



Gender and diversity in food security and livelihoods programming

Guidance note

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. Together with our 189 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide, we reach 97 million people annually through long-term services and development programmes as well as 85 million people through disaster response and early recovery programmes. We act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by *Strategy 2020* – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to ‘saving lives and changing minds’.

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people.

The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

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Gender- and diversity-sensitive food security programming lead to more equitable, effective and efficient outcomes for all members of affected communities.

This guidance note provides an overview of gender and diversity issues and the practical measures that Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers should bear in mind when designing, implementing and evaluating food security programmes¹. It is based on the *IFRC's Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues (2013 – 2020)*².

“Food security and hunger eradication are among the top priorities on the international agenda today in view of the impact on agricultural productivity of global economic crises, food price spikes, and climate change. The extent to which gender inequalities in general, and the gender gaps in agriculture in particular, thwart attainment of these twin priority goals is a key concern given the vital role of women smallholders in household and community food and nutrition security.”

Gender Equality and Food Security: Women's Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger. Asian Development Bank, 2013

1. Food security programming encompasses many different types of interventions depending including water for irrigation, livestock management, seeds distribution or seed bank development, livelihoods, cash- or food-for-work projects, food aid, cash and voucher transfers or any combination of these. In this guidance note, we have focused on primary production, livelihoods, food distribution/relief and cash and voucher transfers.

2. The *IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues (2013 – 2020)* outlines three key strategies to ensure that gender and diversity are mainstreamed in all Red Cross and Red Crescent work:

- a. Systematic incorporation of gender and diversity in needs assessments, programme and service delivery, tools and training.
- b. Improvement of the gender and diversity composition of the IFRC Secretariat and National Societies at all levels.
- c. Reduction of gender inequality, gender discrimination and violence in the community.

What do we mean by gender and diversity?

“The International Federation and each individual National Society shall recognise that food insecurity may have a different impact on men and women, on different individuals and groups of people. Programmes should be designed and implemented in a diversity and gender sensitive way to consider biological, social and cultural differences.”

IFRC Policy on food security and nutrition adopted by the 8th Session of the Governing Board in Geneva, 21-23 October 2003

Gender is often misunderstood to refer to issues related only to women and girls. In fact, gender refers to the social differences between females and males throughout their life cycle and, while deeply-rooted in every culture, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

Being diversity-sensitive means accepting and respecting the needs of groups that may be vulnerable based on their age, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersex (LGBTI), people living with HIV (PLHIV) or other chronic disease or a disability.

Over the past decade, many terms related to gender and diversity have been incorporated into declarations, plans of action, policies, programmes and projects for agriculture and rural development but very little has been translated into action. The purpose of this Guidance Note, therefore, is to provide Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers with practical steps they can take to mainstream gender and diversity into food security programmes.

It should also be borne in mind that gender-based violence (GBV) is a risk in all programmes, including food security. GBV can occur in the home, in the community and even within the Movement/implementing partner. Therefore, specific measures to address GBV in food security programming are included in this guidance.

What are the key issues?

The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2010–2011 documents that, on average worldwide, women comprise 43 per cent of the agricultural labour in developing countries, ranging from 20 per cent in Latin America to 50 per cent in Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Women, girls, boys, men as well as other distinct groups (older persons, LGBTI, PLHIV and persons with disabilities) all need to be reached through food security programmes. **Each group’s needs, role, capacities and involvement must be identified** to ensure that an appropriate programme is designed and implemented. For instance, in agriculture, men and women work as partners in most subsistence and small-holder farming, sharing some tasks and performing activities that the other sex does not. The contributions of women and men, and often girls and boys, are essential to maximize yields and optimize food security. The loss or absence of either men or women’s farming expertise

threatens food security. Therefore, food security programmes that analyse and take into account the needs, priorities and capacities of men and women have a greater impact and are more likely to improve the lives of affected populations.

Experience has shown that **giving all groups within the population equal opportunities to participate in designing and implementing** food security initiatives in agriculture, livestock, livelihoods, food and cash relief and nutrition contributes to strengthening resilient communities. It ensures impact and sustainability of food security programmes in the disaster response, recovery or development contexts.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY ARE IMPORTANT FOR PROGRAMME DESIGN

WHY

More efficient and effective results

Equal access

Cater to needs of all

Safe, secure and culturally appropriate programmes



HOW



Collect data disaggregated by sex, age and diversity



Male/female balance in teams and committees



Consult and involve women, girls, boys, men, older persons, persons living with disabilities, PLHIV and LGBTI



Analyse constraints and/or barriers

TO ENSURE

accuracy, ownership and sustainability

What we need to know and do to plan and implement gender- and diversity-sensitive food security planning

Agriculture/Primary Production Activities



The Female Face of Farming (FAO)

Women and men's and often girls' and boys' roles and responsibilities in agriculture and livestock management are often clearly defined but also often changeable over seasons and circumstances, for instance, in response to crises.

"Women in agriculture and rural areas have one thing in common across regions: they have less access than men to productive resources and opportunities. The gender gap is found for many assets, inputs and services – land, livestock, labour, education, extension and financial services, and technology – and it imposes costs on the agriculture sector, the broader economy and society as well as on women themselves." (SOFA, 2011, pg. 5)

In the *2005 State of the World Population Report*, it was found that women received only 10 per cent of all loans earmarked for small-scale farmers and about one per cent of total agricultural sector credit (UNFPA, 2005).

What we need to know

- Sex- and age-disaggregated data on the affected population; this includes data on the number of pregnant women, polygamous families, people with disabilities, etc.
- The daily and seasonal activities of women, girls, boys and men in the pre-production, production and post-production cycle of each of the major crops.
- The daily and seasonal activities of women, girls, boys and men in fishing/aquaculture, forestry and natural resource harvesting.
- The different protection, mobility, social norms constraints that men/boys and women/girls face in producing and acquiring food.
- The time that women/girls and men/boys invest in non-primary production activities.
- Women and men's decision-making on access to and control over assets, e.g., land, tools, seed, fertilizer, animal vaccines, veterinary support, etc.
- Women and men's access to training and new technology, including improved crop varieties, livestock or fish species, tools, fertilisers or innovative management practices.
- Has safety from violence been included as a sub-objective in the project/programme?³

3. This point is included in all of the 'What we need to know' sections of this Guidance Note. Whether the project/programme relates to agriculture/primary production activities, livelihoods, food distribution/relief and/or cash and voucher transfers, the project/programme designer and implementer should refer to the specific measures to address GBV on page 11 of this Guidance Note.

What we need to do

- Facilitate mixed-sex, or if this is not possible, same-sex discussion groups and ensure all opinions/ideas are captured and reflected in design, targeting and implementation.
- Undertake a participatory needs assessment, consulting both women and men, to gather information on their respective short- and long-term losses of primary production assets and their coping strategies in absence of primary production activities.
- Based on the inclusive needs assessment, target women, girls, boys and men with specific actions when appropriate, e.g., analysis indicates women's key role in household food security and their difficulties in accessing productive resources and, therefore, the project focuses on promoting women's access to training/skills development, seeds and tool distributions, micro-credit, etc.
- Design the operation to address the different effects of the disaster on women and men and to build on their existing/available capacities.
- Prioritise women in the provision of improved agricultural/primary production techniques so as to reduce their workload.
- Promote female leaders among agriculture committees and farmers' groups.
- Take specific actions to prevent the risk of GBV, e.g., income-generation activities for women and girls so that they are not economically dependent on others and do not have to exchange sex for money, housing, food or education.

Livelihoods

What we need to know

- Sex- and age-disaggregated data on the affected population; this includes data on the number of pregnant women, polygamous families, people with disabilities, etc.
- The gender- and age-related division of labour for the range of livelihoods activities undertaken by the community.
- The type of access and control of livelihood assets that women and men have and how these have been affected by the emergency.
- The amount of time that women and men (and girls and boys) spend on unpaid work (e.g., fetching water, cooking, collecting firewood, childcare, washing clothes) and, therefore, can spend on income-generation activities.
- Households and individuals with limited or no capacity to participate in employment or income-generation activities.
- Details of women and men's access to market goods and services as producers, consumers and traders.

What we need to do

- Conduct meetings with women and men to determine their distinct needs, capacities and changes in livelihoods activities since the disaster.
- Facilitate mixed-sex, or if this is not possible, same-sex discussion groups and ensure all opinions/ideas are captured and reflected in design, targeting and implementation.
- Undertake a participatory needs assessment, consulting both women and men, to gather information on their respective short- and long-term losses of livelihoods assets and their coping strategies in absence of livelihoods.
- Based on the inclusive needs assessment, target women, girls, boys and men with specific actions when appropriate, e.g., analysis indicates women's key role in care activities (child, sick, older relatives, etc.) so the project focuses on promoting women's access to home- or local-based income-generation activities with limited working hours.
- Ensure that employment, income-generation, vocational training and non-formal education opportunities that are implemented target the specific needs of women and men of all ages and are equally accessible to all. Pay specific attention to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, older people, etc.
- Identify and respect cultural needs of the population including in relation to movement/mobility, traditional clothing and, together with women and men, determine acceptable ways to overcome any barriers.
- Identify protection, mobility and social norms constraints that men/boys and women/girls face in accessing employment, income-generation, vocational training and non-formal education projects that are implemented.
- Monitor whether employment, income-generation, vocational training and non-formal education opportunities could have any impact on existing social and political divisions within communities.

Food Distribution/Relief

What we need to know

- Sex- and age-disaggregated data on the affected population; this includes data on the number of pregnant women, polygamous families, people with disabilities, persons with disabilities, chronically ill, pregnant and lactating women, etc.
- The general nutritional status of the affected population disaggregated by sex and age.
- Who (men and/or women) receives food aid on behalf of the household.
- How food is shared within households (i.e., intra-household food distribution and consumption - who eats first and most?)
- How food is distributed and allocated; the systems in place to register, distribute, transport food; whether food distribution points are accessible to males and females of all ages and special provisions made for older people, persons with disabilities, etc.
- Religious or cultural food restrictions/preferences for women, men and children in the community.

What we need to do

- Organize focus group discussions with men and women on the cultural, practical and security-related issues related to food and food distributions. The results of these discussions must inform programming.
- Organize focus group discussions with men and women to discuss and decide on the location of food distribution points, the criterion for selection of recipients of food assistance, etc. Based on the gender analysis, target women, girls, boys and men with specific actions when appropriate, e.g., in agreement with community leaders, women are designated as the food entitlement holders (except where men/boys are the single heads of households), etc.
- Analyse the impact of the crisis on women, girls, boys and men and what this entails in terms of division of tasks/labour, work load and access to food distributions (time and location) and food/cash-for-work opportunities.
- Food distribution points should be located as close to beneficiaries as possible.
- Ensure that the weight of food packages is manageable for women, children, older people and people with disabilities.
- Make special transport arrangements for older people or people with disabilities.
- Ensure that everyone can access food assistance, including distributions equally, e.g., women, girls, boys and men's access to assistance projects and services is routinely monitored through spot-checks, discussions with communities, etc.
- Ensure that women and men benefit equally from training or other capacity-building initiatives offered by the project, e.g., equal opportunities exist for women, girls, boys and men in food-for-training/work; an equal number of women and men are employed in food distribution programmes, etc.
- Monitor whether food/relief distribution could have any impact on existing social and political divisions within communities.

Cash and Voucher Transfers

What we need to know

- Who in the community makes the decisions and how community decisions are reached.
- Women and men's different roles in relation to control over, decision-making about, and access to food and cash.
- Whether men and women have different priorities.
- The differences in relation to access to food and cash between male- and female-headed households.
- How money is divided, controlled and used within households, including polygamous households.
- If cash distributions could have any impact on existing role divisions within communities.

What we need to do

- Consult with the community – represented by both men and women – about the criteria for beneficiary selection
- Ensure that targeting addresses the distinct needs of shared and polygamous households effectively
- Communicate with different members of the community about procedures and accountability mechanisms, e.g., programmers should develop with and/or explain to the communities what the criteria for targeting is and why and what the expectations are associated with this targeting. Consulting with the community in developing the criteria can help ensure cultural and social relevance.
- Ensure that distribution mechanisms take gender considerations into account – for example, if considering using mobile phone technology for facilitating distribution, ensure that women and men have equal access to that technology. Ensure that distribution points take into consideration location, time and safety issues, to ensure ease of access and to minimise overburdening beneficiaries.
- Establish accountability mechanisms, including complaints and feedback procedures. Ensure that they are accessible to everyone and that both women and men staff the complaints section, so that different members of the community feel comfortable reporting.
- Monitor the risks of intra-household violence or tension as to who controls the cash.
- Monitor whether cash distributions could have any impact on existing social and political divisions within communities (See ICRC, IFRC Guidelines for cash transfer programming, 2007).

Specific measures related to addressing gender-based violence⁴

What we need to know

- Has safety from violence been included as a sub-objective in the project?
- Are all personnel educated in violence prevention including the code of conduct, reporting, referral and the signs, risk and consequences of violence, including harassment and exploitation?
- Have beneficiaries and employers been briefed on their rights and responsibilities around violence prevention and how to access complaints and referral mechanisms?
- Are there accessible and confidential ways for reporting violence?
- Is there an updated list of agencies and professional, including their contact information to which survivors of violence can be referred?
- Has a risk assessment been conducted to address unintended violence including risks when carrying cash home or to the market, domestic violence due to changed power dynamics and tensions about who controls the money, corruption and extortion, etc.?

4. The list below is adapted from the livelihoods checklist of the Violence Prevention application developed by the Canadian Red Cross

- How are beneficiaries especially vulnerable to violence (e.g., youth, women, the older people, persons with disabilities) included in the project?
- Have the voices of women and children been included to ensure that activities do not put them at higher risk of violence?

What we need to do

- Include violence as a sub-objective in the project.
- Ensure that all personnel are educated in violence prevention including the code of conduct, reporting and referring survivors of violence and the signs, risk and consequences of violence.
- Ensure that beneficiaries and employers are routinely advised of their entitlements and briefed on their rights and responsibilities around violence prevention.
- Ensure that accessible and confidential mechanisms reporting violence are in place.
- Ensure that all beneficiaries know how to access complaints and referral mechanisms.
- Maintain an updated list of agencies and professional, including their contact information, to which survivors of violence can be referred.
- Routinely conduct a risk assessment to address any unintended violence.
- Ensure that beneficiaries who are especially vulnerable to violence (e.g., youth, women, the older people, persons with disabilities) are always included in the project/programme.

Further Reading:

Asian Development Bank – *Gender Equality and Food Security: Women’s Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger*, 2013.

Available in English at <http://www.adb.org/publications/gender-equality-and-food-security-womens-empowerment-tool-against-hunger>

FAO – *The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture – closing the gender gap for development*, 2010 – 2011, Rome, 2011.

Available in English at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

IASC – *Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs, Equal Opportunities (Gender Handbook)*, 2006.

Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Russian and Spanish at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/themes/gender>

ICRC and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – *Guidelines for cash transfer programming*, 2007.

Available in English <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/finance/cash-guidelines-en.pdf> (also available on demand in Arabic, French and Spanish).

The Sphere Project – *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, 2011 (Minimum Standards in Food Security and Nutrition).

Available in English at <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/95530/The-Sphere-Project-Handbook-2011.pdf>

UNFPA – *The State of World Population: The Promise of Equality: Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals*, 2005.

Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish at <http://www.unfpa.org/public/publications/pid/1343>

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

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