

About WFP theme for the International Women's Day 2006

"Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development."

Beijing Platform for Action¹

Partnering with Men to Achieve Gender Equality has been chosen as the 2006 theme for WFP International Women's Day.

WFP recognizes that gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be promoted without taking into consideration the crucial role of men and boys. Achieving gender equality is a social responsibility, one that must fully engage both men and women, requiring partnerships between them. WFP places great emphasis on strengthening men's support in pursuit of gender equality, actively encouraging their involvement and shared responsibility in designing and carrying out programmes and in all areas of family life.

In the past, efforts to achieve gender equality have tended to focus on closing the gender gap. For decades, resources were directed towards addressing women's disadvantaged position in various areas, such as education, control and management of resources, as well as decision-making. Measures tended to centre around women, often neglecting men's role. More recently, positive results in the empowerment and advancement of women have led to a shift away from focusing only on women to engaging men in the process. This is because equality is most attainable when men and women accept interdependence and that the empowerment of women is to everyone's benefit.

Partnering with men is vital to advancing women's rights and equality. When it comes to equality, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and eliminating violence against women, it is clear that men should be involved. The spread of HIV and its progression to AIDS are directly related to an imbalance of power between the sexes, and differing social attitudes towards men's and women's behaviour. Promoting men's positive and responsible involvement and understanding is key to equality between men and women. Specific efforts involving men frequently result in men becoming more active agents of change. For example, men and boys should be encouraged to be more proactive in preventing violence against women and girls, and raise awareness of male responsibility in ending such violence. At work, men can promote women's economic rights and independence, including control of resources and full participation in decision-making.

For WFP, men are:

1. partners, their influence on decisions and behaviour at home and in the community is recognized; men and women should jointly discuss central issues, such as food security, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, control of assets etc
2. agents of positive change, who can encourage greater involvement of men in promoting gender equality and social reform.

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*, Chapter I, resolution 1, annex II, para 1.