

# Guidance Note: Integrating gender into vulnerability and food security analysis<sup>1</sup>

**Gender, age and other important social dimensions** play a central role in determining individual, household and community food security and nutrition vulnerabilities. Under the WFP Gender Policy, VAM is responsible for identifying, analyzing and reporting on these elements to inform the design and implementation of gender-sensitive WFP food security and nutrition programmes. This guidance is intended for VAM staff at HQ, RB and CO levels to support them in meeting WFP commitments to deliver food assistance that meets the needs and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys, and to bridge the gender gap in food security and nutrition.<sup>2</sup>

## Understanding gender in VAM food security analysis

**Gender** refers to socially constructed and learned roles of men, women, girls and boys in a community or household (HH), versus **sex**, which refers to biological specificities. **Age** refers to where people are in their life cycle. Because a person's needs, roles and capacities change over time, where they are in their life cycle influences, and can increase or decrease, his or her vulnerabilities, as well as their capacities.

**Sex- and age-disaggregated data** are data that are broken down according to each person's sex and age or age group, and can be collected using quantitative and/or qualitative methods. These data enable the examination of power dynamics and how these can shape gender roles, access to resources and the relative constraints different people face.<sup>3</sup>

**Gender and age analysis** is a tool for identifying and examining how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities, rights, participation, access and control affect women, men, girls and boys of different ages in specific contexts. This Guidance Note supports the WFP Gender Policy in ensuring that all food assistance is adapted to the different needs and capacities of the women, men, girls and boys whom it serves, by identifying, analysing and reporting on those differences in VAM outputs.<sup>4</sup>

Because women and men do not constitute two homogeneous groups, **other social dimensions** are

helpful to consider when assessing food security and nutrition vulnerabilities and capacities. Gender issues intersect with other social dimensions – e.g. age, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, geographic area, migratory status, forced displacement, HIV/AIDS status, etc. – to create and reinforce inequalities or privileges, not only between women and men, but also among women and among men.

Most VAM data collection instruments collect and analyse data at the HH or community level and allow for disaggregation by sex and age at these levels. **Head of household** can usually be directly linked to the vulnerabilities and capacities of the household, which is why this information must be collected and disaggregated by sex and age. At the same time, gender-sensitive data collection cannot be limited to recording the sex of head of HH. This Guidance Note supports VAM teams in conducting insightful and practical gender analysis and tailored data collection.

In line with WFP commitments, VAM staff are responsible for ensuring gender is considered at each stage of the assessment process.<sup>5</sup> This is central to the establishment of a gender-sensitive programme cycle fit for purpose to respond to the different needs of vulnerable populations.

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<sup>1</sup> This guidance note is supplementary to the [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#) and other VAM gender-related resources, and is meant to function as a brief overview of the main points to remember for VAM staff applying gender analysis into their work.

<sup>2</sup> Guidance may be relevant for other WFP staff audiences engaged in gender-sensitive data collection and gender analysis.

<sup>3</sup> [WFP Gender Policy 2015-2020](#).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> This guidance note does not cover the design and planning stage of an assessment, nor the presentation and visualization of results. For guidance in these areas, see the [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#).

## What is the objective of gender-sensitive food security and nutrition analysis?

Gender-sensitive food security and nutrition assessments and monitoring are critical to inform programme design and implementation, by identifying and contextualizing the different vulnerabilities and capacities of women, men, girls and boys. The lack of gender equality and women's empowerment in the contexts where WFP works has direct and indirect effects on the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition – poor access to nutritious food, health, water and sanitation services, and inadequate mother-and-child care practices—which affect the lives of women, men, girls and boys differently. It is the responsibility of VAM staff to identify, analyse and report on these differences.

### Examples of how beneficiary sex and age can impact food security and nutrition...

Food preferences, taboos and consumption patterns have different impacts on the nutrition status of family members according to their sex and age, with boys being given preference in some contexts and girls in others.

For women affected by food insecurity, lack of macro- and micronutrients, such as iron, during pregnancy leads to low birthweights and other health problems for their babies and themselves

Every year 15 million girls are married before the age of 18, with devastating impacts on their education, health and development. Child brides are most likely to be from poor families. In many countries, young married girls are most often from the poorest quintile of the income bracket.

In some regions, surveys find that stunting is more pronounced among boys under 5 years of age than among girls, suggesting that in some places boys may be more vulnerable to health inequalities than girls.

Engaging men and boys in childcare can help reduce women's burden of unpaid care work, promoting more equal sharing of responsibilities and resources in homes.

*Examples extracted from WFP Gender Policy 2015-2020.*

Effective **gender-sensitive food security assessments** investigate and provide an understanding of the following issues, building on a combination of primary data collected, which is sex- and age-disaggregated, and secondary data:

- Do sex, age and/or other social dimensions affect access to and control over food and other assets/resources, and if so, how?
- What is the variability of food consumption, health, and nutrition by sex and age, and how do these factors affect food utilization by men, women, girls and boys?
- Are gendered division(s) of labour and decision-making power related to food availability and access, and if so, how?
- Are there protection concerns associated with possible negative impacts interventions may have on women or men, or on gender relationships, and if so, how can these be anticipated?

## What does gender analysis entail?

WFP sets a standard of systematically incorporating gender and age analysis into broader analyses of food security and nutrition situations, and it is required that regional bureaux and country offices systematically collect, analyse and use sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender indicators in context and nutrition analyses. This supports gender-sensitive programming by providing insights into the specific needs, roles, vulnerabilities, risks – including GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse – access to resources, coping strategies and capacities of women, men, girls and boys. In crises, rapid gender and

age analysis and emergency assessments must take into consideration pre-existing inequalities, as well as the impact of the crisis on these parameters.<sup>6</sup>

Ensuring that food security assessments and monitoring systems are gender-sensitive requires strong gender analysis built on sex and age disaggregated data collection. VAM staff are responsible for ensuring gender is considered at each stage of the assessment process, in: survey design; data collection; analysis; and reporting on the specific food security needs and capacities of women, men, girls and boys.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, gender-related findings must be emphasized in VAM reports and summaries, and shared widely with WFP programmes and partners.

## 1. Collecting gender-sensitive data

The first step in conducting gender-sensitive food security analysis is ensuring that **data collection tools** collect the household and community-level information, **disaggregated by sex and age**, to inform gender analysis.<sup>8</sup> The gender analysis framework selected by a VAM team will inform how data collection instruments are designed.

Integrating a gender-perspective into data collection goes beyond recording the sex of the HH head; **the data collection process must be reviewed at all stages** (selection of topics to cover in a survey or group discussion, sample design, selection and training of enumerators, data coding and editing, etc.) and ensure that gender bias is avoided throughout.

Head of HH is loosely defined as the main income earner and/or decision maker in a HH.<sup>9</sup> Head of HH can be male or female, young, middle aged, or elderly and/or disabled, and married, single, widow, divorced/separated, polygamous, etc. When surveys include questions targeting individual knowledge of an issue (e.g. “Are you aware of...” or “Have you heard of...”), it is relevant to analyse data by **respondent** sex and age, rather than exclusively by head of HH.

## 2. Analysing the data

The next step is to establish **gender-sensitive statistics** to analyse the data collected, and to inform **food security indicators**.<sup>10</sup> Where primary data is missing, or is not possible to collect, draw from **secondary data sources**.

In conducting gender analysis, there are various frameworks to choose from. The [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#) and the [CFSVA Guidelines](#) provide instruction on applying one such framework developed by DFID that considers 4 areas of enquiry: gender roles; assets and livelihoods; power and decision-making; and needs analysis.

Another approach outlined here is structured around the 2015-2020 WFP Gender Policy objectives: i) Food assistance adapted to different needs; ii) Equal participation; iii) Decision-making by women and girls; and iv) Gender and protection<sup>11</sup> and allows for data disaggregation by sex and age. The main

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<sup>6</sup> For additional information on WFP minimum gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment standards, refer to the [2015-2020 Gender Policy](#).

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed guidance on each stage of an assessment, see the [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#).

<sup>8</sup> For practical examples of the programmatic relevance of gender-sensitive data collection, refer to VAM Gender Analysis Tool: ‘How gender-sensitive data collection and gender analysis inform programme/intervention design’ at [vam.wgp.org/.....](#) For in-depth guidance on developing gender-sensitive tools, refer to the [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#).

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that in certain contexts, the term “head of household” may prove problematic. This should be considered, and alternatives may be used. In Kyrgyzstan for example, it is difficult to apply this term for households where male heads of household temporarily migrate for labour, while at the same time gender gaps remain relatively more pronounced within such households. For a detailed rationale for analysis at the household level, see the [UNSD Gender Statistics Manual](#).

<sup>10</sup> Examples of gender indicators include: average expenditures for female- versus male-headed households, differences in school enrolment between boys and girls; differences in access to (or control over) productive assets between men and women, etc. For other examples of gender indicators and instructions on how to develop these indicators, refer to Table 2 – [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#).

<sup>11</sup> For more detail descriptions of these commitments, refer to the [2015-2020 Gender Policy](#).

benefit of this latter approach is that it supports consistency between VAM target areas of gender analysis, and WFP commitments in operations and programming (VAM staff should apply the framework they feel responds best to their context<sup>12</sup>).

#### *i. Food assistance adapted to different needs*

- Who are the food insecure/most vulnerable to disasters or conflicts? (what makes them vulnerable: sex, age, ethnicity, religion, caste, status as refugees, returnees, IDPs, etc.)
- What gender, age and/or otherwise diversity-related issues (e.g. gender-based violence, early marriage, prostitution) affect people's food and nutrition status?
- What are women's and men's domestic roles/responsibilities (e.g. fetching water and firewood), and their existing time use/time burden?
- What proportion of the total household income is provided by each member of the household? What are the main livelihood activities of the primary economic provider?
- What are women's and men's economic opportunities (e.g. jobs, productive assets), and their differences in access to and control over resources/assets (e.g. access to credit and lending)?
- Who in the household is/are responsible for providing child care and nutrition?
- What are the negative coping strategies by sex of head of household?<sup>13</sup>
- Do women, men, boys and girls cope differently with a food crisis? If so, how?
- What, if any, are the barriers for girls and boys to access to education? (enrolment and retention)
- Who are the beneficiaries, or recipients of food, vouchers and/or cash initiatives, by sex and age?\*
- What are men's and women's preferences for assets/activities for FFA? What are women's and men's preference and concerns over transfer modality?\*

#### *ii. Equal Participation*

- How do women and men participate within leadership structures, including in local committees and WFP project committees?\*
- Who are the participants in food, vouchers and/or cash initiatives, by sex and age?\*
- Do women and men equally influence the design of food assistance activities?\*

#### *iii. Gender and Protection*

- Are there different protection needs of women, men, girls, and boys? Including elderly men and women? If so, what are they?
- Are women, men, girls and boys affected by sexual/gender-based violence, and/or sexual abuse/exploitation?<sup>14</sup> If so, how? Are there differences between groups in risks levels and/or how they are affected?
- Is the security situation different for different groups?

#### *iv. Decision-making of women and girls*

- Who (women, men, both) decides how money is spent within the household?
- Who makes decisions on child health, nutrition and care?

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to the DFID framework, the [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#) provides resources for other analytical frameworks staff can choose from.

<sup>13</sup> An example of assessing negative coping strategies would be to calculate changes in eating patterns due to food shortage and steps to alleviate food shortage by sex of head of household and detailed type of household. Gender analysis might also consider such links as: the impact on women's health (maternal anaemia, infant mortality, reduced birthweights, more stillborns and miscarriages, etc.) in times of crisis or economic adjustment to assess whether intensified demands on female labour and energy are influencing their food security and nutrition. See for [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#) detailed guidance on calculating and analysing negative coping strategies from a gender perspective.

<sup>14</sup> Data to determine this could include: number of people (disaggregated by sex and age group) who have experienced violence in the past 12 month, by type of violence, severity of violence, whether the incident happened going to, at, or coming from a distribution point, etc.

- Who decides how to use/spend food assistance, whether it be food, cash, vouchers, or a combination?\*

### 3. Reporting on the data: some considerations

VAM reports identify and explain the relevant similarities and differences between men, women, girls and boys (including different age groups and other social dimensions).<sup>16</sup> Staff should ask themselves the following questions to ensure reporting is gender-sensitive and adequately promotes findings (note that this is not an exhaustive list, and questions should be adapted depending on context).

- Are report findings communicated widely among WFP staff and partners, and shared on WFP information platforms?
- Do communications activities advocate for, and support informed gender equality programming in the relevant programme(s) based on report findings?
- Is data and analysis reporting done in a manner that is sensitive to possible social tensions within a household or community? Is it possible that the manner of reporting may exacerbate tensions unnecessarily?<sup>17</sup>
- Is this analysis reflected in the final report? Are highlights from analysis reflected in the executive summary and/or concluding remarks of the report?
- Are findings incorporated into regular publications or databases so as to reach a wider audience?

For more in-depth guidance and additional tools for conducting gender-sensitive food security analysis, see: [PGM: Gender and Food Security Analysis](#), [PGM: Gender in Analysis & Assessments](#), and the [VAM Gender Thematic Guidelines](#).

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\*Relevant in contexts in which food assistance is on-going.

<sup>16</sup> For additional guidance on reporting and presenting gender-related findings, see the [UNSD Gender Statistics Manual](#).

<sup>17</sup> For example, reporting the finding that adult women in male-headed households are economically marginalized in a community may motivate a programmatic response to improve women's access to financial products. Case studies have shown that, unless done with sensitivity to the gender dynamics in a community and households, such gender-based targeting can lead to increases in domestic violence rates by husbands against wives.