



Have you read section A ?

# GENDER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS IN EMERGENCIES

In situations of displacement, there is always loss of personal property. Very often people flee with little more than the clothes they are wearing. In addition to food, people affected by crisis need **basic life-saving non-food items** (NFIs) for their survival, including items such as blankets, sleeping mats and plastic sheeting to safeguard them from rain, sun, wind, cold weather and other environmental conditions. Kitchen sets, including pans, plates and spoons, are essential items for every family. Soap and washing powder are necessary to ensure personal hygiene, and jerry cans are needed to collect drinking water and to keep it safe from contamination. Clothes or material for making clothes and shoes may also be needed. In addition, women and girls need sanitary supplies. Children, too, have specific needs, especially those who have been orphaned and require baby food, clothes, diapers, etc. Discussions are ongoing on the feasibility of distributing energy-saving stoves and fuel wood or other sources of fuel energy for cooking purposes.

Non-food items vary according to culture and context and should correspond to the needs of the population and the climate. The NFI packages differ from provider to provider, and the assortment has changed over time and from agency to agency. For example, in regions where malaria is prevalent, impregnated mosquito nets have been added to the list of necessary items. Sanitary towels and/or women's hygiene kits should be standard parts of NFI packages, but the types of items included may vary across regions. Thus, before packs are put together it is important that you identify what the needs are, and which types of feminine hygiene materials are most appropriate. Consult with the women to find out their current practices and preferences.

**Don't make assumptions about family size or structure.** NFIs are often calculated per household with the assumption that a traditional family is made up of two parents and several children. However, average family size and composition of the families may vary, especially for families affected by crisis. Often households are headed by

one parent or a grandparent with children and cousins. In many instances they might not have lived together previously. Take care to ensure that the distribution of NFIs does not exclude or put any members of the new family unit at additional risk.

**Equal participation of women in distribution is often more efficient.** The logistics of NFI distribution can also make a big difference. It's important for you to consider who receives the NFIs or when the NFIs are distributed to ensure that women, girls, boys and men benefit equally from the commodity. In polygamous societies distribution of NFIs should preferably be made to women. Hold discussions with community members in order to receive feedback on the distribution mechanism and make modifications wherever feasible so that women, girls, boys and men all have access to distribution points and are all able to receive the NFIs for their use.

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW FROM THE COMMUNITY TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT GENDER-RESPONSIVE DISTRIBUTION OF NFIS?

### What are the population demographics?

- Number of households and average size of households.
- Number of women, girls, boys and men.
- Number of girls and women in the age group 13 – 49 for the purpose of sanitary and hygiene kits distribution.
- Number of female-, male-, child- and elderly person-headed households.
- Number of persons by age and sex with specific needs (unaccompanied children, persons with disabilities, seriously injured, chronically ill and elderly persons).
- Number of pregnant and lactating women.

**What are the community practices, cultural and social roles and responsibilities?**

- What is the gender division of labour within and outside the household and the approximate time taken for various tasks?
- Who takes responsibility for fetching water?
- What are the cultural practices in relation to women addressing their hygiene and sanitary needs, especially during the monthly period of menstruation?
- What are the firewood collection practices and type of cooking stoves used and are there local practices of energy saving while cooking?
- What are the sleeping practices and bedding arrangements used (including use of mattresses and blankets)?
- What are the different NFI needs of women and men by age and ethnic background?

**What did people have before the crisis?**

- What did the population use before the displacement (e.g. cooking practices) and what fuel source was used?
- What type of clothes did women and men wear? Are any specific clothing items essential for their daily needs?
- What hygiene products do they use/need?
- What mechanisms were instituted for distribution of life-sustaining items before the crisis?
- How were women-headed households or destitute women households surviving/accessing NFIs before?

**ACTIONS TO ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMING IN NFI DISTRIBUTION****Equal participation**

- Ensure that women and men are involved in planning and implementation of the NFI distribution. Meet with them separately to ensure that power dynamics aren't silencing women.
- Make sure that both women and men know the quantity/variety of items they should receive, as well as the distribution methods, by using public information and notice/information boards clearly indicating entitlements to NFIs and distribution sites, dates and time.
- Ensure that the design of the distribution system is based on a thorough understanding of the social structure of the affected population, including the information on groups that could be marginalized and neglected in distribution.

- Agree on the system of distribution, namely through group leadership — male and female leaders or through groups of heads of households or through individual heads of households — and ensure that the affected population is continuously informed on any changes in the system.
- Make sure that distribution sites are easily accessible and safe and the distribution times are convenient for women and men of different age groups and backgrounds.
- Ensure that specific needs of elderly persons, persons with disabilities and the chronically ill are addressed through community support and targeted distribution systems.
- Make sure crowd controllers monitor queues, and provide a separate queue for specific persons and groups (such as those not able to stand in line for various reasons, e.g. elderly persons, persons with disabilities or pregnant women and other specific groups requiring assistance).
- Ensure monitoring of distribution of NFIs is done both by agency staff and refugee community representatives.
- Ensure mechanisms are instituted for women and men to file complaints regarding the non-receipt and unmet needs of NFIs.
- Ensure that women and men are consulted as to what NFIs are culturally appropriate and familiar.

**Observing specific community practices and cultural differences**

- Distribute appropriate sanitary and hygiene supplies for women, girls, boys and men.
- Ensure that clothing is appropriate to climatic conditions and cultural practices, suitable for women, girls, boys and men, and sized according to age.
- Make sure that bedding materials reflect cultural practices and are sufficient in quantity to enable separate sleeping arrangements as required among the members of individual households.
- Ensure that cooking items provided are culturally appropriate and enable safe practices.
- Ensure that existing local practices are taken into account in the specification of stove and fuel solutions.

**Meeting the needs of specific groups and persons**

- Ensure that there is no discrimination or restricted access to NFIs based on sex, age or abilities.
  - Ensure that distribution sites are in a secure area that is accessible to women and men, unaccompanied girls and boys, the elderly, sick and disabled.
  - Conduct regular consultations with women, girls, boys, elderly persons, chronically ill, persons with disabilities and groups with specific needs on NFI issues to address protection concerns.
- Ensure that women are consulted about the location and means of collecting fuel for cooking and heating.
  - Ensure that the demands of collecting fuel on vulnerable groups, such as female-headed households and households caring for people living with HIV/AIDS, are addressed and that special provisions (such as the choice of less labour-intensive fuels, the use of fuel-efficient stoves and accessible fuel sources) are made available.

## CHECKLIST TO ASSESS GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMING IN NFI DISTRIBUTION

The checklist below is derived from the action section in this chapter, and provides a useful tool to remind sector actors of key issues to ensure gender equality programming. In addition, the checklist, together with the sample indicators in the Basics Chapter, serves as a basis for project staff to develop context-specific indicators to measure progress in the incorporation of gender issues into humanitarian action.

<b>NFI DISTRIBUTION – GENDER CHECKLIST</b>	
<b>Analysis of gender differences</b>	
1.	Information is gathered from women, girls, boys and men about family structures and NFI needs based on age and sex, and the distribution system is set up accordingly.
<b>Design</b>	
1.	Family entitlement cards and ration cards are issued in the name of the primary female and male household representatives.
2.	Women, girls, boys and men have at least two sets of clothing in the correct size, appropriate to the culture, season and climate.
3.	People have access to a combination of blankets, bedding or sleeping mats to keep them warm and to enable separate sleeping arrangements as required.
4.	Women and girls have sanitary materials and hygiene kits, including soap and underwear.
5.	Training or guidance in the use of NFIs is provided where necessary.
<b>Access</b>	
1.	The programme is routinely monitored to ensure that women and men benefit equally if there is payment for NFI distribution, including a gender balance in employment.
2.	Obstacles to equal access and benefits are promptly addressed.
<b>Participation</b>	
1.	Women and men are involved in planning and implementing NFI selection and distribution.
2.	Women and men are informed and aware of their individual entitlements; the quantity and variety of items they should receive; and the place, day and time of distribution.
<b>Training/Capacity building</b>	
1.	An equal number of women and men are employed in NFI distribution programmes and have equal access to trainings.
<b>Actions to address GBV</b>	
1.	Both women and men participate in the identification of safe and accessible distribution sites.
2.	Distribution points are monitored to ensure they are safe and accessible.
<b>Monitoring and evaluation based on sex- and age-disaggregated data</b>	
1.	Sex- and age-disaggregated data on programme coverage are collected, analysed and routinely reported on.
2.	Plans are developed and implemented to address any inequalities and ensure access and safety for all of the target population.
<b>Coordinate actions with all partners</b>	
1.	Actors in your sector liaise with actors in other sectors to coordinate on gender issues, including participating in regular meetings of the gender network.
2.	The sector/cluster has a gender action plan, has developed and routinely measures project-specific indicators based on the checklist provided in the IASC Gender Handbook.