Gender in Food and Nutrition Security policy and legislation

Formulating gender-responsive FNS policies

Text-only version

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- recognize the importance of including gender considerations in FNS policies;
- be familiar with the good governance principles that should guide policy formulation and implementation;
- describe the steps in the gender-responsive policy formulation process;
- recognize the rationale and benefits of carrying out a gender situational analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Inequalities exist between men and women in access to productive resources, public services and opportunities. These inequalities contribute to the underperformance of the agriculture sector and negatively affect FNS, economic growth and overall development. Gender inequalities are not only unjust and constitute violations of human rights, but they are also costly. They undermine the effectiveness of development efforts and negatively impact agricultural productivity, household FNS, child nutrition and education, along with the well-being of women and men within the household and the community.

- Addressing gender inequalities in the formulation and implementation of FNS policies is essential, if policies are to be effective and socially sustainable.

In this lesson, we will consider how to formulate a gender-responsive FNS policy.

WHAT IS A GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICY

A policy or programme is gender-responsive when it fulfils two basic criteria:

- gender norms, roles and relations are considered; and
- measures are taken to reduce the harmful effects of gender norms, roles and relations, including gender inequality.
A gender-transformative approach leads to a gender-responsive policy, and:

- considers gender norms, roles and relations for women and men, and how these affect access to and control over resources;
- takes into account the specific needs of women and men;
- addresses the causes of gender-based inequities;
- includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations;
- includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men.

WHY ARE GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IMPORTANT IN FNS POLICIES?

Addressing gender inequalities in the formulation and implementation of FNS policies is important for a variety of reasons. Look at these different perspectives:

1. The need to comply with international commitments
   
   When a country ratifies an international convention that prohibits any form of discrimination, it is legally bound to put the treaty provisions into practice.

   **International commitments**
   
   Many countries have ratified international conventions relevant to FNS, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). When a country ratifies international law conventions and subscribes to international agreements, the government acquires legal obligations that need to be translated into domestic actions. Among these actions is the implementation of public policies that adhere to the norms and principles expressed in those conventions and agreements.

2. Gender inequalities hinder FNS
   
   A recent study confirmed that gender differences in the access to productive resources and services often hinder the achievement of household FNS. Therefore, a FNS policy that intends to improve the FNS situation, must address these inequalities.
More information

Both men and women make important contributions to food production, processing, marketing and retailing, and other parts of the food chain system. Within the household, women often bear the primary responsibility for preparing meals and caring for children and other family members, although men are assuming more responsibilities for these roles in many societies. **Ensuring equal access to resources and services** for men and women is, therefore, critical to **achieve positive FNS outcomes**.

3. **Policies addressing gender equality produce better outcomes**

The evaluation shows that incorporating gender equality principles in policy planning resulted in a greater achievement of the policy goals.

More information

Evidence shows that incorporating gender equality principles in policy planning can contribute to:

- increased **efficiency** in **policy implementation**;
- improved **prioritization of policy issues** to be addressed in the policy formulation;
- more **opportunities to mobilize resources** for policy implementation;
- greater and more **effective participation of stakeholders** to achieve enduring positive impacts on the lives and economic potential of rural women, men, girls and boys.

Summarizing, to formulate and implement a gender-responsive FNS policy, we need to:

- **Understand** and be responsive to the sociocultural norms affecting the roles and responsibilities of women and men in specific contexts, and the existing power dynamics.

- **Analyse** the factors that lie beneath gender inequality (such as age, occupation, ethnicity, nationality, education, wealth).

- **Recognize** the differences in the gender roles and access to resources, and promote gender equality proactively.

It is important to **involve** as much as possible **all stakeholders** in the policy formulation process, and to collect data disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic group, etc. Moreover, **institutions and stakeholders** that implement FNS policies should know how to operate in gender-responsive ways: they
must have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to address the differing needs and priorities of women and men of different age and socio-economic groups.

If gender considerations are not taken into account, policies could risk reinforcing existing gender discriminations. A gender-responsive policy takes into account the underlying causes of gender inequality and is designed specifically to address them. Here are some examples of how gender-responsive FNS policies could work in several areas:

- **Equal access → Provide incentives** aimed at ensuring equal access by women and men to productive resources by gender.

- **Laws and regulations → Develop and implement a legal and regulatory framework** that is designed to provide equal treatment for women and men.

- **Public expenditures → Plan public expenditures and pricing mechanisms** to promote investments in human capital (i.e. education), and provide financial resources (i.e. saving and credit) and physical assets on an equal basis to vulnerable women and men.

- **Existing laws → Remove or mitigate discriminatory elements** embodied in existing laws, institutions, market structures and technology, taking into account gender differences.

**More examples of policy measures to close the gender gap in agriculture**

The following is a set of policy measures¹ that could be employed in addressing gender-based barriers in the agricultural sector:

**Access to land**

- eliminate discrimination under the law;
- recognize the importance and power of customary land rights;
- train officials and evaluate them on gender targets;
- raise awareness of women on their land rights;
- ensure that women’s voices are heard;
- adjust bureaucratic procedures;
- gather sex-disaggregated data for policy design and monitoring.

**Social capital**

- adopt technology and innovative delivery channels;
- develop specific technologies tailored to women’s needs;
- strengthen extension services;

¹ from *The state of food and agriculture*, FAO 2011
Before starting the process of formulating a FNS policy, it is important to clarify what needs to be achieved:

- Your **ultimate goal** would be to **formulate a gender-responsive FNS policy** that recognizes and addresses the gender inequalities contributing to food and nutrition insecurity, and takes on the task of **transforming unequal relations**.

- **This goal requires you to**:
  - move beyond any gender neutral focus of policies, by **recognizing the differences** in gender roles, norms and access to resources, and **taking them into account** in formulating policy measures;
  - focus on **equitable distribution** of food, benefits, responsibilities and work, not only between women and men, but also among different groups of vulnerable people;
  - collect and analyse **sex-disaggregated data**, to understand **the underlying issues of gender-inequality** that contribute to food and nutrition insecurity;
  - establish a **clear gender strategy and formulate action plans** to implement the policies.

**THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The gender-responsive FNS policy should be guided by **good governance and equality principles**. It is important to start taking them into consideration while formulating the policy, as specific activities will be needed to ensure that these principles are eventually followed.
These principles are:

- **Participation**
  
  Participation refers to the degree to which the voices of men and women are heard and respected in making decisions, and in planning, implementing and monitoring actions.

  You can promote participation in informal ways, but also in a more institutionalized manner. For example, through a local body like a subdistrict committee that brings together representatives from the public sector and community-based organizations.

  You should **ensure that**:

  - the voices of the most vulnerable (including women) are heard and their interests are adequately represented;
  - preliminary meetings with women’s groups are held before formal meetings with other stakeholders to identify priority points for discussion and decision-making;
  - persons with specific knowledge of rural women’s roles and priorities are present and participate.

  **The “participation ladder”**

  The different degrees of participation are often referred to as the **steps on the “participation ladder”**. Here examples of participation in increasing order:

  - making decisions based on people’s own priorities and perceptions (self-determination) and implementing actions to fulfill those priorities (with or without public assistance);
  - participating in implementing certain actions (about which they may or may not have been consulted);
  - being consulted on specific issues when decisions need to be made;
  - being asked to provide information needed in the planning process or in action monitoring.

- **Empowerment**

  Empowerment is a process leading to greater awareness and participation, decision-making power and control over one’s life. An empowered individual has the capacity to make effective choices, and to translate them into the desired actions and outcomes.
This is influenced by:

- the ability to recognize the existing options and to make meaningful choices;
- and the opportunities that exist in the person’s formal and informal environments.

While formulating and implementing a policy, you should give special attention to the empowerment of the most vulnerable men and women. Then, you should monitor the process of empowerment to discover whether efforts are being made to empower all people. You should then evaluate the outcome at the end of the empowering process to understand whether both men and women been empowered effectively.

• Responsiveness

- Another essential element of good governance is responsiveness to the needs and established priorities of all those who are served by public institutions. It implies that public institutions have full knowledge of and understand the needs and priorities of the target groups, and respond to them to the best of their capacity. It also means that those who need to be provided with public services are given the opportunity to make their needs and priorities known to public authorities, and can enter into a dialogue with them about the needed changes. It is essential to recognize the existing differences in needs and priorities within the target groups of the policy.

• Consensus-oriented

- During policy formulation and implementation, it is important to consider the different viewpoints and interests to reach a broad-based consensus on how to proceed in the best interests of all the stakeholders. The mediation should take place on the basis of mutual respect among all those who participate in the consensus-building process. The consensus must consider both short-term and long-term perspectives on what is needed. Make sure to include representatives of all target groups, especially the most vulnerable (including women), and of all the stakeholders involved in the implementation phase.

• Inclusiveness
During the policy negotiations, it is important to make sure that the **most vulnerable and food insecure socio-economic groups**, (who are often left out of the decision-making and planning processes), are represented. All members of the community, but particularly those who suffer from social and economic marginalization, should feel that they have a stake in the society’s well-being. They must not be or feel excluded from participating in decision-making, or from contributing their ideas and points of view.

- **Equity**

  Achieving and maintaining food security and good nutrition is a **right of all people**. When adopting this guiding principle, you should give high priority to identifying policy measures that address structural inequalities (such as gender inequality). To do this, you could **include in your analysis questions** such as:

  ✓ What do different groups of men and women have at stake?
  ✓ Are there gender-based differences among and within the stakeholder groups?
  ✓ What are the opportunities and constraints faced by different groups of men and women?
  ✓ How will the potential interventions affect the livelihoods of different groups of men and women?
  ✓ How can conflicts between the interests of men and women be addressed?

- **Non-discrimination**

  Any discrimination in access to food, and in means to acquire food, on the grounds of race, skin colour, gender, language, age, religion, political affiliation, property, birth or any other status constitutes a **human rights violation**. Therefore, you need to make sure that your **policy will not carry out or reinforce any discriminatory practices** by benefiting certain groups at the expense of others. Possible **strategies to eliminate discrimination in the access to food** are:

  ✓ guarantees of full and **equal access** to economic resources, for women and men (including the right to inheritance and the ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technology);
  ✓ measures to respect and protect self-employment and to ensure equitable remuneration for decent living conditions for both women and men;
• **Transparency**
  ➤ Ensure that decisions are made and put in place, (and actions implemented) in accordance with rules, norms and regulations that are known and understood by all whom they affect.
  Ensure that adequate information about decisions and actions taken is easily accessible and understood by all of those concerned.

• **Accountability**
  ➤ Individuals, organizations or institutions are accountable when they have an obligation to explain and justify decisions and actions (or their lack) to those being affected by those decisions.
  Similarly, those affected by decisions and actions must have complete access to relevant and valid information. They should be able to ask for explanations and justifications, and have full knowledge of applicable administrative and legal rules. This is particularly important when it comes to respecting and protecting human rights, including gender equality.

**OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN PHASES**

The main phases of a gender-responsive policy formulation and implementation process are:

1. Preparatory steps
2. Gender situation analysis
3. Formulating the policy
4. Preparing the policy documents
5. Action plan for policy implementation
6. M&E and policy validation or reformulation

In this lesson, we will focus on the first four phases: the gender situation analysis and the policy formulation process.
PREPARATORY STEPS

Where to start?

Here is a checklist of activities that you can take in preparation for the policy formulation:

✔ Identify the policy formulation team ➔ FSN involves several sectors and it is, therefore, important that the policy formulation or assessment team is made up of staff from the most relevant sectors.

Who should be on the team?

Technical staff with solid knowledge of relevant FNS conditions at national and local levels, or with managerial responsibilities for FNS actions in their respective sectors, should be included among the team members. Representatives from key local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support or implement FSN actions and gender equality should also be part of the policy formulation team, to forge stronger partnerships between the government and the NGO community.

How many people?

A team that is too large may slow down the policy formulation or assessment process, and make coordination of the team's work more difficult. There will be a core team (consisting of six to eight members) that undertakes the actual formulation or assessment, and a consultative team (an additional eight to ten members including experts and representatives of local NGOs) to provide further guidance. The main sectors to be represented in the core team are agriculture, health, social protection, trade (particularly in countries with a high dependence on food imports), employment and women’s affairs.

Tip – How to identify the right partner

• To address the specific needs of rural women, it is necessary to identify partners that can represent their priorities, as well as the interests and expectations of all stakeholders, including women.

• It is also important to define the expected roles and responsibilities of each participating stakeholder to identify the relevant aspects that they will address during the discussion and the scope of their activities.
✓ **Develop a work plan**  
Develop a **work plan** for the formulation process with **time-bound outputs** and a schedule of **activities** and **responsibilities** for each team member. All stakeholders should be informed about the nature of the process, when it will take place and what outputs will be produced. With this understanding, supervisors will know for how long and for what purpose their staff members will need to be assigned to the policy formulation team. The work plan must be **drawn up by the team and agreed upon by all members**, so that its implementation can be **a shared responsibility** and everyone can be held accountable. The work plan will also be **widely shared**.

✓ **Map and brief stakeholders**  
This mapping consists of **identifying all governmental and non-governmental institutions, organizations and groups** that are involved in planning and implementing activities related to FNS and to gender equality issues. Once a **list of stakeholders** has been compiled, together with a description of their mandates and activities, you can select each representative who will be invited to participate in the policy formulation team (or who will be consulted as key informants). The initial mapping will be followed by a more in-depth stakeholder analysis as part of the gender and FNS situation analysis.

**Tip – Briefing stakeholders**
Special arrangements are needed to brief stakeholders about the policy formulation process and to obtain their inputs. This briefing will **ensure ownership and responsibility** for the policy design which is essential for policy implementation.

**List of stakeholders**
It is important to assess which stakeholders will represent the interests and priorities of women, and the target beneficiaries during the policy formulation process. These could include men and women’s producers’ groups and rural organizations, such as marketing cooperatives, private traders’ organizations or women’s associations. Whenever possible, **different groups of men and women** stakeholders should be involved in information sharing and in the policy dialogue.

✓ **Form a steering committee (SC)**  
It is useful to identify a **high-level, multi-sector steering and coordinating committee (SC)** to **guide and oversee the policy formulation** process. The SC will also ensure the coordination between all policy formulation parties, and will assign resources.
and responsibilities to different government structures and NGOs. One of the first tasks of the SC is to analyse and identify actions to address gender constraints and needs, to make sure that gender gaps will be addressed adequately by the FNS policy.

**Who should be on it?**

The SC could be made up of principal secretaries of directors of relevant ministries and representatives from civil society, the private sector and rural communities. The SC might be chaired by the lead ministry responsible for FNS and could include representatives of:

- relevant central government structures, such as the ministry for women’s or gender affairs, agriculture, fisheries, water, planning and finance, or statisticians;
- all relevant decentralised government structures such as regional and district councils, to ensure that rural women’s interests are adequately represented;
- NGOs, including those with knowledge of gender issues in rural areas;
- international aid agencies with at least one gender sector specialist;
- men’s and women’s producers’ groups and rural organizations such as marketing cooperatives or private traders’ organizations.

✔ **Strengthen capacity**  → This activity is critical for the effectiveness and sustainability of the policy formulation process. Especially during the initial stages of policy formulation, it is advisable to organize capacity development for members of the policy formulation team. For example, capacity development could consist of a combination of short training workshops on specific gender-related topics.

**Tip – Raising awareness**

Raising awareness on gender issues is important at this stage, to ensure that policy-makers are informed of gender-related constraints and opportunities while they review and modify the legal framework and the existing policies, and they define the policy details.

**Example**

In the legislative sphere, stakeholders must be prepared and adequately informed to address gender aspects such as:

- formal recognition of both men and women as producers and household heads;
- changes in land laws to improve women’s access to and ownership of land;
- modifications in regulations and procedures to improve gender equality in the access to financial services;
- changes in laws affecting women’s capacity to enter into business contracts;
- formal recognition of women’s rights to membership in professional organizations and trade unions;
- changes in inheritance laws to strengthen the position of widows.
✓ Mobilize resources ➔ With a detailed work plan for policy formulation and a clear mandate, you can proceed with the mobilization of the resources needed for the policy formulation phase. The most important resource is the time of the team members, key informants and participants in focus group discussions. Financial resources will be needed for transportation to the field, for materials and supplies, and for a fully-equipped work venue if one is needed. Additional resources may be needed to organize consultative meetings or events, with special allocations to address gender constraints and opportunities, and to ensure the participation and representation of rural women and those groups that are most food insecure.

✓ Compile relevant documentation ➔ This activity is carried out in preparation for conducting a FNS situation analysis. It can be useful to prepare a small guide to indicate what documents and sex-disaggregated data should be gathered. For example:

- **Existing data**
  - in the national planning department, statistical office, line ministries, key technical agencies;
  - relevant scientific studies and assessments/reports that contain sex-disaggregated data;
  - data from NGOs and development partners.

- **Additional research** ➔ detailed sex-disaggregated data to understand the roles of and constraints faced by women and men in food security and agriculture.

**GENDER SITUATION ANALYSIS**

To formulate a new gender-responsive policy for FNS (or improve an existing one), you need to understand the FNS situation in your context, with particular attention to gender inequalities in FNS and their underlying causes. **Only once you analyse these gaps, can you formulate a policy** to address them effectively. You need to carry out a gender situation analysis to help **address the four main questions**:

- What is the problem?
What is the current food and nutrition status of men and women in different locations and at different times?

What are their main current FSN problems? What problems are chronic problems and which ones are due to acute or emergency conditions?

It is important to disaggregate data by sex, age, socio-economic and ethnic groups, to have a clearer overview of the socio-cultural context and the specific priorities and challenges of the different groups.

Why has it happen?

What are the reasons why specific groups of stakeholders suffer more from problems related to food and nutrition insecurity, or are more vulnerable to food insecurity and/or malnutrition?

Sex-disaggregated data are essential to carry out a comprehensive gender situation analysis for policy formulation.

Who are the affected people?

Who are currently the food and nutrition insecure groups, by location, sex, main livelihood characteristics and/or socio-economic status?

Who suffers the most from one or more FNS-related problems? Are women and girls more affected? How severe are these problems for different population groups?

Which socio-economic groups are most vulnerable to food insecurity and/or malnutrition in case of hazards and/or shocks (even if not food insecure or malnourished at present)?

How do you address these problems?

What gender-responsive policy actions can best address the existing gender gaps and reduce food insecurity and malnutrition?

What is the future outlook for food and nutrition insecurity? (Looking ahead is important because the policy actions designed now will be implemented and have an impact in the future).

A clear understanding of these aspects will lead to the definition of specific actions to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition.
A detailed FNS gender situation analysis is fundamental for the formulation of an evidence-based policy. Here is what a colleague recalls:

“\textit{The first time we formulated a FNS policy, we relied on existing data gathered during a previous situation analysis. However, the information was largely incomplete, and at that time we didn’t know that we needed to gather additional sex-disaggregated data and carry out a proper gender analysis of the information. In the end, the FNS policy was not effective in reducing food insecurity and malnutrition. In some cases, the most vulnerable groups ended up being even more discriminated against, because we had not identified and addressed their needs.}”

What are the mean areas of investigation for a gender situation analysis?

- FNS
- Equity analysis
- Legal environment for FNS and gender
- Policy environment
- Institutional setting for FNS
- Stakeholder analysis

FNS

\textit{The FNS situation analysis is usually structured along the four pillars of food security:}

- \textbf{food availability} – domestic food production and net food imports;
- \textbf{food access} – household food production, household income levels and distributions, and trends in domestic food prices;
- \textbf{food utilization and nutritional adequacy} – food consumption patterns, nutritional disorders and their health consequences;
- \textbf{stability in domestic food supplies} – exposure to manmade and natural shocks, livelihood resilience to shocks, resilience in domestic food production to shocks.
A causal analysis can explain the reasons for FNS problems. A very useful approach is the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA) livelihoods analysis, which looks at the responsibilities and opportunities within households for livelihood activities, and the constraints faced by women and men in implementing them (such as access to specific resources and services). The analysis also provides an understanding of what makes households vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity.

Equity analysis

Equity analysis is of critical importance: from the perspective of gender equality, we compare the food security and nutritional status of women (and girls) and men (and boys). You can carry out an equity analysis by accessing sex-disaggregated data to identify demographic, social, economic and location risk factors for household food insecurity and malnutrition.

For an effective policy that addresses inequities, high priority must be given to assist the households and individuals most affected by FNS risk factors.

Legal environment for FNS and gender equality

This part of the analysis provides an overview of the international human rights obligations, relevant constitutional and human rights laws, and human rights institutions in the country.

The analysis:
- summarizes which international legal instruments in relation to gender equality have been ratified by the country;
- provides information on the country’s legal system (including relevant customary laws);
- identifies national human rights institutions and their mandates;
- outlines legal frameworks related to participation and accountability mechanisms; and
- provides insights into the causes of gender discrimination in the country.

Policy environment for the right to food

It is necessary to conduct a rapid gender assessment of the sectoral policy and legal environment to identify the main gender gaps in FNS. Which national strategies, policies and programmes should be included in the assessment? You and the team should establish criteria for their selection, and
focus on national strategies, policies and programmes that relate to FNS, which may impact on gender-differentiated FNS outcomes.

This analysis will be guided by the findings of the situation analysis. For example:

- Which FNS problems and causes are addressed by existing policies?
- Are the most food-insecure and vulnerable population groups, including women, prioritized by policy interventions?
- What are the impacts of existing policy responses in addressing the gender inequalities identified in the situation analysis?

Institutional setting for FNS

In this part of the analysis, the first step is to establish the criteria for the selection of the organizations to analyse. You could include:

- national and local governmental institutions, civil society and private sector organizations with mandates related to FNS and human rights (especially in relation to gender equality);
- national bodies responsible for multisector policy coordination;
- women’s and youth groups.

The goal of the analysis is to determine the effectiveness, the capacity gaps, the extent to which the organizations are gender-sensitive and how they apply good governance practices (such as participation, non-discrimination, inclusiveness, equity, transparency and accountability). If this analysis shows that these institutions have capacity gaps related to gender, you should include in the FNS policy design priority actions to improve the institutional environment to ensure a gender-responsive policy implementation and coordination.

Stakeholder analysis

A stakeholder analysis helps you to:

- identify the individuals or groups that should be involved in the policy formulation and implementation;
- decide how to best address their interests and needs;
- determine their priorities.
It can help you find out how the different stakeholders are likely to affect policy implementation or be affected by the policy, so that you can make the most appropriate decision about how to involve each stakeholder. Women’s priorities must be represented in this analysis.

What are the main steps to conduct a gender situation analysis?

1. Review existing documentation and data sources
2. Analyse sex-disaggregated data obtained through interviews with key informants who also represent the interests of rural men and women.
3. Fill data gaps using sex-disaggregated data gathered through participatory collection methods.

To summarize what we just said, what can you assess during a gender situation analysis?

- The gender inequality of FNS outcomes;
- The specific roles, priorities and needs of rural women and men;
- Equity considerations with a focus on food-insecure, malnourished and vulnerable socio-economic groups;
- The legal and legislative environment for FNS and gender equality;
- The policy environment to identify policy gaps that can be addressed in the FNS policy;
- A stakeholder analysis to describe the institutional environment for policy implementation and coordination among sectors, institutions and organizations.

USING THE FINDINGS OF A GENDER SITUATION ANALYSIS

The findings of a gender situation analysis must be used throughout all the phases of the policy formulation, its implementation and monitoring.

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2 If you wish to learn more about participatory collection methods of sex-disaggregated data, please consult the SEAGA field level handbook.
1. During the **problem identification** and the **policy agenda setting** phases, the findings of the gender situation analysis can help us identify the underlying causes of the gender inequality problems, and formulate a **preliminary list of policy options** to address them.

2. During **policy formulation**, this information can help us understand how women and men are likely to react to, and benefit from, a specific policy measure that addresses their food and nutrition insecurity. It also helps us to formulate measures to assist men and women equally.

3. During **policy implementation**, the gender research findings can contribute to a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of alternative policy measures, taking into account their specific impacts on different target groups, men and women.

4. For **policy monitoring**, sex-disaggregated data from the gender research can be used to identify gender-sensitive indicators to measure how the policy impacts on women’s and men’s access to food and productive resources, and on their nutritional status.

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**More information**

These data can also be used to define a set of gender-sensitive indicators in the policy monitoring framework. The indicators can measure the impact of certain policy measures on men’s and women's access to food and productive resources, and on their nutritional status. Or they can show how specific policy actions have (unintended) inequitable effects on women and men, calling for a change in their design and/or implementation methods.

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**FORMULATING THE POLICY**

On the basis of the results of the gender situation analysis, you can start the actual **policy formulation**. You must clearly focus on the priority FNS problems affecting men and women, and their causes.

Here an **overview** of the policy formulation steps:

- **Step 1**: Rank problems
- **Step 2**: Develop a gender-responsive policy vision
- **Step 3**: Formulate the policy objectives
- **Step 4**: State the guiding principles
- **Step 5**: Define the strategic areas of action
- **Step 6**: Create an enabling environment
- **Step 7**: Formulate strategies for policy adoption and implementation
Step 8: Consider monitoring and evaluation

Tessa is a policy advisor in the policy formulation team of a gender-responsive national FNS policy. She will give you some real-life examples of the main steps in policy formulation.

Step 1: Rank problems

Rank the identified gender gaps in FNS so that you can set priorities for policy formulation. After conducting a gender situation analysis, you will probably have a long list of identified gender gaps in FNS. You will need to prioritize, or identify the main problem(s) by scoring the different findings. You can use the ‘Pairwise ranking’ methodology. See the SEAGA field level handbook for more details.

Step 2: Develop a gender-responsive policy vision

Once you have ranked the priority gender gaps or problems, you can formulate the vision of your policy. The vision is made up of one or more statements explaining what the desired long-term situation is to which the policy will attempt to contribute.

Thessa “On the basis of our analysis, the vision of our policy is: ‘To promote access for all citizens to safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food, to meet nutritional requirements for a healthy and active life. We recognize the right of all people to permanent access to food.’ “

Step 3: Formulate the policy objectives

Policy objectives should be directly linked to the findings of the FNS and gender situation analysis. Depending on the findings of the policy, the institutional and the stakeholder analyses, the policy objectives may also be defined to fill important gaps in the policy environment for FNS and gender equality, and in the institutional capacities to design, implement and monitor FNS actions.

Objectives of Tessa’s policy

- Improved food availability through enhancing domestic food production, and more efficient food marketing and trade.
- Increased purchasing power and access to food for all resource-poor households, including female-headed households.
- Improved utilization of adequate, nutritious, safe and high-quality food for all

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3 Tessa’s story is based on an adaptation of the Zanzibar food security and nutrition policy, 2013.
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members of the household.

- Reduced vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition for the most vulnerable socio-economic groups through well-targeted social protection measures and effective national emergency preparedness and food emergency measures.

Step 4: State the guiding principles

State the guiding principles underlying your policy. As mentioned earlier in this lesson, the formulation process of a gender-responsive policy is usually guided by a number of equity and fairness principles. You will have to identify all the necessary policy actions to ensure that these principles will be adhered to when the policy is implemented.

Guiding principles in Tessa’s policy:

- full respect for human dignity and the rule of law;
- institutional accountability mechanisms in place;
- non-discrimination with respect to age, gender, social status, religion, colour and racial background;
- equity and sustainability in achieving food security and good nutrition;
- effective and equal participation and empowerment of all citizens and/or their representatives in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policy measures, programmes, projects and other actions;
- transparency in decision-making and public resource allocation and use.

Step 5: Define the strategic areas of action

Define the main strategic areas of action for each objective. At this step, you should:

- define the most effective strategy and priority actions to achieve each objective, on the basis of the available information; and
- define the target group(s) expected to benefit from the proposed strategy.
A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints (SWOC) analysis is one approach to generate information that will help you choose priority actions. Deciding on priorities may often mean weighing alternatives. Therefore, it is important to establish clear criteria on which to base the comparison and the selection of alternative priority actions.

These strategic actions will then be detailed during the formulation of the plan of action, by including specific activities and time frames. In some cases, you could also include a separate component to address the specific needs of poor and food insecure women, with a budget allocation for specific investments in rural women.

Thessa “For example, in relation to the policy objective to “improve food availability through enhanced domestic food production, more efficient food marketing and trade”, we have identified a strategy that comprises a number of priority areas for intervention that allowed us to define and prioritize our activities.”

Examples of strategic areas of action in Tessa’s policy:

- advocate and promote investment in agricultural areas with high potential for growth, including crop, livestock and fisheries, so that all farmers can benefit;
- promote a policy dialogue towards implementation of agricultural sector investments and access to productivity-enhancing, environmentally-sustainable technologies (e.g. agroprocessing and value addition) targeting small-scale producers, particularly women;
- establish effective linkages between technological generation, service providers and recipients. A strategic approach to extension support for increasing agricultural production, reaching all beneficiaries, needs to be adopted;
- advocate and facilitate rapid land reforms that will reinforce the farmers’ security of land tenure, will secure land tenure for women farmers and will offer a stimulus for increasing investment in land and its use as collateral for credit;
- exploit the potential of smallholder men and women farmers in development and promotion of backyard farming including home gardening, improved poultry and small-scale dairy keeping;
- identify and promote more sustainable livelihood options for the most vulnerable and poor farmers in areas that are ecologically fragile.

Step 6: Create an enabling environment

Identify the main elements to create an enabling environment for gender-responsive policy implementation. What needs to be put in place to facilitate policy implementation? The results of the
institutional capacity analysis will be useful here. This implies assessing the mandate of the institutions, staff composition, resource availability and technical skills to ensure an adequate implementation of the policy. It is also essential to consider both internal and external factors that may influence the policy implementation, including an analysis of gender issues and concerns (i.e. socio-cultural context and customary laws that may discriminate against certain socio-economic and ethnic groups).

Thessa "For example, our analysis showed that relevant institutions and organizations do not generally apply good governance practices. They may also have inadequate gender skills and competence, making it more difficult for us to implement policy actions that reduce gender inequality. Thus, we decided to organize gender awareness-raising and education in those institutions and organizations, along with training on good governance practices.”

Defining an institutional framework

- The findings and conclusions of the institutional analysis should lead to defining an institutional framework for policy coordination and implementation. This is also in response to the need for intersectoral coordination and for establishing or strengthening government and civil society partnerships.
- This framework needs to be legalized by means of a legislative act, and the plan of action must include specific actions for making it operational.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder involved in the process must be defined and an accountability system be put in place.

Step 7: Formulate strategies for policy adoption and implementation

The SC may indicate short- and long-term strategies, focusing on those with a higher potential to foster changes towards gender equality. Once you formulate the gender-responsive policy, you need to define some actions outlining how the SC will continue to function to implement the policy commitments. For instance, you may devise actions to gain male allies and support who, in turn, can advocate for equal access to resources. At this point, you could begin to start thinking about your gender-responsive policy action plan.

Thessa "As part of our implementation and coordination mechanism, we identified several teams with clear roles and responsibilities. For example, we formed an intersectoral SC, whose membership consisted of high-level representatives of key ministries with a responsibility for FSN, and representatives of the private sector and NGOs.”

Example
Step 8: Consider monitoring and evaluation

Define a **monitoring and evaluation framework** for the gender-responsive policy. The policy formulation team should think about the monitoring and evaluation framework. Monitoring may cover both the process and methods by which the policy and its actions are implemented (process monitoring), and the policy’s impact in terms of achieving its gender equality goals (impact monitoring). The translation of the monitoring and evaluation framework into operational terms will be done during the **formulation of the plan of action**.

Thessa: “*In our policy, we mentioned the institutional framework and responsibilities for monitoring, and the possible linkages with the existing monitoring schemes such as, for example, the monitoring of poverty reduction or specific sector monitoring systems, such as a clinic-based health surveillance system.*”

**PREPARING THE POLICY DOCUMENTS**

How can I structure my policy document, and where can I include the issues related to gender equality?
There are many ways of structuring a policy document. In some countries, there may be established policy document structures that need to be observed. Here is an outline (the order of the sections may vary), based on the elements we have just considered:

- Preamble
- Justification
- Findings of the gender FNS situation analysis
- Vision statement
- Policy objectives
- Priority areas of actions
- Creating an enabling environment for gender-responsive policy coordination and implementation
- General description of the monitoring and evaluation process

Let us consider these sections in more detail. It is very important to integrate gender equality principles into every one of them.

**Preamble**

The preamble normally contains a (re-)affirmation by the government of the political commitment to achieve the intended goals of the policy. For example, it may state that significant reduction in food and nutrition insecurity is an important policy priority for the government.

**Focus on gender**

Reducing gender inequalities in general, and, specifically, those related to FNS outcomes should be part of the political commitment of the government. In other words, the government sees this policy as an instrument to reduce gender inequality, which is recognized as a human rights violation.

**Justification for the policy**
You may describe: (a) the extent and the magnitude of FNS problems and their links to other policy issues such as poverty reduction; (b) the number of men and women who are food insecure, vulnerable to food insecurity and are suffering from malnutrition; (c) gaps in the current policy environment for FNS; and (d) international commitments that the government has made to achieve the national goals and other international agreements, including regional FNS policies.

**Focus on gender**

The emphasis on reducing gender inequality should be justified by referencing:

- gender inequalities highlighted in the FNS situation analysis and other studies;
- ratification of international law agreements such as the CEDAW;
- relevant constitutional provisions with respect to gender equality;
- relevant domestic legislation and jurisprudence.

**Findings of the gender FNS situation analysis**

The policy document should provide a brief synthesis of the findings and conclusions of the situation analysis.

**Focus on gender**

You should highlight the gender differences that the analysis has brought out with respect to access to:

- Food;
- health and nutrition related outcomes;
- productive resources for food production; and
- income-generating opportunities and entitlements for food access.

You can also include a more comprehensive description in terms of location, livelihood characteristics and reasons for food insecurity, to identify the groups of women (which might differ in terms of resource control, education and information levels, etc.) that are to be targeted, and the policy actions that are likely to be the most effective. You should also mention the gaps in gender equality in the legal, legislative and policy environments of FNS.

**Vision statement**

This statement covers the long-term goal to which the policy is designed to contribute. An example of a vision statement is: “...to achieve sustainable access for all citizens to safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food to meet nutritional requirements for a healthy and active life”.

Text-only version
Focus on gender

The vision statement should be gender sensitive. For example: “...to achieve sustainable access for all women and men to safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food to meet their nutritional requirements for a healthy and active life.” The vision statement should be part of a gender-transformative policy when the situation analysis clearly shows gender differences in access to food and in nutritional outcomes or status.

Policy objectives

Policy objectives are often organized according to the four pillars of food security, and they should be formulated in ways that reflect awareness of gender differences in roles, norms and responsibilities.

For example...

... one objective may state that small-scale agricultural production is to be commercialized as a way of increasing household monetary incomes among poor rural households; while another one could state that household food intakes are to be improved nutritionally through training on the nutritional values of different foods. In a rural society with defined gender roles with respect to household income, food acquisition and meal preparation, the first objective would target men and the second objective would be addressed to women.

Focus on gender

In the case of a gender-responsive FNS policy, you could also formulate a specific objective to reduce gender inequality and promote women’s empowerment.

Strategic areas of actions to achieve the policy objectives

As already mentioned, strategic areas of action are directly linked to policy objectives, and will be further detailed in specific activities in the plan of action. Depending on the formulation of the policy objectives, priority areas of action should specify ways in which gender inequality in FNS outcomes can be reduced.

Focus on gender

For example, if the reduction in gender inequality in the access to resources is among the policy objectives, a possible priority area of action would be facilitating access to financial services for rural women.
Creating an enabling environment for policy coordination/implementation

It is important to mention in your policy document the guiding principles for policy implementation, including a set of good governance practices that comprise gender equality principles. In this section, you can provide details about the key responsibilities of various ministries and other relevant agencies, (and of local level institutions), in implementing the policy. You could think of establishing (or strengthening) one or more multisector bodies, such as a national FNS councils or technical departments with a mandate to support the implementation and monitoring of the policy across the different sectors. In that case, you would prepare and clarify the terms of reference of these bodies with respect to the implementation and coordination of the policy.

Guiding principles comprise principles of gender equality

The guiding principles for policy implementation should emphasize that:

- Discriminatory practices in implementing policy measures or in designing actions that have gender-differentiated impacts will not be allowed.

- Every effort will be made to include women and men, particularly of marginalized socio-economic groups, in decision-making processes and in action implementation, recognizing the different needs of women and men.

- The policy actions will fully take into account the different needs of women and men, will reflect the socio-cultural norms with respect to the roles of women and men in society and will address the underlying causes of gender inequality.

Based on the findings of the institutional analysis, the institutional capacities will be strengthened to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to address the differing needs of women and men in implementing gender-responsive policy measures.

General description of the monitoring and evaluation process

It is important that you include the prepared monitoring and evaluation framework in the policy document because this forms the basis for related actions in the plan of action (including the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework and process). If monitoring and evaluation is considered later, it may be developed and implemented long after the policy has been implemented.
Focus on gender

You should highlight that the monitoring and evaluation framework of the policy will contain gender-sensitive indicators that measure reductions in gender inequalities over time with respect to food access, health and nutrition outcomes, as well as all those identified factors that produce gender-differentiated food security and nutritional outcomes. This focus implies the production of sex-disaggregated data.

CONCLUSIONS

We have mentioned that a gender-transformative policy process is also a reflexive learning experience. Therefore, it is important to consider the lessons learned in other policies and programmes. We considered how incorporating gender equality principles in policy planning can result in better strategic decisions, greater efficiency in policy implementation and enduring positive impacts on the lives of rural women, men, girls and boys.

We also recognized the importance of a sound gender analysis of the FNS situation, with a focus on the food-insecure, malnourished and vulnerable men and women. Policy documents are expressions of a government’s intent to act.

SUMMARY

• Addressing gender inequalities in the formulation and implementation of FNS policies is essential, if policies are to be effective.

• A policy or programme is gender-responsive when it fulfils two basic criteria:
  ✓ gender norms, roles and relations are considered; and
  ✓ measures are taken to reduce the harmful effects of gender norms, roles and relations, including gender inequality.

• A gender-responsive FNS policy should be guided by good governance and equality principles. It is important to start taking them into consideration while formulating the policy.

• The preparatory steps include:
  ✓ Identify the policy formulation team;
  ✓ Develop a work plan;
Map and brief stakeholders;
Form a steering committee;
Strengthen capacity.

- The policy formulation steps include:
  - Rank problems;
  - Develop a gender-responsive policy vision;
  - Formulate the policy objectives;
  - State the guiding principles;
  - Define the strategic areas of action;
  - Create an enabling environment;
  - Formulate strategies for policy adoption and implementation;
  - Consider monitoring and evaluation.