in the ‘learning by doing’ programme.
3. Identify – such as through a short survey or in a meeting – the gender-related learning needs and interests of staff.
4. Together, define the overarching goal of the ‘learning by doing’ programme. The goal will depend on the answers to (1) and (2).
   
   For example: “staff have a sound understanding of how gender quality is integral to WFP’s mandate and how that translates to their own work and responsibilities.”
5. Create a schedule – the programme – with includes (a) group discussions that involve reflection on actions taken and on one topic of interest; and (b) learning actions.
6. Identify facilitators for each review / reflection session.
7. At the first session:
   - ensure that all participants understand the purpose of the ‘learning by doing’ programme and what is involved;
   - establish the ground rules for participation, which might include respecting confidentiality; being open, honest and non-judgemental; willingness to learn, to listen and to contribute; experimenting with new ways of doing things; and having fun;
   - remind staff to include participation in the ‘learning by doing’ programme in their performance plan (e.g., PACE document; and
   - remind staff of the e-folder where all documents relating to the ‘learning by doing’ programme are saved and accessible to participants.
8. At the last session, obtain feedback from staff:
   - What was useful about the programme? What wasn’t useful?
   - What did they like about the programme? What didn’t they like?
   - How could the ‘learning by doing’ approach to strengthen gender-related knowledge and skills be improved? Content? Process?