6. Food Security and Nutrition

Sectoral Activities

Minimum Prevention and Response Interventions

6.1 Implement safe security and nutrition programmes
Background

Women and girls often face a different set of risks from men and boys during an emergency; one such risk is food insecurity. Effective food security and nutrition strategies require an understanding of the gender dimensions of crises in order to identify and assess sex-specific relief needs. (See Action Sheet 2.1, Conduct coordinated rapid situation analysis.)

The participation of women in decisions about how to best implement food security and nutrition programmes is critical to reducing the risks women and girls face in emergency situations. Sexual violence prevention requires the application of the following principles in planning and conducting food distributions:

• The community is entitled to specific food aid benefits.
• There must be active participation of the community.
• All actions must be transparent, open, and clear to all.
• All actors must facilitate access to food aid.
• All actors must ensure safety from violence and abuse.

Key Actions

The following actions apply to the food security and nutrition sector; that is, organisations implementing food distribution and nutrition programmes. The food security and nutrition sector identifies a focal point who participates regularly in the GBV working group and reports on the sector’s achievement of the key actions. The food security and nutrition sector focal point(s) participates in cross-cutting functions led by the GBV coordinating agencies and working groups, as described in Action Sheets for Coordination, Assessment and monitoring, Human resources, and Information education communication.

1. Collect sex-disaggregated data for planning and evaluation of food security and nutrition strategies. (See Action Sheet 2.1, Conduct coordinated rapid situation analysis.)

2. Incorporate strategies to prevent sexual violence in food and nutrition programmes at all stages of the project cycle (including design, implementation, monitoring, and follow-up), giving special attention to groups in the community which are more vulnerable to sexual violence.

• Target food aid to women- and child-headed households. Women and children who are the sole providers of the household are often at greater risk of discrimination and violence. In times of food shortage, women and children are often at heightened risk of food insecurity and malnutrition. Registering household ration cards in the names of women rather than men can help to ensure that women have greater control over food and that it is actually consumed.

• Give special attention to pregnant women and lactating mothers, addressing their increased nutritional needs.

• For polygamous families, issue separate ration cards for each wife and her dependents. Often, the husband will be considered a member of one of the wives’ households. Traditionally, many polygamous men and their wives believe that the husband is entitled to meals from each/any wife. Carefully consider how to assign the husband’s food ration and give clear information to all members of the family (i.e. all wives).

3. Involve women in the entire process of implementing food security and nutrition strategies.

   Establish frequent and consistent communication with women in order to understand the issues that need to be addressed and resolved. Women should participate in:

   • The assessment and targeting process, especially in the identification of the most vulnerable;
   • Discussions about the desirability and appropriateness of potential food baskets;
   • Decisions about the location and timing of food distributions, including both general ration distributions and supplementary feeding;
   • The assessment of cooking requirements and additional tools, their availability within the community, and the strategies in securing access to those non-food-items. Special attention should be given to this point since women could be exposed to sexual violence in the process of collection of these items (e.g. the collection of firewood can put them in a vul-
4. Enhance women's control of food in food distributions by making women the household food entitlement holder.
   - Issue the household ration card in a woman's name.
   - Encourage women to collect the food at the distribution point.
   - Give women the right to designate someone to collect the rations on their behalf.
   - Encourage women to form collectives to collect food.
   - Conduct distributions at least twice per month to reduce the amount of food that needs to be carried from distribution points.
   - Introduce funds in project budgets to provide transport support for community members unable to carry rations from distribution points.

5. Include women in the process of selecting the location of the distribution point. Consideration should be given to the following aspects:
   - The distance from the distribution point to the households should not be greater than the distance from the nearest water or wood source to the household.
   - The roads to and from the distribution point should be clearly marked, accessible, and frequently used by other members of the community.
   - Locations with nearby presence of large numbers of men should be avoided, particularly those where there is liberal access to alcohol, or where armed persons are in the vicinity.

6. Establish sex-balanced food distribution committees that allow for the meaningful and equal participation of women. Attention should be given to the following aspects:
   - Make sure food distribution is done by a sex-balanced team. Provide packaging that facilitates handling and can be re-used for other domestic activities.
   - Select the time of distribution according to women's activities and needs, to permit the organisation of groups that can travel together to and from the distribution point.
   - Distribute food during the day. Leave enough time for women to return to their homes during daylight.

7. Provide enough and sufficient information about distributions using a variety of methods to ensure communication to everyone, especially women and girls. Inform the community about:
   - The size and composition of the household food rations;
   - Beneficiary selection criteria;
   - Distribution place and time;
   - The fact that they do not have to provide services or favours in exchange for receiving the rations;
   - The proper channels available to them for reporting cases of abuse linked to food distribution.

8. Reduce security risks at food distributions. Create “safe spaces” for women at distribution points.
   - Appeal to men in the beneficiary community to protect women and ensure safe passage of women from distribution sites to their homes.
   - Ensure sex balance of those carrying out the distribution.
   - If necessary, segregate men and women receiving rations, either by having distributions for men and women at different times, or by establishing a physical barrier between them during the distribution.
   - Assure that food distribution teams and all staff of implementing agencies have been informed about appropriate conduct, avoidance of sexual abuse and exploitation, and mandatory reporting. (See Action Sheet 4.3, Implement confidential complaints mechanisms.)
   - Create “safe passage” schedules for child-household heads.
   - Begin and end food distribution during daylight hours.
   - Consider placing two women guardians (with vests and whistles) to oversee off-loading, registration, distribution, and post-distribution of food. These women can signal to the security focal point (see Key Action 9 below) if there are problems.

9. Monitor security and instances of abuse in the distribution point as well as on departure roads.
   - Ensure there are women staff from the implementing agency present during food distributions.
• Establish a community-based security plan for food distribution sites and departure roads (see Action Sheets 3.1, Assess security and define protection strategy and 3.2, Provide security in accordance with needs) in collaboration with the community.
• Establish a security focal point at each of the distribution sites.
• Monitor security on departure roads and ensure that women are not at an increased risk for violence by having the food commodity.

Key Reference Materials

   http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0840/$File/ICRC_002_0840.PDF?Open

   http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0840/$File/ICRC_002_0840.PDF?Open