

## WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

### Good practice

Since 1995 WFP and its partners have been working on strengthening women's control over food in relief distributions. In many relief operations women have been encouraged to collect the household food rations themselves. However, household food entitlements continued to be issued in the name of the household head. This system created difficulties for those refugee women/children from polygamous families who were neglected by their husband/father and could not get access to their food rations. Therefore WFP, UNHCR and host governments agreed in a number of countries that in these situations family/household ration cards be issued in the name of each wife and her dependants (with the husband joining one of these groups or receiving a ration card for himself).

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### Recent policy statements

WFP's mission is to provide access to food to hungry men, women and children in situations of acute and chronic food insecurity, thus contributing to the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people who suffer from hunger by the year 2015. In this context, WFP has developed a Gender Policy for the period 2003-2007, which was approved by its Executive Board in 2002 (WFP/EB.3/2002/4-A). The Gender Policy is based on the lessons from the implementation of WFP's Policy Commitments to Women 1996-2001, and on the experiences of partner agencies. It takes account of the important role women play for household food security and aims to close gender gaps among food aid beneficiaries and the organization's staff in order to more effectively contribute to food security.

The Policy contains eight Enhanced Commitments to Women (ECW), which focus on programming, advocacy and human resources. New features of the ECW are: (1) Focus on women's enhanced control of food in relief food distributions with the issuance of household food ration cards in women's names, with food delivered either directly to the women or in a manner preferred by them, and the ensuring of full transparency in the distribution system in order to prevent abuse; (2) Strengthened emphasis on adolescent girls by enlarging WFP's assistance portfolio to support their secondary school education and out-of-school training activities; (3) A new programme focus on food-assisted training activities, especially for women and adolescent girls will combine nutrition and health education with training in marketable skills and in life skills such as functional literacy, numeracy, and awareness; (4) Increased advocacy about women's and girls' role in ensuring household food security by putting emphasis on how households and societies as a whole gain and advance when women are better nourished, better educated, participate more equally in economic activities and have a stronger voice in decision-making; (5) In the area of human resources WFP especially aims to facilitate an increase in the proportion of female staff at management levels in humanitarian assistance operations where gender gaps are biggest and in household-level monitoring; (6) WFP has also recognized the importance of increasingly including HIV/AIDS affected women and children in its operations and of addressing their specific needs in collaboration with partners.

The WFP Executive Board emphasized the need for putting systems in place that allow the measurement of progress and achievements and the mainstreaming of all costs related to the implementation of the Gender Policy into budgets. The Executive Board also emphasized the need to systematically implement the ECW in humanitarian assistance operations as this was identified as an area requiring improvement. The gender dimension as reflected in the ECW has been mainstreamed in WFP's Strategic Plan 2004-2007 and its Management Plan 2004-2005 which will be submitted to the Executive Board in October 2003.

### Programme objectives

WFP continues to strive for gender mainstreaming in accordance with the ECOSOC resolution E/1997/66 and emphasizes positive measures for women to facilitate the closing of gender gaps. The objectives of the ECW 2003-2007,

which cut across all thematic areas of WFP's programmes are: i) meet the specific nutritional requirements of expectant and nursing mothers and - where appropriate - adolescent girls, and raise their health and nutrition awareness; ii) expand activities that enable girls to attend school; iii) ensure that women benefit at least equally from the assets created through food for training and food for work; iv) contribute to women's control of food in relief food distributions of household rations; v) ensure that women are equally involved in food distribution committees and other programme-related local bodies; vi) ensure that gender is mainstreamed in programming activities (situation analyses; monitoring and evaluations; standard reports; budgets; programme tools and guidelines; agreements with partners); vii) contribute to an environment that acknowledges the important role women play in ensuring household food security and that encourages both men and women to participate in closing the gender gap; and viii) make progress towards gender equality in staffing, opportunities and duties, and ensure that human resources policies are gender sensitive and provide possibilities for staff members to combine their personal and professional priorities.

### **Operational activities**

The implementation of WFP's Gender Policy is being facilitated by a number of initiatives carried out in 2003 and 2004: (1) Information sharing with partners on the Gender Policy and the ECW; (2) A continued in-house scrutiny of programme documents with regard to their consideration of the ECW and the budget mainstreaming of expenses related to their implementation; (3) Preparation of guidelines on the implementation of all ECW; (4) Design of ECW baselines that will determine the country and corporate level status quo in 2003-2004 against which results can be measured at a later point in time; conducting ECW baselines in at least 30 countries; (5) Preparation of ECW training modules and implementation of ECW training and other capacity building efforts at corporate, regional and country level; (6) Pilot-testing of measures that aim at enhancing women's control of food in relief food distributions; (7) Compilation of progress and achievements with regard to these initiatives for the mid-term review report on the implementation of the Gender Policy which will be submitted to WFP's Executive Board at its annual session in 2005.

### **Other recent activities:**

WFP has continued to play an important role in inter-agency collaboration on mainstreaming gender in humanitarian assistance. It co-chairs the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance and in this capacity is actively involved in the ongoing review of gender mainstreaming in the Consolidated Appeals Process. WFP has also contributed to the inter-agency Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Humanitarian Crises, the Women, Peace and Security initiative and the development of Gender and HIV/AIDS fact sheets. ■