

Regional Bureau for **Eastern Africa**



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Gender **EQUALITY** and Women's **EMPOWERMENT**







WFP/Johnpaul Sesonga

Gender inequalities and lack of women empowerment are critical barriers to achieving food security. Across the countries in the Eastern Africa Region, women continue to face adverse inequalities, ranging from social and cultural norms such as limited access to productive assets, education, resources and opportunities. In a region facing multiple frequent shocks, women and girls are disproportionately affected.

Contributing to SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and working with communities, partners and Governments, WFP adopted a gender-transformative approach in its programming. These included intentionally targeted women to strengthen their resilience, nutrition and food security. WFP interventions were tailored to address the root causes of inequalities that affect food and nutrition security. WFP also ensured women were empowered to access, control and influence decision-making over food assistance.

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Goals

-  Enhanced and equitable participation.
-  Strengthened leadership and decision-making.
-  Enhanced protection to ensure safety, dignity, and meaningful access.
-  Transformative action on social norms and structural barriers

Spotlight on Country Offices

Financial Inclusion:



In Uganda’s refugee response, financial literacy training was provided to 86,459 individuals (51 percent women) across all 13 refugee settlements contributing to improving their financial management skills, in alignment with the CBT scale-up and enhanced joint decision-making at the household level. Monitoring results indicate 47 percent of households are making joint decisions, an increase of 13 percent compared to 34 percent in 2022.



In Ethiopia, under its climate and resilient activities, 59,400 Village Saving Loan Associations (VSLAs) members comprising of 62 percent women smallholder pastoralists and agro-pastoralists were supported to invest in a microcredit value of USD 538,000, which were used to invest in businesses and cover short-term needs.

Focus on Youth and Women in Kenya



WFP implemented various initiatives to strengthen the socio-economic empowerment of women and youth in Kenya’s agricultural value chains. These included participation in Climate-Smart Agriculture training, establishing linkages with input suppliers, and receiving access to certified farm inputs.

Gender Equality Learning Initiative in Rwanda



Since 2017, WFP has piloted and rolled out the **“Transforming Social Norms for Gender Equality”** learning initiative in the form of a Training of Trainers (ToT) programme. Its purpose was to increase WFP staff and partners’ understanding of and ability to address the discriminatory social norms that underpin gender inequalities and deepen food insecurity, with an emphasis on how to engage men and boys more actively in this work.

At the heart of the gender transformative approach is the link between personal and social change. As the FAO/IFAD/WFP compendium of good practices on gender transformative approaches makes clear, “starting with a self-analysis of their own lives helps people realize that they are part of the solution to any challenge that they may be facing, and they can commit to plan for change.” This capacity building initiative models this approach, emphasizing personal reflection, interactive group discussion and participatory learning over formal presentations.

In 2023, WFP Rwanda piloted this initiative which aimed to strengthen staff capacity and also commit to integrating gender transformative approaches into their day-to-day work. This pilot sought to contribute to ongoing efforts to set a norm within WFP itself, such that gender transformative work on food security and nutrition is integral, rather than optional, to its mission. At the end of the training in November, there was a personal and collective understanding of social and gender norms and how critical for WFP teams to be able to design and implement gender transformative programming.

Gender Analysis of School Feeding Programme in Ethiopia



In collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, WFP Ethiopia carried out a gender analysis focused on the School Feeding Programme (SFP). This analysis aimed to evaluate the SFP impact on reducing gender disparities in access, agency, participation, and power dynamics within selected regions of Ethiopia, specifically Afar (Zone 1), Oromia (Borena Zone), and Amhara (North Wollo). Additionally, the study aimed to identify strategies for enhancing the SFP to more effectively address gender gaps in future initiatives.

The findings indicate that the SFP significantly contributes to gender equality outcomes, particularly in terms of school enrollment, attendance, and a decrease in dropout rates.

Participants in the study confirmed that the SFP also enhances academic achievements and boosts girls’ agency and self-confidence, although these improvements cannot be solely attributed to the school feeding alone. This highlights the critical role of SFP partnerships with other organizations within schools and communities to achieve broader gender equality goals.

The SFP is actively engaging men, women, boys, and girls in its implementation process, resulting in changes in gender norms. While there’s been progress in shifting attitudes towards girls’ education, prevalent gender norms in target areas, including child marriage, school-related gender-based violence, and traditional gender roles, still hinder girls’ advancement. The SFP could further mitigate these challenges and enhance reporting in future programming.

Gender and Water study: Gender analysis of water (in)security

In 2023, WFP partnered with UNICEF CGIAR and UN Women to carry out a study in **Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia** to explore the gender and power dynamics within households and communities that influence women's access to, use of, and control over water resources for productive purposes. Findings from this study will inform interventions within the region including in devising targeted, transformative strategies to overcome barriers related to gender and water for productive use.



IN THE FIELD BUBANZA, BURUNDI

Members of the cooperative dry the unhusked rice. WFP is working with the government to support production and increase incomes of small-scale farmers especially women.

Contact Information

RBN.reports@wfp.org

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wfp.org