Gender & Food Assistance
Quick Guide

Gender is a key factor in determining what and how much food assistance is needed, preferred, safest and most empowering food assistance transfer type and delivery mechanism; how and if the assistance can be accessed; and how women, men, girls and boys benefit from the assistance.

Assessing Needs

- Obtain sex- and age-disaggregated data from existing needs assessments.
- Conduct participatory needs assessments, collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data. Incorporate gender and protection analyses.
- Use gender and protection informed needs assessments to determine direct beneficiaries; and inform selection of transfer modalities and of delivery mechanisms.

Selecting Transfer Modalities

- Interests of identified women and men should determine selection of transfer modality and delivery mechanism. Issues of technology, ease of implementation and donor interests are secondary considerations.
- Identify whether food, vouchers, cash or a combination is the optimal transfer for the women and men; considering participation, access, dignity, safety, civil status, access to technology, household dynamics, community dynamics and risk of diversion of food assistance.
- Identify optimal delivery mechanisms – physical delivery at community level, cash collection points, paying cash into bank accounts, mobile phone, electronic cards.
- Don’t assume transferring to women automatically empowers and advances gender equality. Decisions should be informed by participatory gender and protection analyses.
- Ensure transfer types and delivery mechanisms do not reinforce discriminatory and restrictive gender roles; such as women being primarily responsible for the health and well-being of household members.

Transferring Food Assistance

- Ensure women and men participate equally and meaningfully in food assistance decision-making bodies, including the Intersectoral Cash and Voucher Working Group.
- Design and implement sensitisation campaigns that (a) reach, inform and engage diverse women and men in the target community, and (b) involve two-way communication.
- Support the registration of women and men, making sure to address information gathered from the gender and protection analyses, using the beneficiary sex and age functions of SCOPE.

Monitoring

- Monitor provision of food assistance. Ensure gender and gender equality considerations are integrated into tools, procedures and reporting of on-site, post-distribution and market monitoring.
- Track changes (or not) in the food security, nutrition, decision-making authority, empowerment, equitable participation, access, protection and safety issues, and satisfaction with assistance, for individual women, men, girls and boys, households, and community groups.
- Design, establish and manage complaints and feedback mechanisms that are accessible to the diverse women, men, girls and boys in the target community.

Improving, Linking & Exiting

- Address issues preventing equitable, safe and empowered access to food assistance for the target women and men, based on learnings from gender-responsive monitoring.
- Be inclusive, participatory and empowering and communicate changes to all stakeholders.
- Develop an exit strategy in consultation with women and men, civil society organisations and government bodies.
- Link with gender-transformative social protection programmes.

Distributing Food

- Ensure women point of contact are available to women food entitlement holders (& men for men), according to safety concerns and cultural norms.
- Ensure women and men distributing food understand and address gender and inclusion; can explain and refer people to complaints and feedback mechanisms; and understand the obligation and procedures for responding to protection, including GBV, risks and incidents of abuse.
- Ensure diverse community members are informed of, and understand, the reasons for targeting food assistance to particular women, men, girls and/or boys.
- Include women and men equally in choosing sites, dates and times for food distribution.
- Select sites close to where women and men reside to minimise travel time and costs; protection risks, and increases in domestic workload. Package food in safe and manageable loads and weights so that women (& other recipients) are able to receive and transport it.
- Provide information about food distributions before they begin, to women and men and their organisations, so they can make arrangements to collect food without risk and minimising additional workload.
- Establish separate queues at distribution sites, waiting areas and toilet facilities for women/girls and men/boys, as appropriate and preferred.
- Distribute food during daylight hours, accounting for women’s and men’s existing workloads and schedules, including domestic work and care of children, elderly persons and sick relatives. Finish distribution early enough so women and men reach their homes/shelters before sunset.
- Prioritise food distribution to pregnant and breastfeeding women; women and men with children under 5; elderly persons; persons who are unwell and/or malnourished, and persons with disabilities.
- Monitor distribution ensuring delivery as intended.