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WFP GENDER POLICY

**Promoting Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women in Addressing Food
and Nutrition Challenges**

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for approval.

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

“Breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty at its roots begins with women. Hunger breeds insecurity and often exacerbates circumstances that lead to conflict and crisis, and creates situations where women and girls are often victims of abuse, rape and violence. In situations of desperate poverty, access to food is power. WFP works in careful and innovative ways to ensure women are empowered – and protected in food distribution and access.”

Josette Sheeran, WFP Executive Director

Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: it is estimated that 60 percent of the world’s chronically hungry people are women and girls; 20 percent are children under 5. Achieving gender equality remains crucial to reach the poverty and hunger goals of the Millennium Declaration.

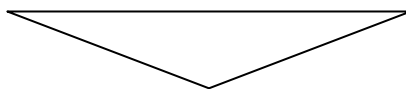
The Strategic Plan (2008–2011) provides an opportunity to review WFP’s gender policy and improve the way in which gender is addressed in its programming. The positive measures focusing on women established by previous WFP policies need to continue, but a more holistic approach to gender is required to improve the balance in relationships between genders and in families.

This document sets out a framework for mainstreaming gender more fully in WFP’s policies and programmes: it identifies priorities and actions that build on WFP’s strengths such as its unique field presence and extensive partnerships, incorporates the findings of a recent evaluation of its gender policy and indicates ways in which WFP can work more constructively to protect women.

WFP seeks to create an enabling environment for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women to support partner countries in addressing food and nutrition challenges. Ultimately this will increase the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes addressing poverty and hunger.



DRAFT DECISION*



The Board approves “WFP Gender Policy” (WFP/EB.1/2009/5-A) and:

- reaffirms its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- recognizes the importance of an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and is committed to actions, programme priorities and institutional support measures referred to in the document; and
- pledges to advocate for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.



PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1. WFP's mission can only be achieved if women, men, girls and boys are equal in terms of opportunities, access to resources and services and participation in decisions.¹ With regard to gender, the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2011) highlights the link between gender and hunger and reaffirms WFP's commitment to work at all levels to ensure gender sensitivity and equality. The new Strategic Plan calls for WFP to adapt its tools to context and meet identified needs in a more appropriate and flexible manner. It also provides an opportunity for WFP to review its gender policy and improve how gender is addressed in its programming.
2. A recent evaluation of WFP's gender policy concluded that “unlike many United Nations and donor agencies, WFP [has gone] beyond rhetoric to require specific, strategic actions at the operational level. This resulted in increased visibility and inclusion of women and laid strong foundations for gender mainstreaming.”²
3. This document builds on the strengths of the former (2003–2007) gender policy and sets out a framework for the continued mainstreaming of gender into WFP's policies, operational processes and programmes at all levels. It identifies priority actions to create an enabling environment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women with a view to increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes addressing extreme poverty and hunger.
4. A time-bound corporate action plan with realistic and measurable targets will be developed providing details of the institutional measures to support gender mainstreaming, including resource requirements. Country offices will incorporate measurable, context-based actions into their work plans based on gender analysis and in accordance with the priority areas identified in this policy.

RATIONALE

5. Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: it is estimated that 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls; 20 percent are children under 5.³ Achieving gender equality remains crucial to reaching the poverty and hunger goals of the Millennium Declaration.

¹ United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), from Concepts and Definitions section of website: “[Gender] equality between women and men [...] refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.”

² WFP. 2008. “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).

³ United Nations. 2007. Report of the Secretary-General: Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger, including through the Global Partnership for Development (E/2007/71). New York. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) the number of undernourished people as of December 2008 was 963 million (see: www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/8836/icode/).



6. WFP's past gender policies recognized this and focus on women's roles in ensuring household food security.⁴ Positive measures for women must therefore continue in WFP operations but a more holistic approach to gender is needed that improves the balance in relationships between genders and in families.
7. This is partly a result of new challenges and opportunities for gender equality: for example, changes in the dynamics of the HIV/AIDS pandemic have prompted WFP to scale up its response and to pay particular attention to mainstreaming a gender dimension into HIV/AIDS programming.⁵
8. WFP's mission is also becoming increasingly difficult as a result of climate change, given the high proportion of hungry people living in developing countries that are affected by climate change and yet have minimal capacity to adapt.⁶ WFP is strengthening its capacity to respond to the challenges related to climate change, including its response to the different needs and coping mechanisms of women, men, boys and girls. For example, in inequitable societies, women are more vulnerable to natural disasters than men because of socially constructed gender roles and behaviours that affect their access to resources.⁷
9. High food prices and the current global financial crisis exacerbate vulnerability to food insecurity⁸ and are negating some gains made in addressing food and nutrition insecurity. The implications are different for men and women, so care is needed in designing policies and actions to address the situation.
10. Violence against women and girls has escalated in recent years, resulting in a global call for action. Much of this violence is occurring in conflict and post-conflict countries where WFP has large operations. The Secretary-General's study of violence against women sets out its forms, consequences and costs.⁹
11. In recognition of the need to expedite the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the United Nations adopted a gender mainstreaming policy and strategy in 2006,¹⁰ which provides a common framework for the United Nations system.

⁴ Research shows that improving the status of women results in positive outcomes for women and their families. Improvements in women's education have been linked to reductions in child malnutrition rates (Smith, L.C. and Haddad, L. 2000. *Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: A Cross-Country Analysis*. Washington DC, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Household food security tends to improve if women are given equal access to resources. See IFPRI. 2000. *Women: The Key to Food Security: Looking into the Household*. Washington DC.

⁵ WFP. 2006. *Getting Started: HIV, AIDS and Gender in WFP Programmes*. Rome.

⁶ WFP and Columbia University. 2008. *Climate Change in West Africa: Recommendations for Adaptation and Mitigation*. New York.

⁷ Neumayer, E. and Pluemper, T. 2007. The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002. Available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=874965>.

⁸ FAO. 2008. Soaring Food Prices: Facts, Perspective, Impact and Actions Required (HLC/08/INF/1). Document from the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. 3-5 June 2008. Rome.

⁹ United Nations. 2006. Report of the Secretary-General: In-Depth Study on all Forms of Violence against Women (A/61/122). New York.

¹⁰ United Nations. 2006. United Nations System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Focusing on Results and Impact (CEB/2006/2). New York.



WFP'S EXPERIENCE IN MAINSTREAMING GENDER

Achievements and Challenges

12. WFP's past gender policies have resulted in several achievements:
- i) The focus on women and girls has given them visibility as beneficiaries and contributors to household food security.²
 - ii) Women's access to food has increased considerably as a result of making women the holders of food entitlements.
 - iii) Women's equal participation in decision-making bodies has been promoted by establishing a 50 percent minimum for their participation in food committees.
 - iv) Girls' access to education has been enhanced by extra rations to encourage parents to send girls to school.
 - v) Women now have greater access to training through food-for-training (FFT) schemes.
 - vi) The collection of sex-disaggregated data has become routine.
13. There are, however, challenges still to be addressed:
- i) There is evidence that increasing the representation of women in food-related bodies does not automatically result in increased participation in decision-making.
 - ii) Issuing ration cards in women's names does not necessarily give them control over household rations because control is determined by the capacity to negotiate and decide the use of food.¹¹
 - iii) A "one-size-fits-all" approach to the Enhanced Commitments to Women (ECW) may have limited field-based innovation and reduced the impetus to carry out gender analysis to adapt programmes to their context.
 - iv) Limited understanding of gender issues among field staff has sometimes led them to perceive gender issues as relating only to women.¹² More research and improvements in programme design are necessary.
14. Achieving gender balance in staffing remains a challenge, particularly in managerial positions.² This is addressed in WFP's human resource strategy.¹³

¹¹ See WFP case studies to assess the implementation of women's control of food in relief food distributions (ECW IV) and participation in decision-making (ECW V) in Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zambia, June–September 2004.

¹² In a survey in 2007, the gender focal points also identified inadequate funding and capacity and limited practical tools for gender mainstreaming as challenges for implementing the gender policy.

¹³ "Preparing for Tomorrow Today: Strategy for Managing and Developing Human Resources (2008–2011)" (WFP/EB.2/2008/4-C/Corr.1)



POLICY FRAMEWORK

Vision

15. To create an enabling environment in WFP for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women reflected in policies, programmes and actions that support partner countries in addressing food and nutrition challenges.

Principles

16. Gender equality is not merely socially desirable: it is critical to the reduction of poverty and hunger¹⁴ and therefore linked to the achievement of WFP's Strategic Objectives. WFP will continue to seek opportunities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women to fulfil its mandate in food and nutrition security.
17. This gender policy builds on previous gender policies, and is guided by:
- the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2011), which emphasizes WFP's role in supporting countries in addressing hunger and undernutrition;
 - the principles of the United Nations policy and strategy on gender mainstreaming,¹⁵ Resolution 2006/36 of the Economic and Social Council and other norms and standards;¹⁶
 - the core values of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and respect in WFP's humanitarian principles;¹⁷
 - the principle of “do no harm”, which is the commitment to prevent actions that cause harm to any beneficiary:¹⁸ it may include ensuring that distribution sites are safe and taking care not to overburden women or expose them to violence, sexual exploitation or abuse; and
 - the principles of the gender and development approach, which encompasses the social, economic, political and cultural forces that determine how men and women might benefit from and control resources and activities; the approach focuses on gender relations with a view to achieving sustainable improvements in the status of women.

¹⁴ Morrison, A., Raju, D. and Sinha, N. 2008. Gender Equality is Good for the Poor. *Poverty in Focus*, 13: 16-17.

¹⁵ United Nations. 2006. *United Nations System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Focusing on Results and Impact* (CEB/2006/2). New York. The main elements are: i) accountability; ii) results-based management; iii) oversight functions – monitoring and evaluation (M&E), audit and reporting; iv) human and financial resources; v) capacity development; and (vi) coherence, coordination, knowledge and information management.

¹⁶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995); United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women and peace and security (2000; 2008); The Millennium Declaration (2000); the Declaration of the World Food Summit; five years later (2002); the Secretary-General's bulletins/directives on sexual exploitation and abuse (2003).

¹⁷ “Humanitarian Principles” (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C), p. 8.

¹⁸ CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. 2004. *The Do No Harm Handbook. The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict*, p. 19. Cambridge, MA, USA.



18. The development of this WFP gender policy has been informed by the evaluation of WFP's gender policy (2003–2007), consultations with partners and field staff, desk reviews of partners' policies, ECW baseline and follow-up surveys.¹⁹

Goals

19. The goals are:

- to strengthen and maintain an institutional environment that supports and encourages gender mainstreaming;
- to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of WFP programmes addressing hunger in partner countries; and
- to promote the integration of a gender perspective into the food and nutrition policies, programmes and projects of partner countries and cooperating partners.

Expected Outcomes

20. The expected outcomes are:

- increased knowledge and skills among WFP staff for addressing gender in policy development and programming;
- improved and sustained gender mainstreaming in WFP programmes and activities; and
- increased capacity in partner countries to incorporate a gender perspective into food and nutrition policies, plans and projects.

21. Targeted actions²⁰ and gender mainstreaming²¹ will be applied to achieve the expected outcomes. Targeted actions will be carried out in the context of WFP's field-level programming on the basis of gender analysis; gender will be mainstreamed at the programme and institutional levels. Because women are often disadvantaged, these actions will more often favour them. This does not preclude action for men and boys if required.

PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

Building on Strengths and Addressing the Challenges

22. WFP has a strong base from which to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women: the focus on women in its previous policies has increased awareness of and respect for women as partners and beneficiaries.²

¹⁹ WFP. 2007. Gender Focal Point Survey. Desk Review of the ECW Implementation and Views from WFP Gender Focal Points/Teams. Rome.

²⁰ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2006. *Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action*. New York. See p. 3: Targeted actions "should compensate for the consequences of gender-based inequality such as the long-term deprivation of rights to education or health care. This is important as in many situations women and girls are more disadvantaged than men and boys [...] but there are a number of situations where boys or men will be targeted for action, for example when boys are the target of recruitment for armed conflict".

²¹ United Nations. 1999. (A/52/3/Rev.1), p. 24: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action [...] in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of [...] policies and programmes [...] so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."



23. WFP therefore commits itself to:
- continue providing food assistance for pregnant and lactating women, children under 5 and adolescent girls;
 - continue making women the food entitlement holders and ensuring that they are not put at risk of abuse or violence as a result of this policy;
 - continue facilitating the participation of women in food distribution committees; and
 - continue improving access to education and reducing the gender gap in primary and secondary education, using take-home rations as an incentive.
24. The gender policy evaluation identified key issues to guide this new policy, including i) restoring a gender mainstreaming mandate; ii) reorienting the institutional approach to enable context-led approaches; and iii) marshalling operational resources.
25. WFP will therefore establish new programme priorities and institutional support mechanisms that will provide the enabling environment for successful gender mainstreaming.

NEW PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

26. The new programme priorities incorporate a gender-sensitive perspective and take into account the different contexts in which WFP operates, ranging from complex emergencies to more stable conditions.

Addressing Gender-Related Protection Challenges

27. WFP will continue to promote the protection of its target population and staff members in accordance with the Secretary-General's special measures on sexual exploitation and abuse,²² and Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women and peace and security.
28. WFP will work to prevent violence against women, girls and children in its operations. In complex emergencies it will seek to do the following:
- Reduce the burden on, and improve the safety of, women and girls in camps. Firewood is often collected exclusively by women and girls,²³ who may walk long distances outside the camps with heavy loads and at personal risk. As part of inter-agency efforts, in camps WFP will: i) mobilize resources to provide fuel-efficient stoves to the most vulnerable women; ii) use its food assistance to support income-generating activities for women and girls; iii) support the creation of safe and private spaces for women and girls; and iv) facilitate the formation of women's support groups in camps to enable women to make decisions and be heard concerning food and nutrition security.
 - Identify additional opportunities in WFP operations to improve the protection of women and girls. This will include: i) using food assistance to engage men and boys

²² United Nations Secretariat. 2003. Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). New York.

²³ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. 2006. *Beyond Firewood: Fuel Alternatives and Protection Strategies for Displaced Women and Girls*. New York. According to this study, cooking fuel is rarely provided by the humanitarian community; it is even rarer for men to collect wood.



to foster understanding of the links between gender inequality and hunger, involve them in activities to protect women and children from violence and reduce burdens on women, and share childcare responsibilities; ii) making WFP distribution sites safe for women and girls; and iii) using WFP's field presence and national staff to encourage local initiatives aimed at ending violence against women and girls.

Integrating a Gender Perspective into HIV/AIDS Programmes

29. Addressing gender inequality is fundamental to reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV and AIDS. WFP will continue to support an inter-agency response to the pandemic, and will seek to: i) use its food assistance to increase awareness of the links between HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, gender-based violence and food insecurity; and ii) work with partners to promote the involvement of men and boys in HIV/AIDS prevention, mitigation, treatment, support and caregiving.²⁴

Breaking Gender Barriers through Improved Mother-and-Child Health and Nutrition Programmes

30. Mother-and-child health and nutrition (MCHN) programmes can break gender barriers in childcare by including men and boys in nutrition and health education activities. WFP will continue to collaborate with partners to: i) provide an essential package of non-food interventions for pregnant and lactating women, children under 5 and adolescent girls; ii) involve men and boys in activities to raise awareness of MCHN, improve their knowledge of and commitment to maintaining the nutrition and health of mothers and children, and increase their participation in childcare; and iii) promote the development and use of ready-to-use foods that meet nutritional needs and save time and fuel, especially in camps.

Promoting Gender Equality through WFP-Supported School Feeding

31. There is evidence of the positive impact of school feeding on addressing the gender gap in education. WFP will therefore collaborate with partners²⁵ to further use school feeding as an entry point to promote gender equality during children's formative years. Innovative learning and advocacy methods will be promoted to address, for example, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

Promoting Positive Gender Relations and Supporting Sustainable Livelihoods

⇒ *Food for Work and Food for Training*

32. Food-for-work (FFW) and FFT programmes will be designed to take into account the different needs of women, men, young people and the elderly. WFP will ensure: i) that women and men participate equally in identifying FFW and FFT activities on the basis of their different needs and priorities; ii) that women and men have equal access to benefits

²⁴ For example in Zimbabwe, the Rome-based-care programme supported by WFP and the NGO Africare has a strong focus on involving men by training them as caregivers. This initiative has challenged the myth that men cannot provide care for the sick and it has reduced the burden on women of providing care.

²⁵ The school feeding "Essential Package" is a WFP-UNICEF collaborative effort that includes promoting girls' education and can be expanded to include other gender-based interventions.



through FFW and FFT programmes that are designed in a participatory process; support systems such as childcare will be considered in the design to improve women's access to the benefits; and iii) that a monitoring system is put in place to ascertain whether women are empowered in terms of decision-making and of benefiting from WFP assistance to improve their livelihoods; the system should include qualitative data.

⇒ *Cash Transfer and Voucher Programmes and Cash for Work*

33. Cash transfer and voucher programmes and cash-for-work (CFW) programmes, will be designed that ensure that women benefit equally with men, without negative implications. WFP will ensure that: i) cash transfer and voucher programmes take into account the needs of women and children, including food and nutrition security and the potential for domestic violence over the control of cash or vouchers; and ii) a monitoring system is put in place to ascertain whether women are empowered by cash transfer and voucher programmes through decision-making and improved livelihoods.

⇒ *Purchase for Progress*

34. Purchase for Progress (P4P) projects will take into account the inequality of women and men in access to farming inputs, transports, markets and returns. WFP will ensure: i) adequate representation of women farmers by establishing minimum targets for their participation in line with country contexts; this will include working with traders and farmers' associations to ensure that women are equitably represented in management positions and that women farmers benefit directly from cash payments for their produce; and ii) that a monitoring, evaluation and reporting system is in place at the country level to track women's participation.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

35. WFP will establish specific institutional measures to support the incorporation of a gender perspective in its operations.

Capacity Development

36. WFP will ensure that staff members develop the capacity to mainstream gender in their work, including carrying out gender analyses. A comprehensive capacity development plan will be implemented to address the capacities and competencies of staff for mainstreaming gender.²⁶ This will include utilizing training opportunities created through inter-agency mechanisms and the efforts of partners.
37. WFP, as part of the United Nations country teams and through its involvement in Poverty Reduction Strategy processes, will advocate for – and support governments and cooperating partners to strengthen their capacity for – incorporating a gender perspective in their national food and nutrition plans, policies and programmes.

Accountability

38. WFP will: i) improve its accountability systems and revise its accountability tools to incorporate gender perspectives into workplans, risk-management profiles, monitoring and

²⁶ For example, gender-sensitive content will be incorporated into the training for country directors in 2009.



evaluation tools, the *Indicator Compendium*, the Performance and Competency Enhancement programme and the Strategic Results Framework; senior managers will provide leadership and have primary responsibility for implementing this gender policy; ii) promote accountability for gender mainstreaming among its partners through field-level agreements and Memoranda of Understanding; iii) strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to measure and report on progress in mainstreaming gender; and iv) enforce and monitor its policy on sexual harassment and abuse of power, in accordance with the United Nations' zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Advocacy

39. WFP's extensive field presence and network of partners provide opportunities for advocacy at different levels. WFP will collaborate with its partners to: i) raise awareness of the importance of promoting gender equality and empowering women to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security; and ii) develop a communication and advocacy strategy for a better understanding of the links between gender inequality, hunger and the sharing of responsibilities.
40. WFP will harness the extensive experience of its gender focal points by transforming them into a gender advocacy network.

Gender Mainstreaming in Operations

41. WFP's extensive field presence also provides the opportunity to use knowledge of local conditions to design and implement programmes that are appropriate and sensitive to local cultures.
42. WFP will make it mandatory to incorporate a gender perspective into operations at all stages of a project cycle. WFP assessment tools will be revised accordingly to support this process.
43. To further help country offices to mainstream gender, WFP will: i) launch a Gender-Friendly Country Office Initiative, whereby country offices will be rewarded for compliance with the measures set out in this policy; and ii) mobilize resources to establish a Gender Innovations Fund to help country offices implement innovative activities that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Partnerships

44. WFP will continue to strengthen partnerships at all levels, including working at the inter-agency level to address gender issues and promote knowledge sharing.
45. WFP will work with partners – governments; international, regional and local organizations; and communities – to mobilize complementary resources, including expertise.²⁷

Research

46. WFP will collaborate with academic institutions on research to improve its policies and programmes and will collaborate with partners in assessing the impacts of its interventions.

²⁷For example the GenCap Project, administered by the Norwegian Refugee Council provides gender standby capacity to United Nations agencies using a pool of gender advisers who can be deployed on short notice during emergency situations.



CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

47. Implementing this policy will entail changes in some core processes and may require the establishment of new ones, which will have implications for human and financial resources. WFP will therefore invest in specialist staff and capacity development and will, within its funding capacity, provide resources for gender mainstreaming. WFP will also seek extra-budgetary resources to address funding gaps.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ECW	Enhanced Commitments to Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFT	food for training
FFW	food for work
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MCHN	mother-and-child health and nutrition