



GENDER INTEGRATION IN EMERGENCY PROGRAMMING

The first in a series of overviews on key emergency sectors



When Bintu Abubacar and her family fled Boko attacks in Nigeria, she received vouchers from CRS to buy food from local shops. Read about the gender implications of the voucher modality on page 4. Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

Background

When gaining an understanding of people’s needs in a humanitarian emergency, gender is a crucial consideration, but is often overlooked. Yet, the experiences and vulnerabilities of women and men, girls and boys can be very different in a crisis. Due to existing gender inequality, crises often have hidden, devastating and long-lasting effects on a community, in addition to the basic lifesaving needs that arise. Power dynamics within households and communities, the gendered division of labor, and gender-based violence (GBV) can worsen or be transformed by a humanitarian crisis. For example, in places where men have greater access to work and control household income, women may be forced into harmful coping mechanisms, such as transactional sex to meet individual or family needs. On the other hand, humanitarian crises can have a transformative impact. For example, women can gain new skills for earning an income and men can become more involved in their child’s care.

The CRS Central Africa Regional office (CARO) recognizes the importance of addressing gender issues in a meaningful and effective way—not only in our development portfolio, but also in our emergency programming. This is especially important given our working context, where gender inequalities are extreme, with rigid and harmful cultural norms, high levels of gender-based violence, poor or nonexistent institutional frameworks protecting women’s rights, and high levels of insecurity.

CRS in Central Africa

The CRS Central Africa Regional office (CARO) is responding to protracted and acute humanitarian emergencies in Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and the Republic of the Congo.

Inside

- Why gender integration in emergency response?2
- Case studies: Gender integration in beneficiary feedback mechanisms.....3
- How a targeted voucher project can impact gender relations4
- Gender analysis to inform emergency response strategies4
- Case study: E-voucher impact on household power dynamics5
- Case studies: Menstrual hygiene management6
- Training and resources9
- How can we include gender in our emergency response?9
- Staff Spotlight10





Disasters impact women and men differently. Photo by Ben Depp for CRS

Why gender integration in emergency response?

What is gender integration?

Gender integration involves taking into account the differences and inequalities between and among women and men, girls and boys, in everything we do. It supports more effective programming by delivering a response that adapts to the needs of the population, and that also contributes to greater social equality.

.....

Global evidence tells us that addressing gender in our programs allows for more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

.....

Disasters, both natural and human-made, impact women and men, girls and boys differently, with the level of vulnerability and gender equality being key determinants of which groups are worst affected. Addressing issues of gender equality is crucial to effective programming for ensuring that the protection and assistance provided in emergencies is planned and implemented in a way that benefits women and men, girls and boys equitably, taking into account an analysis of their needs, vulnerabilities and capacities. Global evidence tells us that addressing gender in our programs allows for more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

Merely working with women and girls does not advance gender equality.

Just because a program targets women or girls, does not necessarily mean it takes a gender perspective and/or promotes equality. In fact, an effort can be gender-blind even when women are its target group if it fails to explore and address:

- Gendered division of labor (“who does what?”)
- Access to and control over resources (“who has what and decides on its use?”)
- Power imbalances between women and men (“who decides?”)

For instance, if a nutrition program approaches only mothers, it may reinforce social norms that confine women to the domestic sphere and that excuse men when it comes to caring for children. It is equally important to understand how shifting access to and control of household resources can put certain members of the household at risk, given the prevailing high levels of GBV, notions of masculinity, and rigidity of community gender norms.

The lesson for humanitarian programming is that vulnerability is not easily defined, and viewing program design through a relational gender lens helps to reveal ambiguities and nuances. Greater understanding of the context and community will result in greater impact and uphold the Do No Harm principle. CARO programs should continue to explore gender issues and base decisions about strategy on contextualized gender and risk analyses.

Gender integration in beneficiary feedback mechanisms



Nigeria

As part of its emergency response to the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, CRS established comprehensive beneficiary feedback-and-response mechanisms, including a hotline (calls and SMSs) and in-person communication (committees and staff feedback forms). All feedback is managed in a centralized database.

The most recent data showed that women responded at more than twice the rate as men. This can be explained by the fact that women and children make up the majority of CRS' caseload, mirroring the demographics of conflict situations. Also, women are targeted by a number of CRS interventions—such as complementary nutrition outreach sessions—that provide them with greater opportunities to share feedback with project teams.

Best practices included:

- **Holding community consultations with men and women** to identify their preferred feedback channels (in order of preference), to cater to different beneficiary profiles.
- **Providing gender-specific platforms for in-person feedback**, allowing male and female beneficiaries to feel comfortable discussing sensitive information.
- **Ensuring that program accountability staff reflected the demographics of the beneficiary populations.** In this emergency context, it was vital that the CRS accountability team was staffed by both women and men, especially in case community members had sensitive, protection-related concerns to share.
- **Preparing project teams with referral information** for instances when feedback included references to violence or other protection-related concerns that required a specialized response.



To increase women's access to feedback hotlines, CRS is liaising with a telecommunications company to provide 4,000 phones to female project participants. *Photo by Sam Phelps for CRS*

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

This country program is at the forefront of developing beneficiary feedback mechanisms in the region, including the use of a mobile phone platform. In 2017, beneficiary feedback data indicated that only 8 percent of phone hotline users were women because of their limited access to mobile phones. Also, the hotline operator's welcome message was identified as an obstacle to women since it was in French. Women did not have the same education level as men, or opportunities to practice speaking French. The language barrier led to men calling on behalf of women. Since operators recorded the feedback as coming from men, the data could not be disaggregated correctly. To improve women's feedback participation, CRS—in collaboration with the Budikadidi Food for Peace program team—is liaising with a telecommunications company to provide 4,000 phones to key female project participants. CRS is also adding local languages to hotlines and adjusting the process to identify whether a caller is speaking on behalf of a third party.



In Nigeria, Fatima Mammadu received an electronic voucher from CRS to buy food. The voucher modality can enhance a woman's decision-making role in the family. Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

How a targeted voucher project can impact gender relations

Women are more engaged than men in household decision-making, and have a heightened role in choosing foods for their families. While research has shown that cash and food vouchers do not necessarily contribute to improved gender relations, these program modalities have been shown to have a positive impact on women's lives.

Recent gender and conflict assessments found that CRS' decision to register each wife as a household head had a positive impact within the household. Women were allowed and able to make local purchasing decisions for their families. However, it is important to validate the targeting approach through robust community consultations, as well as a contextual gender analysis that looks at local gender dynamics and the potential risk factors when registering women as primary voucher beneficiaries.

Lastly, if project teams deem targeting women in the household as most appropriate, this should be accompanied by strong sensitization and communication plans that explain the decision, to avoid undue pressure or even abuse from male spouses, other wives or other household or community members not targeted.

.....
It is important to validate the targeted approach through robust community consultations, as well as a contextual gender analysis that looks at local gender dynamics and the potential risk factors when registering women as primary voucher beneficiaries.
.....

Gender analysis to inform emergency response strategies

In humanitarian responses, emergency assessments are iterative, starting with initial rapid assessments that identify first-order, lifesaving needs, followed by more in-depth analyses performed as soon as the context allows. At each phase, humanitarian responders should use a gender analysis tool to identify and meet people's diverse needs, capacities and coping strategies. The tool should be adjusted, or telescoped, to the emergency context. Gender analysis will provide information about the differentiated impact of the crisis and illuminate the various ways in which women and men, girls and boys are accorded power and resources.

Recent CARO projects have integrated a thorough gender analysis into their project design, making them contextually sound and donor-competitive. A good example is [CRS Cameroon's proposal to the Global Affairs Canada funding mechanism](#).

Please see our CARO gender Sharepoint site [here](#) for examples of tools that can be adapted as needed. Tools include guidance for a rapid gender analysis, a focus group discussion, a key informant interview, community mapping, a gender and protection audit, an individual story, and a household questionnaire.

E-voucher impact on household power dynamics

Cameroon

From December 2017 to March 2018, CRS Cameroon piloted the use of e-vouchers to enable 353 families to buy food and living supplies from local vendors. The project sought to pilot and assess the appropriateness of the e-voucher modality in this context, while also identifying and understanding any unintended shifts in gender dynamics in the home. CRS interviewed 57 families during purchases, and 97 families after activities took place. Key results include:

- Most respondents were women, indicating that, whether or not they were the household head, they were more likely to do the buying. In 65 percent of cases, women came to the market alone, while men came alone in 20 percent of cases. In 11 percent of cases, a child or other family member was sent. Only in 4 percent of cases did a couple go together.
- When asked why the identified person was chosen to go to market, 89 percent said the head of household decided, and 7 percent said it fell within that person's responsibility.
- Of the 53 percent of respondents who required permission to go to the market, all were women.
- When asked who made household purchasing decisions, 70 percent of respondents reported that the choice was made by the husband alone. Only in 10 percent of cases did both husband and wife decide together.

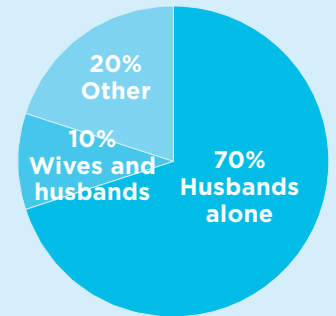
Recommendations

Pilots such as this can lead to a greater understanding of gender dynamics around decision-making, roles and responsibilities, as well as issues of mobility and permission for movement. Future market-based interventions should look to:

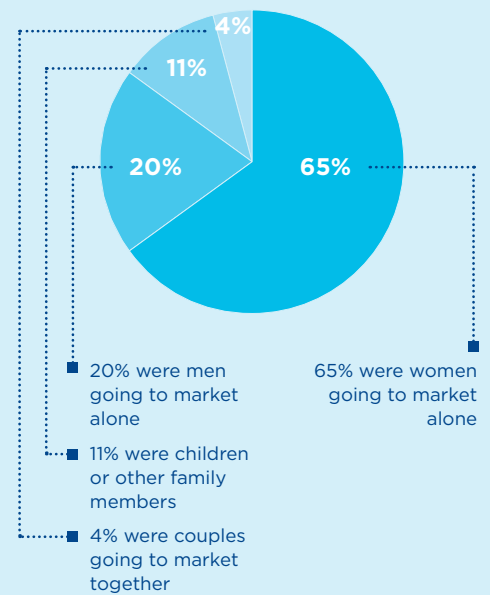
- Conduct a rapid gender analysis prior to the design of market-based initiatives to analyze gender roles and responsibilities; access to markets and financial resources; and decision-making patterns. Similar post-distribution monitoring exercises should also be implemented.
- From the onset, involve women and men, girls and boys in the program design, and collect feedback on operational questions linked to program implementation—preferred days and times for distributions, nearest markets, modes of transportation, etc.
- Ensure that all program beneficiaries have equitable and safe access to distribution points. In cases where mobility is limited by strict norms linked to husband permission and control of income, work with communities to reinforce communication on program activities and objectives, identify local shops, and consider providing a small stipend for transportation.
- Add a gender-focused project activity by targeting couples already attending distributions together. Involve them in trainings on couple communication, joint decision-making and household resource management.

These strategies will help ensure that such approaches are relevant to participating men and women, reflective of their realities and context, and not exacerbating existing harmful power dynamics during the project's implementation.

Who made household purchasing decisions?



Who shopped for the family in the market?



Menstrual hygiene management

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Good menstrual hygiene reduces the risk of infection to girls and women, and promotes dignity and empowerment to engage in daily activities—especially in an emergency context.

Since 2016, the CRS ADMiRE, or Amélioration de la Dignité Menstruelle pour Renforcer l'Éducation des Filles project (improving menstrual dignity to strengthen girls' education) has researched the context, perceptions and practices of menstrual hygiene management. In partnership with UNICEF, CRS sought to understand the specific needs of adolescent girls in refugee camps.

CRS conducted 428 interviews with girls aged 10 to 17, 428 with caregivers, and 299 with boys, as well as 26 focus group discussions with teachers, community leaders, fathers of young girls, and other community members. Stakeholders from the local ministries (education, health, social affairs/gender) and other active nongovernmental organizations participated in the validation of key findings.

Participating adolescent girls reported having limited access to modern hygiene materials, and often used pieces of cloth as pads. In addition, CRS found that school latrines, where they existed, did not offer girls sufficient privacy, clean water, waste disposal options or other essential hygiene items. More than 80 percent of girls reported fear of using school latrines because of the risk of being disturbed. The findings led to the following recommendations:

- Integrate menstrual hygiene management education into the school curriculum. Target girls with the information before their first menstrual cycle.
- The provision of sanitary kits during emergency responses should be limited to the early phase, and quickly transition to promoting the use of locally available materials.
- Include safe facilities for girls to manage menstruation at school, including facilities separated by gender, private washing and drying facilities, and security measures (such as lighting, locks, etc.) to reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

What is menstrual hygiene management (MHM)?

“Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period; using soap and water for washing the body as required; and have access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials.”

Joint Monitoring Program
of WHO and UNICEF



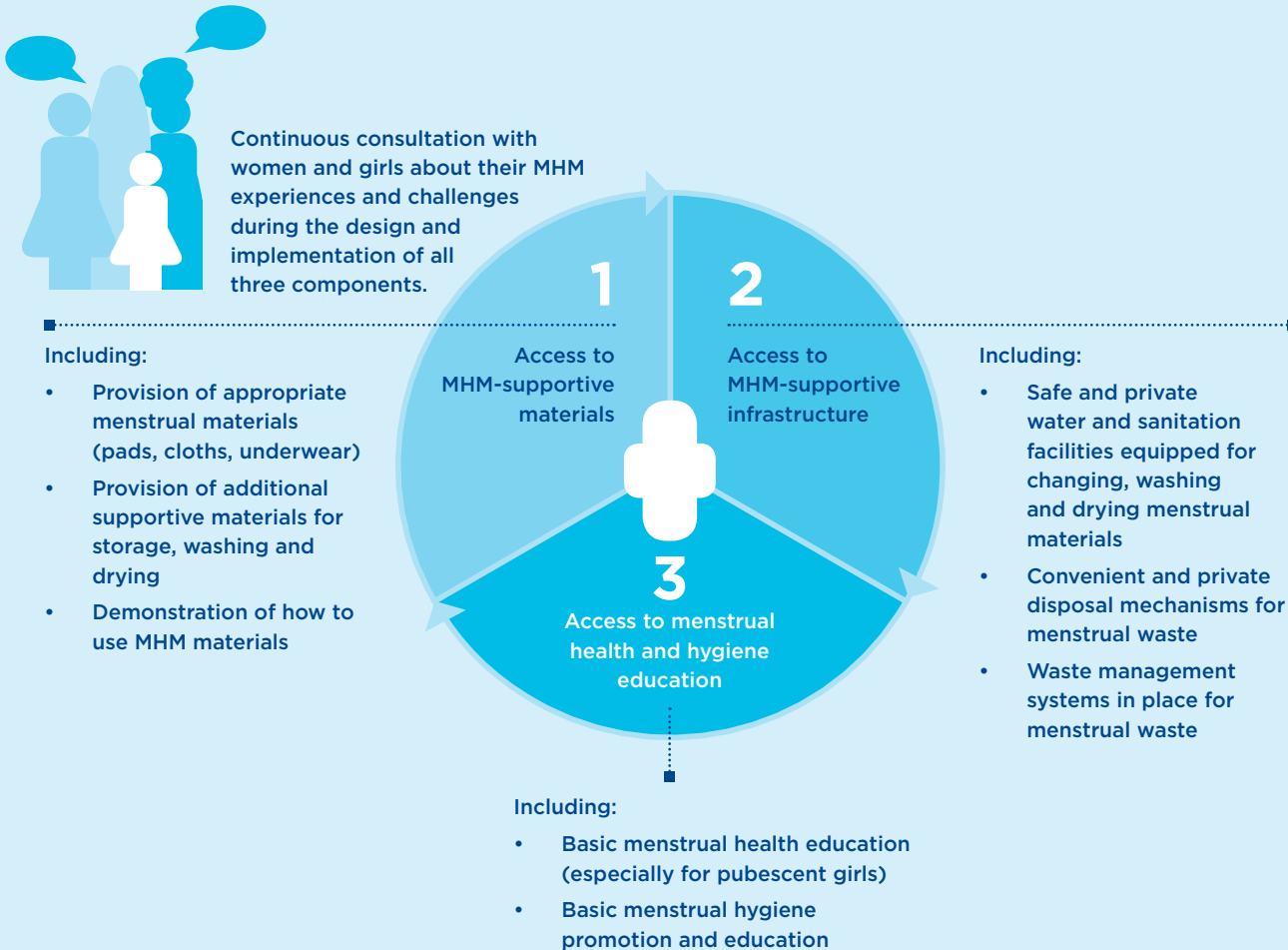
Albertine Mbangoe collects water from a borehole constructed with CRS support in Cameroon. Women and girls should have access to private washing and drying facilities.
Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

Menstrual hygiene management

Nigeria

With support from USAID’s Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Latter-Day Saints Charities for the ongoing emergency response, CRS distributes menstrual hygiene management (MHM) kits to girls aged 14 to 24 years in Yobe and Borno states. In this effort, CRS Nigeria focuses on the following:

The three components of menstrual hygiene management



CRS began its programming in 2016 through a series of consultations with displaced women and girls to understand their practices and preferences. Adolescent girls were identified as a particularly vulnerable group given the social practice of secluding young unmarried women during their menstrual cycle. This resulted in limited mobility beyond the home, and lack of access to resources, including funds.

After identifying three types of locally available reusable pads, CRS launched a 3-month pilot project in which 40 adolescent girls tested the pads. Female community mobilizers met with the girls to get their feedback on the design of the pads, and on their experiences of washing, drying and maintaining them in the densely populated camp with little privacy. The girls said that a range of underwear sizes should be provided in dark colors so stains were less visible. They also said they had difficulty finding buckets and basins for washing, as these were usually shared by the household.

CRS procured kits consisting of reusable pads, dark-colored cotton underwear, a clothesline, clothes pins, detergent and a laundry bucket with a lid. We also developed a one-page, illustrated handout on the use and care of reusable pads. Based on the pilot groups' preferences, it was decided to distribute reusable kits in kind, close to the recipients' homes, where privacy could be maintained. Female staff accompanied all distributions and led complementary awareness sessions, with demonstrations on the care and correct, safe use of the materials.

Due to cultural sensitivity around the topic, CRS trained male community mobilizers on the delivery of key MHM messages geared towards men and boys. These included an explanation of menstruation (what it is, how it is connected to reproduction, and how it impacts women and girls), and guidance on how to support women, and reduce the stigma linked to menstruation.

To date, 7,600 young girls have received kits and training. Focus group discussions with women and girls highlighted strong beneficiary satisfaction. All participants said they used the reusable pads throughout their menstrual cycle and found them to be of good material, easy to use, and more comfortable (and softer) than the material they were accustomed to. Many reported sharing their pads with non-beneficiaries. Girls interviewed as part of the post-distribution monitoring were found to be more knowledgeable on key aspects of MHM after CRS trainings.

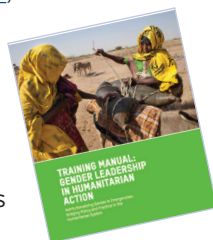
Cultural beliefs make it difficult to openly discuss menstruation, and the start of menstruation may be viewed by some within the community as a girl's readiness for marriage. CRS found that some girls had to hide the onset of their menstruation from their parents due to fears of forced marriage. This identified the need to build referral networks with protection actors. Beneficiary feedback also pointed to a need to provide kits more widely, as many said they would share their pads with their family or friends.

Recommendations:

- Ensure women are included in the design of facilities and the make-up of menstrual hygiene kits so they are relevant and culturally appropriate.
- Engage community members—especially young girls' parents and key family members, but also boys and men—in the sensitizations on menstruation and distribution of hygiene kits. This can help encourage the acceptability of MHM in the household, and reduce misconceptions and myths, particularly linked to child marriage.
- Program teams should consider widening their reach to all women of reproductive age wherever possible. Alternatively, consider including more pads per kit. The project increased the number of pads included in the kit so project recipients could share them with others if necessary.
- This type of gender-sensitive programing may encourage conversations around issues that may be taboo, and can lead to the reporting of protection concerns that would otherwise go unreported. The project should research the available referral networks and potential for support of vulnerable individuals in advance of implementation.

Training and resources

- [The Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#), Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 2017
This handbook sets out the rationale for integrating gender equality into humanitarian action, and provides specific practical guidance across sectors. This is a must-read for all humanitarian actors.
- [Training Manual: Gender Leadership in Humanitarian Action](#), Oxfam, 2017
The purpose of this training manual is to support the institutionalization of gender equality and women's rights in all humanitarian activities—from policy to practice.
- [Gender issues in humanitarian action](#)
This new e-learning pathway targets humanitarian managers interested in refreshing or developing their gender-specific knowledge and practice. Two e-learning courses focus on *using a "gender lens" in humanitarian programming* (3 hours) and *preventing/responding to sexual and gender-based violence* (6 hours).
- [Oxfam Minimum Standards for Gender in Emergencies](#), Oxfam, 2013
These standards for ensuring a consistent promotion of gender equality in humanitarian programming can inform project planning, design, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). The guidelines include key actions presented in a checklist format.
- [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Gender Marker](#)
This tool codes whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it, and whether the results are likely to be limited or significant (see here for the [Gender Marker Fact Sheet](#) and here for [Gender Marker FAQs](#)). A useful resource is the cluster-specific Tip Sheets on camp coordination and camp management, child protection, coordination, education, food security, health, gender-based violence, mine action, nutrition, protection, early recovery, shelter and non-food items, and WASH sectors. Click here for the zip file of [Gender Marker Tip sheets](#).
- The [Gender with Age Marker \(GAM\)](#), also by IASC, looks at how essential programs address gender- and age-related differences in humanitarian response (using these [Gender Equality Measures](#)).
- [Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery](#), Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015
Practical guidance and effective tools for humanitarians and communities to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions for the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence. Part III includes thematic area guidance, and Annex 8 features a useful tip sheet on GBV prevention and response.



How we can include gender in our emergency response?

- Have a gender-balanced team with the ability to listen to women and men, girls and boys, and who can understand their needs.
- Include a budget for the training of all staff on gender integration and protection mainstreaming, including the CRS Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Conduct a gender analysis, including sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD), to analyze the different power, roles and needs of women and men, girls and boys within the community, and how they have been affected by the crisis.
- Base emergency response strategy, program design and implementation directly on the results of the gender analysis.
- Ensure the different impacts of the response on women and men, girls and boys, are measured regularly.
- Systematically use monitoring data to identify early any potentially harmful impact, and adapt the response accordingly.



Staff Spotlight

KAREEN CERDENA
CRS Emergency Response and Recovery
Program Coordinator, Cameroon



A CRS colleague shares their relevant perspective and experience

Briefly describe the backdrop to gender issues in the Boko Haram crisis in Cameroon.

The impact of the crisis on people and their livelihoods, particularly women and youth, has been unexpected and unprecedented. Young people, and even children as young as 9 years old, are being used as weapons of war by armed groups, carrying out kamikaze missions and being recruited to carry arms in exchange for money or safety. Early marriage, which had decreased before the crisis, is on the rise due to protection and economic concerns. Large numbers of schoolgirls have been kidnapped and sexually abused by armed groups. There is a range of gender and protection issues, and not all humanitarian actors are prepared or have the capacity (both resources and experience) to address these. A lot of weight is placed on male/female roles and responsibilities in the household and, while cultural norms may not always affect how people work, finding local staff who are able to separate their own beliefs and norms from what they do in the field can be a challenge.

How does CRS/Caritas/partner address these issues? The three main strategies used are:

1) putting in practice the Do No Harm principle, and ensuring all staff and partners are oriented on, and have signed, the Code of Conduct and Protection Policy; 2) the deliberate inclusion and targeting of women/young girls in project activities, by organizing separate consultation meetings for men and women, to learn preferences for activities, and the time and design of water and sanitation, cash-for-work, agriculture/livelihoods, and distribution activities; and 3) ensuring that half of beneficiaries are women/youth (boys and girls).

CRS tries to consistently ensure that gender is integrated into our MEAL systems, tools and reporting. We ensure inclusion of a gender analysis in our project design, and integrate gender into all aspects of programming (design, targeting, activities, reporting). Projects are more explicit and deliberate about ensuring women’s participation and leadership.

What are some best practices related to gender integration?

- Have mixed teams to meet the demand for gender-specific meetings and activities: Female staff work with women’s groups, and male staff with men’s. Mixed community meetings are facilitated by both male and female staff.
- Work with the field teams and local partners to understand the local context (norms, cultures, laws, customs) and capacity (knowledge, skills, attitudes).
- Consider learning sessions and reflections with the field teams on topics like women’s participation, and overcoming barriers to it. Field team members provide the answers themselves, and work on the steps to get better results. Program leadership is important to follow those next steps through and get better results.
- When possible, recruit a full-time gender and protection person within programs to ensure integration and follow-through. If CPs are unable to hire such a person, at least include gender and protection questions in job interviews, and as a requirement in job descriptions. When hiring, ensure that project officer and project manager levels have basic gender training.

.....
Projects are more explicit and deliberate about ensuring women’s participation and leadership.
.....



For more information on the initiatives highlighted in this newsletter, please contact:

CRS DRC, MHM
Ghislain Mukuna
ghislain.mukuna@crs.org

CRS Cameroon, PDM
Kareen Cerdena
kareen.cerdena@crs.org

CRS Nigeria, MHM
Beth Muriithi
beth.muriithi@crs.org
Timothy Paul Daret
timothypaul.daret@crs.org

CRS Nigeria, beneficiary feedback mechanisms
Janada Ali
janada.ali@crs.org
Aude Bertrand
aude.bertrand@crs.org

CRS DRC, beneficiary feedback mechanisms
Bruce Luaba
bruce.luaba@crs.org

Questions on training/resources
Laura Groggel
laura.groggel@crs.org
Giulia Frontini
giulia.frontini@crs.org