



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP and Gender

For the World Food Programme (WFP), the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to fulfilling its mandate to save lives and change lives by ending global hunger. Food insecurity and gender inequality are closely interlinked; globally there are 150 million more women who are food insecure than men. Restrictive gender roles assign women and men different responsibilities, including those related to nutrition and care work within households and communities, and this in turn impacts a person's food security. When women and girls have better access to information, resources, services, decision-making and economic opportunities, the result is increased food security and improved nutrition for themselves, their families, their communities and their countries.

Undeniably, there is no achieving SDG 2 (zero hunger), without also achieving SDG 5 (gender equality). This is why, as the leading humanitarian organisation fighting hunger, WFP prioritises gender equality as a central feature of its policies, operations and commitments at the global, regional and country level.

Our approach

The updated WFP Gender Policy guides the organisation's approach to optimise our presence, role and capabilities, in partnership, to advance gender equality and empower women. WFP has three key objectives to address the gender inequalities that continue to exacerbate hunger and nutrition around the globe:

- Achieve equitable access to and control over food security and nutrition;
- Address the root causes of gender inequalities that affect food security and nutrition;

- Advance the economic empowerment of women and girls in food security and nutrition.

To achieve these objectives, WFP addresses gender equality and women's empowerment through a twin-track approach. Firstly, gender is mainstreamed into WFP's strategies, guidelines, training, and tools, as well as into project design, implementation and evaluation. Secondly, we carry out some gender-targeted actions and activities at the country level.

Gender Inequality in Numbers

As of 2021, there are **150 million more women who are food insecure than men** in the world. [1]

Moderate or severe food insecurity among adult women rose during the pandemic from 27.5 percent in 2019 to 31.9 percent in 2021. Among men, it increased from 25.7 to 27.6 percent, **enlarging the gender gap from 1.8 to 4.3 percentage points.** [2]

It is now estimated that the **world will not reach gender equality at least for another 86 years.** [3]

In 2021, **37.5 percent of female-headed households in war-affected areas experienced moderate or severe food insecurity**, compared to 20.5 percent of male-headed households. Importantly, the majority of female-headed households are also single-parent households. [4]

Women's equal participation in the economy with men would increase global GDP by up to 26 percent. [5]

In 2021, WFP assisted **128 million beneficiaries**, of which **68 million** were women and girls (60 million men and boys).

Our areas of work

GENDER AND EMERGENCIES

WFP works to ensure that women and girls are not placed at risk through our food assistance work during humanitarian interventions.

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WFP actively promotes the participation, leadership and agency of women, girls, and women-led organisations in humanitarian settings, understanding that many times they are best positioned as first responders. In **Libya**, WFP partners with local feminist and women's civil society organisations to reach marginalised groups and to support women as agents of change in conflict-affected areas.

CASH-BASED TRANSFERS, DIGITAL AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Cash-based transfers provided by WFP can contribute to the economic empowerment of women by increasing their decision-making power and ability to invest in livelihood opportunities. By conducting a barrier analysis and collaborating with the National Bank of **Uganda**, WFP in turn successfully increased the number of women bank agents, as well as the number of women with bank or mobile money accounts.

In partnership with the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, WFP supports women's digital financial inclusion, by which cash transfers are credited directly to women's bank or mobile money accounts and training on financial planning and digital tools is provided. Cash alone is simply not enough, and this tandem approach is crucial to advance women's access to finance, technology and labour markets, which ultimately reduces the gender digital divide.



SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMING

WFP's school-based programming, providing nutritious school meals, cash incentives and tailored support, directly contributes to the retention of girls in primary and secondary schools. Partnering with **UNFPA** and **UNICEF**, the 'Breaking Barriers to Education' initiative in **Chad** and **Niger** addresses the key barriers to schooling for girls by providing fortified school meals, and targeted services related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, childcare facilities, as well as mentoring and coaching. WFP's

school-based programmes also enable complementary activities beyond food assistance to holistically empower both girls and boys.

NUTRITION

Gender and nutrition intertwine across WFP programme areas to not only help women and girls meet their nutrient needs, but to integrate a gender transformative focus for lasting impact. Through social and behaviour change sessions involving women, men, girls and boys, WFP addresses unequal distribution of tasks within the household, including men's involvement in childcare, and food preparation and nutrition of household members. WFP uses nutrition-sensitive programming to support women's livelihood development and leadership. In **India**, WFP partners with state governments to establish fortified take-home rations (supplementary nutrition for families) run by women-led micro-enterprises.

ASSET CREATION, RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

WFP's Food Assistance for Assets programming supports the building of assets, which when layered with complementary actions, create opportunities for women to generate income and significantly reduce their workload. In **Zimbabwe**, FFA activities included the construction of a dam to reduce women's time-spent collecting water, as well as financial and business literacy training to support livelihood development and sustainable resilience.

Women and girls have less access to and control of land, participation in decision-making and access to information, which puts them at greater risk of suffering from climate shocks and stresses. WFP designs and implements programmes that enhance women and girls' resilience and ability to adapt to climate change by focusing on women's leadership, capacities and independence. In **Guatemala**, WFP supports indigenous women by providing climate risk insurance and increasing their climate risk management skills.

SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURAL MARKET SUPPORT (SAMS)

Through the purchase of time- and labour-saving equipment, as well as crops that can be farmed and controlled by women smallholder farmers, WFP's SAMS programmes promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment through gender transformative agricultural value chain approaches. Recently partnering with the **Mastercard Foundation**,

WFP works to strengthen and make local food systems more inclusive for young women across the African continent by helping them reduce post-harvest losses, increase their entrepreneurial skills, and gain access to markets and employment opportunities across the value chain.

Partnerships

With today's complex and unprecedented challenges, no single organisation can achieve gender equality and women's empowerment for all. As outlined in the WFP 2022 Gender Policy, one of the keys to achieving gender results is prioritising local, gender-mandated and women's-led organisations. The extensive network of WFP field offices near the people in need, positions the organisation to build the capacity of local actors to help deliver sustainable humanitarian and development programming. Likewise, WFP will continue to identify and engage with the international, national and local actors, both public and private, who possess comparative advantages to ensure no one is left behind in our programming.

Our gender priorities

Shifting from the development of the WFP 2022 Gender Policy towards policy implementation, our focus areas are:

- Strengthening our approach to integrating gender considerations in emergencies.
- Strengthening our collaboration with partners, particularly local, women-led organisations, who are often best positioned to first respond.
- Strengthening our collection of data, including intra-household data and qualitative data, that informs the development of gender responsive and gender transformative programming. This requires shifting towards a tiered results pathway to link gender results achieved at the country level and those reported on corporately.
- Developing quality standards for gender analysis which shapes WFP's programming and operations.
- Generate and systematise evidence and knowledge products that showcase WFP's gender equality and women's empowerment work.



References

[1] CARE International, Food Security & Gender Equality: A synergistic understudied symphony (2022)

[2] FAO, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (2022)

[3] Gates Foundation, Gender equality depends on women having power, not just "empowerment" (2022)

[4] UN Women, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot (2022)

[5] McKinsey Global Institute, The Power of Parity (2015)

Photo page 1: WFP/Marco Frattini

Photo page 2: WFP/Will Baxter

Photo page 3: WFP/Elise Bijon

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