

# Evaluation Brief



## Evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2008 – 2013)

### Context

International standards, norms, agreements and goals position gender equality as a development objective in itself, as well as a powerful lever for achieving other development outcomes. The post-2015 development agenda is expected to reinforce the primacy of gender equality as a global objective. A transformative goal on gender has been proposed which, if adopted, will imply greater scrutiny for WFP's efforts on gender.

Momentum on gender within the UN system is also growing. The 2006 UN System-Wide Policy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was followed by the 2012 System Wide Action Plan (UNSWAP) for Gender Equality.

### Scope and Evaluation focus

The evaluation covered WFP's 2009 Policy for "Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Addressing Food and Nutrition Challenges" and its associated Corporate Action Plan (CAP). The Policy follows two predecessors - the 2003-2007 Enhanced Commitments to Women, and the 1996-2001 Commitments to Women. Previous evaluations found that these Policies had raised the profile of gender within WFP, and helped develop the strong reputation WFP enjoyed for its work in gender over the period. Yet shortcomings in institutional arrangements and capacities for gender were also pointed out.

The current evaluation was intended for both accountability and learning. It focussed on assessing: i) the quality of the policy; ii) its results; and iii) the factors explaining the results.

### Key Findings

#### Policy Quality

The 2009 Policy was broadly aligned with prevailing international norms for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was founded on a conscious effort to respond to the 2008 recommendations of the evaluation of the previous Gender Policy. It sought a realistic approach, focusing on institutional change as a building-block towards later humanitarian and development results. It also took a major conceptual step forward for WFP in its shift from 'women' to 'gender'.

However, the evaluation found the Policy to be of limited quality overall, forming more an institutional mainstreaming strategy than a Policy in the classic sense. It lacked several critical foundations to drive institutional reform, including:

- A vision statement for gender in WFP, which geared institutional reform to intended humanitarian and development results, and a related theory of change.
- A sound rationale as to 'why gender', clarifying how working on gender could help WFP deliver on its mandate (including in disaster preparedness and emergency response).
- Clear strategies, statement of responsibilities and accountabilities geared to operationalizing the policy.

The Policy was also not accompanied by the sorts of systemic changes envisaged by the 2008 evaluation, diluting these – in part due to resource constraints – to projectised initiatives. It has not resulted in a shared vision of 'gender' in WFP. The most common understanding remains that of 'targeting women'.

#### Policy Results

**Institutional results:** Policies and Programmes. While gender was reflected in all WFP's thematic policy documents,

albeit to varying depths, WFP's project cycle management process has integrated gender only shallowly. The use of gender analysis in project design has been patchy but examples are emerging of a more structural gender approach within livelihoods/resilience programming and Purchase for Progress. As one of the Policy's key instruments, the Gender Innovation Fund approved 42 projects by August 2013, totalling US\$2.9 million for some valuable individual initiatives. However, projects were mostly small-scale, incurred significant transaction costs and lacked sound sustainability strategies.

**Capacity development.** The Gender Advocate network (GAN) members lacked training, workplans, budget and time allocations. Very little WFP staff training or capacity development has occurred, besides the recent roll-out of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Marker training. While extrinsic to the Policy, gender parity statistics for staffing within WFP have moved little since 2010, and inadequate action has been taken to diagnose and address particular blockages.

**Accountability and corporate reporting** for gender were limited until 2012. Corporate reports reflect partial attention to gender beyond data disaggregation. Financial budgeting systems do not require or allow for the tracking of budget allocations to gender nor is gender embedded in risk assessments, audits or evaluations. However, accountability for gender is gaining momentum. A Gender Mainstreaming Accountability Framework, geared to the UNSWAP, has been developed. WFP's adoption of the IASC Gender Marker means that all project documents will be assessed for gender sensitivity (though this requires more systematic benchmarking and analysis).

**In partnerships and capacity development,** WFP has made only limited efforts to raise gender with national partners and with its donors or INGO partners centrally, albeit reacting positively where encouraged. Collaboration with Rome-based agencies has been relatively strong at headquarters and WFP has partnered with IFAD, FAO and UN Women in the development of a Joint UN Programme focussed on Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (as yet unfunded). A three-year research programme on innovations from the field on gender-equitable food security programmes is generating considerable interest.

**Humanitarian and development results:** There is evidence of a growing body of gender-focused work and gender-sensitive programming at country level. This is producing potentially valuable results: increasing equitable access to food allocations and decision-making on food distributions; supporting women's participation; and, to a lesser extent, empowerment gains.

Results however remain concentrated on ensuring women's inclusion. There is lesser evidence – though some powerful examples emerging – of programmes using food assistance to support empowerment and transformations in gender relationships. Where capacity, commitment and conducive national conditions exist, WFP is showing willingness to adopt more progressive models of gender-sensitive programming and to participate in national dialogue around gender equality.

Yet these shifts are driven from the bottom up. They are largely unguided by the Policy or any common vision, approach or framework. At times, this has risked compromising the Do No Harm principles.

## Explanatory factors

External factors, including the UN system-wide drive for increased accountability for gender and, even more so, national context and gender realities on the ground, have primarily driven WFP's gender efforts. The extent and nature of WFP's strategic partnerships have also played a major part, with sustainable results more evident where WFP has capitalised on these. Where WFP engages in well-designed multi-donor food security programmes, for example, positive results are emerging.

A number of key internal requirements for institutionalisation of the Gender Policy were only partially met. These have impacted on traction within the organisation, and ultimately, results. They included: the limited quality of the Policy and insufficient leadership, communication, human and financial resources. Significant strides have been made to strengthen accountability, and the new corporate focus on integrating gender into organisational change processes augurs well for change.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Overall Assessment

WFP's 2009 Gender Policy suffered from both quality limitations and a fragmented institutional response to its implementation. Yet there is evidence of some potentially valuable results for gender equality from WFP's work, albeit disconnected from the Policy itself. External factors have formed the major drivers for implementation and results. Recent improvements, notably in accountability systems and human and financial resourcing, suggest a welcome course correction.

### Recommendations

Some key principles have guided the recommendations:

- 'When will we ever learn?' Both previous Gender Policy evaluations noted similar shortcomings. For change to occur, WFP's commitment to gender must be sincere and sustained.
- A clear corporate understanding must be established that gender mainstreaming will contribute to making WFP more effective in delivering on its mandate, rather than competing with it or with other priorities.
- A shift in mindset is needed. Gender should be considered everybody's business, whatever their institutional role and wherever their daily work takes place.
- Failing to address gender poses risks - not just to meeting WFP's international and UN commitments, but also to WFP's effectiveness, efficiency and credibility.
- Leadership is essential and must be sustained. Partners – including UN agencies, donors, partner governments, civil society and others – must combine demands for reform with supportive action.
- Resources are necessary to initiate and sustain the process of policy development and its institutionalisation.

### Recommendation 1: Policy Development, strategizing and planning.

**1.a Renew the Gender Policy over a year** to provide: i) a clear vision on the gender-related results to which WFP will contribute – and a statement of 'what gender means for WFP; ii) a strong evidence-based narrative linking gender to WFP's mandate and comparative advantage; iii) a theory of change through to expected results for beneficiaries, including for each Strategic Objective; and iv) a credible framework for action.

**1.b Embed gender within Country Strategies and operational plans.** All Country Offices should articulate within Country Strategies or operational plans 'what gender means' to WFP in their environment; what strategies will be applied; what results are sought; and how these will be achieved.

### Recommendation 2. Programming and Operations.

**2.a Integrate Gender into WFP's Programme Cycle.** Gender should be integrated into key Programme Cycle

Management instruments and procedures to ensure that only those programmes whose designs are explicit on their intentions vis-à-vis gender, including in their objectives, strategies, monitoring and reporting, are approved.

**2.b Apply the IASC Gender Marker as an instrument to support gender-sensitive programme and/or project design.** Ensure that ranking is conducted by Gender Standby Capacity advisers, Regional Bureaux or WFP's Gender Service. Annual analysis, validation and quality check of ratings should be undertaken to support corporate reporting. The scope of the Marker should be reviewed for potential use beyond design, e.g. for implementation and as a monitoring and evaluation tool.

**2.c Renew partnerships for gender.** With a better understanding of national governments' expectations of WFP in food security/nutrition/livelihoods, and whilst developing its own gender capabilities, WFP should seek out strategic relationships with partners who have relevant gender expertise. The scope for improving current partnerships should also be reviewed.

### Recommendation 3. Capacity Development and Knowledge Management

**3.a Work towards developing technical gender expertise at all organisational levels.** Actions include: undertake the gender capacity assessment required by the UNSWAP and use it to inform staff development planning; develop and implement a clear strategy to expand the pool of gender-competent policy and programme staff; train all staff in the Gender Marker, tailored to their functions; develop a systematic approach to knowledge management on gender; and include specific strategies and targets in WFP's Human Resource Strategy to increase the pace towards gender parity in staffing.

**3.b Expand and sharpen the Gender Advocate Network (GAN).** Move to a team approach using corporately developed Terms of Reference; state a clear rationale for selection including seniority; embed dedicated time, resources and deliverable results in performance compacts; and hold annual meetings.

### Recommendation 4. Accountability and reporting, roles and responsibilities.

**4.a Ensure that gender is consistently corporately tracked and reported upon.** In particular: revisit WFP's current Strategic and Management Objectives and results indicators to ensure their gender sensitivity; revise corporate reporting tools to embed gender results more appropriately; produce annual reports to inform the Executive Board; embed gender into guidance and quality criteria for all evaluations.

**4.b Clarify roles and responsibilities for gender across WFP.** Responsibilities for gender should be clarified for all staff. Gender should be built into Directors' competencies and performance compacts. The role of the gender service should be re-focussed to technical advice, co-ordination, knowledge management and advocacy. Integrate gender into WFP's internal risk management processes and auditors' training.

**Reference: Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at [www.wfp.org/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/evaluation)**  
**For more information please contact the Office of Evaluation: [WFP.evaluation@WFP.org](mailto:WFP.evaluation@WFP.org)**