rural women’s organisations and improving their agricultural production and governance through the FAO-Cooperative (Promoting Governance and Gender Equality in Producer Organisation in Niger) approach, the “Purchase from Africans for Africa” and WFP’s “Cash and Voucher” (providing voucher / cash to schools to buy locally produced products for their school canteen) programmes. IFAD works with WFP and FAO to reduce rural women’s work burden and enhances their resilience capacities through the provision of livestock kits. UN Women improves rural women’s entrepreneurial capacities and creates income-generating opportunities through the provision of multifunctional platforms. Synergies, complementarities and innovations allow to support women’s empowerment.

**Rewarding good school performance amongst girls as a disincentive to girls withdrawal from school**

As a part of complementary activities of the school meal programme, WFP provides small livestock to the female pupils from very poor households that have good school performance. This reduces dropouts as it encourages the parents to allow their girls to attend school, support the family’s livelihoods and promotes income diversification, diet diversification and better nutrition (amongst others through milk production).

**Way forward**

In light of the Niger context, gender equality and women empowerment constitute a priority in WFP Niger’s agenda. Beyond the above developed actions, new targeted and innovative actions, with strengthened analyses on some dimensions, will be implemented in partnership with other agencies and the Government to help close the gender gap and reach the zero hunger targets.

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**Voices from the field.**

Yadja Issaoufou, a widow with four children is president of a farmers’ organization. For her, WFP’s integrated and multisector approach has a concurrent impact on women’s empowerment, nutrition, education and thus resilience. “With WFP purchases of my production, it allowed me to obtain better income, to save and set up a small business. I sell donuts on the market… As women we have become more confident. Thanks to the sensitisation and training on key family practices, we have improved our practices in terms of health, nutrition and education of our children.”

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**Context**

Gender inequality in Niger is high: Niger ranks 154th out of 155 on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2015). Persistent gender disparities continue to challenge development, especially in literacy, mortality, morbidity, access to assets, gender-based violence and early marriage. Women, especially in rural areas, are overburdened with tasks such as fetching water and firewood, agricultural work, preparing meals, or taking care of children. In light of this challenge, a National Gender Policy was adopted in 2007 to create a favourable environment and to ensure systematic integration of gender at all levels in all phases. Gender inequality is one of the major causes of hunger, malnutrition and poverty, thus the mission of WFP Niger can be realised only if women, men, girls and boys have equal opportunity and access to resources and services and participation in decision making. Thus, WFP Niger is increasing its focus on gender in order to close the gender gap in food and nutrition security.

**WFP Niger’s Approach**

In line with the Corporate Gender Policy, WFP Niger aims to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment into its interventions, to ensure that the different food security and nutrition needs of women, men, girls and boys are met. WFP Niger uses a twin-track strategy, combining gender mainstreaming and targeted action. In line with the Regional Gender Strategy, WFP Niger is strengthening gender analysis, focusing on behaviour changes and aiming at sharing good practices on gender-informed approaches.

**Key figures**

- Gross enrolment of primary school-aged children (UNDP, 2015): boys 80.2%; girls 68%
- Primary school drop rate (UNDP, 2015): boys 14.1% girls 35.4%
- Literacy rate of those above the age of 15 (ECVMA, 2011): men 40%; women 18.2%
- Head of food insecure households in rural areas (IFPRI, 2008): men 30.8% women 69.2%
- Ownership and access of land: highly inequitable - 1/10 score (UNECA, 2015)

**For more information, contact us at: niger.information@wfp.org**
Ensuring gender mainstreaming: some examples of gender sensitive interventions

Gender and Productive Safety Net/Food Assistance for Assets

Female headed households are generally more vulnerable and are thus prioritised within WFP Niger’s intervention. However these households are often composed of only young children and pregnant women and lactating women. These households don’t have effective workforce for the assets creation activities and are therefore exempted from the physical activities while they still receive the same amount of assistance (cash or in-kind).

The different physical capacities and attitudes of women and men are taken into account and work norms are adjusted for women, who are usually assigned lighter tasks. For example, while men dig the land to create the half-moon beds, women ensure the design of the shape. In addition, equal participation of women and men in the sites management committee is promoted. Currently almost 50% of committee members are women which contributes to women’s empowerment in the community politics and decision making. Certain activities carried out under asset creation directly contribute to gender equality and women empowerment. Water management and reforestation, coupled with sensitisation on sustainable use of natural resources, improve access to water and firewood, thus reducing domestic chores that in rural settings are traditionally carried out by women. Rehabilitation and promotion of vegetable gardens, which are activities often carried out by women’s activity, help generate opportunities for women’s income generating activities. A gender analysis was carried out in some sites showing interesting causal links and brought forward recommendations. However given the limited scope of this analysis, an extension of this study should be undertaken to feed a broader reflexion.

Local Purchase

Under the promotion of local purchase, WFP purchases agricultural products mainly from the farmers’ organisations that are composed also by women’s groups. Whenever possible, WFP prioritises and promotes purchases from female smallholder farmers.

Innovating with gender specific interventions

Targeting adolescent girls to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition

Niger is confronted with an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Drawing from the evidence between the level of education and nutritional status of mothers and the prevalence of malnutrition in new-born children, WFP set up a pilot initiative in 2012 targeting future mothers in their adolescent years, working on behaviour in three communes. The intervention is articulated around three axes: nutrition (Supply of micronutrient powder for school meals), education (scholarship to adolescent girls from vulnerable households as well as financial support to their host family) and sensitization of adolescent girls and communities (focus on promotion of adolescents’ rights of health and education). The government, through the High Commissioner of Initiative Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens (HCIN), Ministries of public health and primary and secondary education as well as technical acts like the GRET, CESAF and UNICEF are amongst key partners.

Nutrition

Screening of malnutrition at the community level is carried out by female and male community health workers. In addition women play a key role on sensitisation on Key Family Practices (KFP), nutrition and Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices (IYCF), with IYCF women support groups. This provides them with the opportunity to engage for their community and thus contributing to their own social empowerment. Furthermore, sensitization on the key practices such as exclusive breastfeeding, importance of pre- and post-natal consultations, assisted deliveries, family planning etc. are provided both to women and men. This also improves men’s understanding on these topics and thus contributes to improve women and children’s health.