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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE END-OF-TERM EVALUATION OF WFP'S GENDER POLICY (2003–2007): ENHANCED COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report to the Board on WFP's implementation of its Gender Policy (2003–2007) provides information and guidance for future gender policies.

The evaluation found that unlike many other United Nations organizations and donor agencies, WFP went beyond rhetoric to require specific strategic action at the operational level, supported by a special training initiative and measurable targets for monitoring. By achieving visibility and by including women, the policy laid strong foundations for gender mainstreaming.

But the operational focus of the evaluation revealed limited understanding of gender analysis in terms of innovation in local contexts: more gender expertise and resources are needed at the country office level. Although the global food crisis may be seen as a threat to WFP's commitments to gender mainstreaming, the evaluation suggests that WFP can enhance its support for household resilience to achieve food security by ensuring that gender roles and relationships are understood.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of “Summary Report of the End-of-Term Evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2003–2007): Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security” (WFP/EB.2/2008/6-B) and of the “Management Response to the Summary Report of the End-of-Term Evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy (2003–2007): Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security” (WFP/EB/2008/6-B/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations (document WFP/EB.2/2008/15) issued at the end of the session.



BACKGROUND

Context

1. WFP designed and implemented its gender policy during a transition from “women in development” (WID) to “gender and development” approaches. The WID approach reacted to a development assistance system in which professional women were rare and were invisible as beneficiaries and assets. Donors initiated activities focused on women, but with limited resources and little if any connection with the mainstream of operational modalities.
2. By the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, advocates had advanced an alternative approach: gender mainstreaming was to ensure the inclusion of women in all programmes. In 1997, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) passed a resolution calling for gender mainstreaming by all United Nations agencies.
3. Since then, the definition of gender mainstreaming has evolved. It now incorporates:
 - i) ensuring that women participate in and benefit from all mainstream operational modalities;
 - ii) focusing on women not in isolation, but in social units such as families;
 - iii) recognizing the need to involve men as part of improving women’s lives;
 - iv) acknowledging that principles relating to women’s practical needs should apply to women who are marginalized or overlooked; and
 - v) working for gender equality that promotes equal opportunities to develop capabilities and to be treated with dignity and respect, without necessarily seeking sameness for men and women.
4. Yet women’s advocates also recognize the risks of gender mainstreaming: women may lose visibility, resources for women’s advancement may disappear into the mainstream and it is difficult to evaluate efforts to promote gender equality. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) threatened to eclipse government and donor commitments to women, despite the focus on gender equality.
5. In 2005, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) commissioned a study of gender policies and evaluations that found striking similarities: findings and recommendations “all point in the same direction”, often raising issues of political will and resources. The NORAD review and discussions of “delivering as one” called for greater focus on the operational level.

WFP’s Gender Policy (2003–2007): Enhanced Commitments to Women

6. WFP has a long-standing concern for women, as reflected for example in its 1996–2001 Commitments to Women policy. WFP invested substantially in evaluating that policy, and the current policy builds on it.
7. The former and current policies combine two issues: the food security of women, adolescent girls and younger girls; and the relationship between their roles and WFP’s food assistance mission. The policies particularly consider women’s traditional roles regarding food production and preparation and distribution in households, and seek to improve women’s control over food and food-related decision-making.
8. The current policy is generally known in WFP as the Enhanced Commitments to Women (ECW). Five of the eight ECW are “targeted measures for women”: ECW I focuses on the nutrition of pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls; ECW II on girls’ education; ECW III on women benefiting from food for work, training and assets;



ECW IV on women's control of food, especially at food distribution points, with attention to transparency and safety; and ECW V on women's participation in decision-making relating to food assistance. Two are cross-cutting: ECW VI focuses on gender mainstreaming and ECW VII on advocacy to build "... an environment that acknowledges the important role women play in ensuring household food security". ECW VIII focuses on gender equality in staffing, calling for gender-sensitive human resources policies: WFP was to reach goals of women accounting for 75 percent of food aid monitors, increasing the proportion of international women staff in humanitarian assistance operations and increasing the proportion of women in management positions.

Evaluation Methodology

9. Taking into account the NORAD review and a substantial mid-term review, the evaluators proposed to concentrate on the operational level in evaluating whether WFP met its commitments to donors and to women. Three foci were proposed: i) verifying corporate follow-through; ii) seeking lessons learned from implementation of the positive measures; and iii) understanding gaps between policy and responses in the field.
10. In view of the extent of gender mainstreaming, the evaluation covered: the gender policy and other policies and practices; Headquarters, country offices and sub-offices; and gender focal points (GFPs), other staff and partners. It encompassed development programmes, recovery operations and emergency relief, and all intervention modalities.
11. To reflect concerns regarding the gap between gender policies and implementation at the operational level, the evaluators focused on factors that could influence the behaviour of staff and partners in the field: i) the clarity of the policy; ii) communication of expectations; iii) opportunities to comply in terms of authority and resources; iv) capacities to carry out expected actions; and v) competing interests and ideologies.
12. The methods included a document review and interviews at Headquarters and two regional bureaux. Country studies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Georgia, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda and Sri Lanka included discussions with WFP staff, meetings with government and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, site visits and a survey to determine levels of gender training, understanding of gender mainstreaming and field-level views of factors affecting implementation of the policy. The limited number of country studies precluded representative sampling, but comparison of multiple data sources enabled triangulation to enhance the validity of the studies.
13. The human resources (HR) study focused primarily on documents and data, with some interviews at Headquarters. Discussions at country offices and regional bureaux included interviews with HR staff.
14. The evaluation was undertaken by a small team: a team leader, a part-time technical adviser, a part-time HR data analyst and two consultants for country studies, neither of whom met the team in Rome.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Quality of the Policy

15. Viewed from the perspective of the times when it was designed, and compared with those of other United Nations organizations and donor agencies, WFP's Gender Policy (2003–2007) was unusual.¹ It went beyond rhetoric to specify actions to be taken. Serious about ensuring implementation, and anticipating results-based management (RBM), it included measurable targets for monitoring. With five targeted measures, it recognized the need to reach the operational level, requiring field-based as well as corporate measures. Anticipating practice in the field, its measures were relevant to WFP's mission and linked pragmatic measures with existing modalities.
16. As a policy to support women, the policy was strategic in that it addressed women's needs such as food, protection and empowerment. But from the field point of view the policy lacked clarity in three ways.
17. First, although the targeted measures were specific and pragmatic, many staff at the operational level complained that the policy was too prescriptive. To solve local gender-related problems, operational actors needed a normative basis for exercising discretion.
18. Second, the policy generated confusion between women-focused and gender-oriented thinking. The "W" of ECW consistently focused attention on women; field staff were focusing on the five measures that targeted women, and on the collection of data that showed the number of women beneficiaries and participants. And although ECW VI calls for gender mainstreaming, it was primarily recognized at Headquarters: most staff in the field saw gender mainstreaming as not applicable to them. Other women-focused signals reinforced the confusion. For example, WFP's *Consolidated Framework of Policies* states: "WFP regards its niche as working with and for women." WFP merged its Gender Unit (PDPG) with mother-and-child health, the public website included "Focus on Women" with no mention of gender, and the most consistently visible advocacy initiative has been International Women's Day.
19. Third, the policy left uncertainty regarding its objective. It was not clear whether its measures were to improve the food security of girls and women, with a view of women as agents for their families, or whether it established a parallel objective derived from the ECOSOC resolution on gender mainstreaming. And actors at the operational level did not know how much to promote gender equality. Where there was serious food insecurity, school feeding programmes promoted girls' education and food-for-training (FFT) programmes improved adolescent girls' livelihood skills. When food needs were less significant but gender equality was an issue, however, it was not clear whether operational staff should use food assistance to promote women's literacy or whether to engage adolescent boys in HIV/AIDS education.
20. The inclusion of HR issues in the policy was also problematic: it confused people who think that "gender" is only about gender balance in staffing, and it stretched the evaluation process into two separate areas – programmatic and institutional – when each deserves full and separate attention. (See the HR discussion later in this report.)

¹ WFP/EB.3/2002/4-A



Policy Implementation and Results

21. WFP has done well in implementation at the corporate level. PDPG worked with the four pillars of: i) producing guidelines; ii) training staff and partners; iii) disseminating best practices; and iv) baseline and follow-up surveys. PDPG produced manuals explaining how to implement ECW and tailor them to local circumstances, collaborated to integrate a gender perspective into assessments and compiled *Gender News Online* to share good practices.
22. But although PDPG shared examples of ways of applying positive measures in local contexts and explained gender issues relating to the focus on women, many staff at the operational level were aware only of a list of ECW, often without the sub-commitments associated with each one. PDPG sent resources to country offices, usually to a GFP, but dissemination of documents to staff and partners was partial and inconsistent. Few staff have seen the published version of the gender policy.
23. WFP also rolled out an extraordinary training and learning initiative (TLI) that resulted in 6 regional workshops, 65 country workshops and 43 trained facilitators. The TLI reached staff and partners to support their implementation of the positive measures for women and communicated WFP's commitment to girls and women.
24. From the operational perspective, the results have been good but insufficient: there are still thousands of people to reach, there is regular staff turnover and a need for more than a single training session to build functional gender analysis capabilities. Other than in the TLI, there was little inclusion of gender in mainstream training programmes. Many international staff lack understanding of gender roles in local contexts, and nationals tend not to link gender roles in their culture, which they perceive as unchangeable, to their WFP work.
25. WFP has conscientiously implemented the fourth pillar – monitoring results – by undertaking baseline and follow-up studies in 45 countries, producing explanatory notes for each ECW and developing Country Fact Sheets. The surveys focused on whether the targeted measures were implemented, providing some measure of partners' compliance with operational guidelines, revealing measures that posed difficulties and indicating where efforts had decreased.
26. WFP also developed 39 gender-focused indicators to monitor field-level compliance with the policy, though it tracked only three annually. There have also been relevant "mainstream indicators" such as improving maternal health as part of nutrition interventions, and increasing the percentages of girls receiving food assistance and enrolment rates associated with school feeding.
27. Such data collection sent a strong signal to the field. The 2007 follow-up study demonstrated that WFP undertook many of the expected measures such as including girls in school feeding and consulting women about emergency food distribution points. The largest positive trends were in the proportion of women beneficiaries in WFP's food-for-assets (FFA) activities and the introduction of mechanisms to ensure women's access to and control of food in relief operations.
28. And although indicators tracked compliance, many did not measure the real objectives. For example, tracking the numbers of women on committees did not monitor the quality of their participation in terms of engagement or influence on decisions, and tracking how many contracts referenced the ECW did not reflect whether anyone other than the person signing the contract knew of them or whether that knowledge influenced partners' approaches.



29. Interviews at Headquarters yielded some evidence of programmatic gender mainstreaming, including PDPG's review of programmes submitted to the Programme Review Committee (PRC). Special units at WFP addressed gender issues not covered by the policy. The training course given by the Gender Unit and the HIV/AIDS Unit for men transport and contract workers is noteworthy. With regard to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), WFP's Protection Unit built on ECW IV, which calls for consultation with women on safe food distribution times and places.
30. The targeted measures reached women and many of the practices were institutionalized. WFP is aware of the particular nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women, is committed to girls' education, and targets women in FFT and food-for-work (FFW) programmes. Putting food into the hands of women at food distribution points has become a common practice from which many women gain recognition and status and greater control over the food.
31. But from 2003 to 2007 there were only limited increases in practice. This should raise questions about impediments: country visits and surveys point to constraints to modification and innovation such as limited understanding of gender and concerns about the model in local contexts.
32. The cross-cutting lesson is that gender analysis did not reach the targeted measures. For example, there is little evidence of: i) encouraging fathers to visit clinics with their wives so that they could understand and share responsibility for their children's nutrition; ii) ensuring that gender stereotypes were not reinforced because women cooked school meals; iii) using FFT to empower adolescent girls and to address concerns about unemployment among young men; or iv) using FFW to build respect and teamwork among men and women.
33. The positive measures focus on providing food, assets or training for women, but do not consider how households manage and distribute food or how family relationships may increase resilience in times of food insecurity.
34. Experience of implementation in emergency operations reveals the critical factors at the operational level. For staff who have to act quickly, the normative basis for decisions must be clear: there is no time to consult guidelines. The fundamental guidance is to recognize the dignity of every person, be careful to "do no harm" and protect each individual, from girls fetching firewood to boys forced to be fighters. Partners with gender expertise would be ideal, but there is often no choice. Women staff and partners are essential, including women with local language skills who can consult and advocate on behalf of displaced women.
35. Taking into account these factors at the operational level, along with competing interests and ideologies, the evaluators found three factors that tempered receptiveness to gender mainstreaming: i) lack of understanding, part of which was a tendency to assume that it involved the unconditional privileging of women; ii) concerns about conflicts with local cultures; and iii) the pressures of emergencies.
36. WFP and its operational partners might question the policy if they: regard a focus on women as inflexible, inappropriate or ineffective; consider policy initiatives, such as the Gender Policy, to be secondary to meeting emergency food needs; or do not understand how addressing gender inequalities or constraints on women's access to resources can help to reduce hunger in cases of extreme poverty. They welcome gender analysis if they understand how it can improve their programmes and that it can be undertaken in ways consistent with local contexts.



WFP's Capabilities

37. Implementing a gender policy requires different resources at each level. At the corporate level it requires leadership, oversight and coordination; at the operational level it requires leaders, staff and partners who appreciate the value of gender analysis and can put it into practice. At both levels, it requires financial resources and the ability to identify opportunities to “deliver as one” when gender equality may contribute to several United Nations missions.
38. WFP initiated the gender policy with considerable commitment among senior management and staff. Subsequently, however, the momentum has diminished: staff and partners describe a prolonged period of inattention to gender mainstreaming. The recent disbanding of PDPG signalled the diminishing importance of gender mainstreaming, and there are questions regarding the adequacy of current staffing for overseeing a new policy and coordinating experience. The first two drafts of the Strategic Plan (2008–2011) included gender equality among the core principles, but they did not make reference to women's needs and contributions, or show how gender roles can affect each Strategic Objective – thus missing an opportunity to model gender analysis.
39. At the operational level, WFP's capability has been more problematic. Given the ambiguity of the policy and problems in communicating it to staff and partners in the field, capabilities at that level have depended on country office leadership, staff who understand gender relations in the local context and expert guidance. Only country office leaders who understand gender mainstreaming will advocate effectively with cooperating partners, find resources for training or reward gender-related initiatives.
40. Gender mainstreaming involves everyone. It requires all staff, not just GFPs, to be able to observe, analyse and innovate in the context of their work. As in other United Nations organizations, WFP's ability to implement the policy assumed widespread training and qualified GFPs; but GFPs are typically young women staff recruited nationally or junior staff with limited authority. Acknowledging the difficulties facing GFPs, WFP encouraged gender focal teams (GFTs) to include men staff and to prioritize TLI training for GFTs.
41. But weaknesses in the GFP system persist: responsibilities are often imposed without agreement, job descriptions rarely include GFP tasks and performance appraisals do not credit gender-related work; there is also a perception that “real” work allows little time for gender concerns. And because effective gender mainstreaming requires an understanding of each WFP modality, many junior GFPs lack the ability to coach their colleagues. The system works where there are dedicated and capable GFPs – and some are outstanding – but the shift from WID to gender mainstreaming requires expertise, time and authority that GFPs rarely have.
42. Approaches to monitoring at the local level were missed opportunities for building gender-related capabilities among local staff and partners. WFP's programme assistants, food aid monitors and cooperating partners collect sex-disaggregated data, but they rarely analyse it or complement it with qualitative monitoring; and when they do, there is little follow-up. Although there is attention to inputs and outputs, there are few attempts to assess impacts and few opportunities to discuss the relationship between local gender roles and WFP's modalities.
43. Consequently, monitoring the provision of nutrition and health information for mothers has not raised questions about including and educating fathers. Celebrating women's participation on oversight committees when there is little participation by men has not raised questions about the need for men to share responsibilities for food security.



44. WFP's capability depends on the financial resources allocated. The policy foresaw two approaches to budgeting: special internal and external allocations; and mainstreaming gender-related expenses into all programme budgets. Special funds paid for the surveys and the training initiative; internal funds covered the mid-term review and final evaluation and PDPG's annual budgets. But because it has not mainstreamed direct operational costs or direct support costs for gender, WFP cannot report resources spent at the operational level on women and girls as beneficiaries or on gender-related initiatives.
45. At the operational level, managers who recognize the importance of gender mainstreaming were hampered by the lack of resources: many reported that if they had had gender mainstreaming resources, they would have done more.
46. WFP's capability was also hampered by failure to recognize and build on available resources. For example, the other Rome-based agencies have training courses, assessment tools and experts. At the country level, WFP does not always participate in United Nations gender working groups; and the junior GFPs it sends do not have sufficient understanding of gender to see linkages such as the need to work on gender-based violence because distribution of food in contexts of scarcity often raises household tensions.
47. There are also times when WFP could promote gender equality without using its limited resources by establishing site-specific partnerships and working in a sequence with others. WFP typically reaches vulnerable populations before others, and undertakes assessments that may identify gender-related needs. Even when WFP provides only short-term food assistance, it could link, for example, with: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which could improve school facilities or curricula where WFP's school feeding programme has increased girls' enrolment; the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which could offer life-skills training for the husbands of young women receiving fortified food; and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which could support gender budgeting where local government provides no funding for social services supported by women volunteers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

48. The evaluators commend the designers of the WFP Gender Policy (2003–2007), which has achieved a major success in comparison with other organizations in that it has enhanced the visibility of women and girls not just as vulnerable beneficiaries but as critical contributors to household and community food security. This is an essential foundation for gender equality. But WFP lags behind in gender analysis and mainstreaming, partly because of the way the policy is written and partly because of disconnection from the field.
49. Policy implementation was strong as a result of positive measures designed to extend implementation beyond the Headquarters level to the field and a monitoring system that reinforced compliance. These elements laid sound foundations, but some operational actors perceived them as uniform and inflexible and raised the need for local approaches.
50. Because the indicators measured outputs rather than outcomes, they do not support conclusions regarding the impact of ECW on the lives of women and their families.
51. Some weaknesses stem from general issues: i) attention to outputs rather than outcomes; ii) failure to analyse and learn from collected data; iii) limited institutionalized resources



for capacity development; and iv) a focus on delivering food to family representatives, with little attention to distribution in households.

52. There were initial political will and resources, and WFP's gender specialists demonstrated extraordinary dedication, but leadership and resources have declined. Many believe that the focus on women has been accomplished and that gender mainstreaming is no longer important.

Issues for the Future

53. Restoring the gender mainstreaming mandate. WFP needs to find visible, meaningful and lasting ways to signal the ongoing importance of gender mainstreaming as good humanitarian and development practice and as a matter of equity.
54. Completing the transition from WID to gender mainstreaming. It is time for WFP to give real meaning to the concept of gender, for example by recognizing how men can help to protect women in refugee camps and how fathers can share responsibility for children's nutrition. The overall objective should be respectful gender relationships, with gender integration as an approach and gender analysis as a primary tool. New capacity-building is needed.
55. Re-orienting the institutional approach to enable context-led approaches. WFP has decentralized decision-making, and gender expertise and resources have increased at the regional and country levels. Staff and partners increasingly recognize the benefits of gender analysis and endorse gender equality. More partners see the value of engaging boys and men to improve gender relations for the benefit of all in addition to addressing women's needs. However, the status of women and girls, the rigidity or flexibility of gender roles and the quality of gender relationships vary from locality to locality, so there is a need to support initiative and innovation at the operational level.
56. Marshalling and allocating resources at the operational level. Because resources are scarce and corporate programmes are costly, resources for gender-related issues must be carefully targeted. Country offices need funds for capacity-building and technical support, and for unanticipated but strategic opportunities to promote gender equality. Rather than trying to bring all staff to average levels of understanding, WFP could support those more "enlightened" staff who could provide leadership and share capacity as they rotate to future assignments. The successes of those country offices that make the effort and attain results could be an example to others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

57. The evaluators make the following recommendations:

I. Take immediate steps to communicate the ECW and gender equality.

- Issue the new gender policy with strong senior management endorsement.
- Develop and disseminate a gender-integrated version of WFP's Strategic Plan (2008–2011).
- Improve the gender content of WFP's public statements by coaching public information staff in gender mainstreaming.



II. Build gender mainstreaming capacity by enhancing training and guidance.

58. Gender mainstreaming requires staff and partners who understand gender analysis. The new gender policy should include a strategic action plan for capacity-building and a list of requirements that may include:
- basic training for all new staff and partners, perhaps through an interactive CD-ROM such as that used for training on sexual harassment;
 - training for country directors, deputy country directors and programme managers;
 - multiple options for the field, incorporating professional gender expertise and learning from experience;
 - an alternative to corporate training programmes such as grants or vouchers: country directors could access resources with which to recruit gender experts for technical assistance or training; and
 - opportunities for gender experts in regional bureaux to provide technical expertise and promote exchanges among countries in the region.
59. Monitoring and evaluation should be a basis for learning and innovation. All programmes should be expected to analyse data and invite staff and cooperating partners to share gender-related observations, concerns and experiences.
60. WFP demonstrated its willingness to take innovative approaches with the ECW. It should use its new gender policy to encourage forward thinking and collaboration with other agencies to research the impacts of different approaches while supporting sustainable food security, focusing on government capacity and the handing over of programmes, and on household-based resilience. There is no justification for claiming, as many do, that it is difficult to determine whether programmes benefit target groups and then claiming, without verification, that they are effective. There are rapid and cost-effective ways of providing acceptable assessments of outcomes and impacts that are well within WFP's financial, professional and data-collection capacities.

III. Re-orient the roles of Headquarters, country offices and regional bureaux.

61. Headquarters should concentrate on:
- making it clear that WFP takes gender mainstreaming seriously;
 - generating commitment to gender mainstreaming by engaging with staff and sharing successes;
 - mobilizing and managing technical and financial support for country offices, sub-offices and cooperating partners; and
 - collecting and sharing reports from the field.
62. Other aspects of gender mainstreaming should be left to context-driven needs and initiatives.



63. Country Offices should be responsible for:
- undertaking or gaining access to gender analyses;
 - formulating locally appropriate targeted measures and developing relevant and meaningful indicators;
 - providing gender-related training or expertise; and
 - identifying resources and attracting gender-oriented funding from country-focused donors.
64. To shift funding and control to the local level, a mechanism such as a grant fund could be used – the Gender Funding Facility of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is an example – to which country offices could submit proposals for gender-focused initiatives. Funds could be leveraged to encourage the Rome-based agencies to share resources.

HUMAN RESOURCES

65. Gender balance performance has been mixed. The percentage of women in the WFP workforce has steadily increased, and although the gap between men and women still increases as level of seniority increases, the gap at more senior levels has narrowed. In 2003, of all men staff members in WFP 27.8 percent were at the P5 level and above, while just 10.2 of all women staff were P5 or above; by 2007 the figures were 29.8 percent of men staff members and 22.5 of women staff members. Thirty-six percent of deputy country directors were women in 2007, compared with 17 percent in 2001.
66. There was a decrease in the proportion of women as country directors, from 28 percent in 2001 to 23 percent in 2007; WFP also falls short in recruiting women for those hardship duty posts classified as “D” or “E”. PDPG’s follow-up survey found that the proportion of women food monitors decreased from 40 percent in 2003 to 30 percent in 2006.
67. The evaluators also found pervasive frustration. For example, managers had difficulty in finding qualified women candidates, resulting in disappointing recruitment, and women were tired of participating in a working culture they perceived as male-dominated, with limited opportunities for promotion.
68. The HR objectives of the gender policy are affected by issues similar to the programmatic issues. First, they often focus on targets rather than on understanding gender-related obstacles and developing strategies for overcoming them. Each area where women are less well-represented poses different challenges and requires different strategies. Increasing the proportion of women at the highest levels may require greater political will: a long-term strategy for women in P5 positions and above could focus on mentoring and advancing women in WFP. Recent succession planning initiatives and management training for women are steps in the right direction.
69. Second, the rationale for targeted measures for women are that they promote equity and effectiveness in the workplace. But mandates and targets are not necessarily the best approach. A strategic approach, on the other hand, would raise awareness of the benefits to programmes of recruiting more women: for example women food monitors are able to reach and communicate with women beneficiaries, men and women working together model effective gender relations and combining men’s and women’s perspectives in a country office promotes creative problem-solving.



70. Third, gender-neutral practices have different impacts on men and women. Once decentralization reduces control by HR professionals in Rome and disperses the authority to hire staff, there will be a need to ensure that hiring managers understand unintended biases such as the tendency to choose staff with a familiar background or characteristics.
71. Fourth, the hiring context has evolved and the backgrounds and profiles of prospective women employees have changed. WFP now has an extensive pool of talented women, many of whom are hired nationally, who seek career-building experience in emergency settings. Rather than struggling to recruit international professional women, WFP could promote nationally hired women with WFP experience. Gender roles have changed, too: the challenges are no longer limited to finding suitably qualified and experienced women because family concerns may be as important for fathers as for mothers. Women and men may be interested in hardship posts while they are young and single, but as parents they will have reservations and will not seek such positions again until their children have become independent.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

72. Rather than expecting improvement in all areas and at all levels, WFP should focus on priority areas. In particular, qualified women should be found for the highest levels of WFP leadership and for contexts where reaching female beneficiaries requires female staff (e.g. conservative countries and environments with high levels of SGBV).
73. To recruit and retain qualified women, WFP must address systemic issues. The will to recruit women must come from hiring managers and field-based HR staff. Some staff need to understand the ways in which women are critical for delivering food assistance; others understand the issues but need to acquire skills and receive support.
74. Many qualified men and women have entered the United Nations through national recruitment in recent years. WFP has a large pool of experienced nationally recruited women food aid monitors and programme assistants: it could address some gender balance issues by removing systemic obstacles to training and promoting them.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (United Nations)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ECW	Enhanced Commitments to Women
FFA	food for assets
FFT	food for training
FFW	food for work
GFP	gender focal point
GFT	gender focal team
HR	human resources
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	non-governmental organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PDPG	WFP's (former) Gender Unit
PRC	Programme Review Committee
RBM	results-based management
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
TLI	training and learning initiative
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WID	women in development