



# NOURISHING EQUALITY

## Linkages between Gender and Food Security

Programme Learning Report: Combatting Food Insecurity in Six Crisis Contexts

November 2024



**OXFAM**

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# Summary

## Background

This learning report captures insights and recommendations from Oxfam’s “**Combatting Food Insecurity in Six Crisis Contexts**” programme, a multi-country initiative funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). The programme aimed to address food insecurity and promote long-term solutions – particularly for women, children, and marginalised groups – and provided a valuable opportunity for transversal learning.

Both Oxfam and the wider aid sector are committed to advancing gender equality. In this context, the authors emphasise the importance of integrating gender perspectives into food security programming and outline several key concerns, including:

- Women are disproportionately affected by food security shocks and many assessments focus only on household-level data, overlooking the unique needs of individual family members, particularly women. How can we better understand the relationship between gender equality and food security?
- Is it accurate to assume that Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) automatically leads to broader empowerment in areas such as decision-making or reducing gender-based violence?
- While there is some anecdotal evidence of the impact of gender-transformative approaches, how effective are these methods in driving broader gender equality and improving food security, given that their impact has not been systematically evaluated?

To address these issues, this report presents findings from several countries and examines three key areas of learning:



1. **Measuring gender equality and food security:** Addressing gaps in gendered food security data collection and analysis.



2. **Gender-transformative approaches and food security:** Assessing how these approaches influence gender equality and food security at the household and community level.



3. **WEE in volatile contexts:** Evaluating the effectiveness of economic empowerment strategies in unstable settings and understanding the link between women’s income and food security.

The report concludes that while the integration of gender into food security programming holds promise, there are critical gaps in both the data and our understanding of how gender-transformative approaches influence food security. Additionally, while WEE is important, it does not automatically translate into broader empowerment or greater food security. More research and systematic evaluations are needed to measure the full impact of gender-responsive and transformative strategies on food security, particularly at intra-household level.

## Moving forwards

In relation to each of the learning areas, the authors propose a number of recommendations for humanitarian practitioners to consider and adopt in their work. These suggestions stress the need for gender-sensitive, responsive and transformative, long-term approaches that empower women, ensure inclusivity, and support sustainable change. In brief:

### Gender-Responsive Data

- Develop tools for sex- and age-disaggregated data, ensuring all household members are included in surveys.
- Include gender data in assessments and standardise methods across projects and programmes for consistency.

### WEE

- Combine livelihood activities to reduce vulnerability.
- Improve access to financial services, markets, and skills training.

### Learning and Improvement

- Provide gender training for all staff and encourage collaboration across teams.
- Capture feedback, reflect on learnings, and adapt methodologies based on emerging best practices.
- Ensure gender equality is treated as a long-term goal embedded in ongoing programmes.

### Gender-Transformative Approaches

- Involve women in community and household-level decision-making.
- Incorporate gender-transformative approaches to challenge harmful gender norms, roles, and practices at household and community levels.
- Allocate sufficient time and resources to implement a full cycle of gender-transformative approaches.

### Sustainability

- Support women's entire value chain and partner with external actors to ensure long-term support for women-led initiatives.

### Do No Harm

- Conduct conflict-sensitive risk analyses and ensure inclusive, transparent targeting and feedback mechanisms.
- Tailor interventions to local conditions and ensure women's active participation in planning.

**Kenya:** Asha Sode and Uye Women's Group on their way to the field, building community resilience and increasing food security.  
**Photo:** Misheck Macharia.





## **Gender sensitive:**

Programmes or projects that reflect an awareness of the varied impacts on and vulnerabilities of different genders (including gender minorities), and the existence of gendered power imbalances. Strategies, priorities and activities are adapted to better meet the needs of marginalised gender groups.

## **Gender responsive:**

Programmes or projects which include specific actions to try and reduce gender inequalities within communities.

## **Gender transformative:**

Gender transformative change is not a specific set of activities implemented at a certain time; it is the cumulative result of actions and processes. These actions can be standalone activities in a project or can be embedded in the delivery of (mostly non-gender) activities. It calls for approaches that are long-term and sustainable, and often requires collective actions that work towards changes at multiple levels – within ourselves, within households, within society, and within institutions. Moving towards gender transformation means aiming to challenge and change discriminatory gender roles, norms and dynamics, while promoting gender equality. Gender transformation requires strategic, concerted and intentional change to systems that create risk, vulnerability and inequality. As such, gender transformation is a complex, slow, nuanced process that may meet with backlash and resistance along the way. It needs to be nurtured carefully and over time.

## **Women's economic empowerment (WEE):**

WEE ensures that women can equally participate and benefit from decent work and social protection; access markets and have control over resources, their own time, lives and body. It increases voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to economic institutions.

## **Gendered intra-household food insecurity data:**

This refers to the collection and analysis of data that highlights how food insecurity affects different genders within the same household. This type of data is crucial for understanding the nuanced ways in which food insecurity impacts men, women, and other gender identities differently, often due to social, economic, and cultural factors.



This report is the final learning component of a programme entitled “**Combatting Food Insecurity in Six Crisis Contexts**” (hereafter referred to as “the programme”), funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). With a budget of approximately 6 million Euros, the programme reached 166,814 individuals (104,140 women and 62,674 men) – with a focus on women, children, and marginalised groups – in meeting their immediate food and nutrition needs, while fostering long-term food security through strategies like climate-adaptive food production, livelihood support, and cash and nutrition aid.

As a multi-country initiative integrating various approaches to combatting food insecurity, the programme provided a valuable opportunity for transversal learning. Given the critical importance of women’s empowerment and gender equality, both for programme components and priorities within Oxfam, this learning report focuses on the programme’s contribution to food security from a gender perspective.

Women are disproportionately affected by shocks to food security<sup>1</sup>, yet the intersection between gender equality and food security has been largely understudied and overlooked<sup>2,3,4</sup>. For example, the widely recognised Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) scale – used by organisations, governments, and donors to understand and respond to food and nutrition crises – often lacks detailed data beyond geographic levels and frequently does not incorporate gender disaggregated data nor gender analysis. Additionally, most recognised tools for measuring food security analyse the situation at the household level<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, food security programming tends to measure changes in food security at household level only, leaving us unaware of the different vulnerabilities, perspectives, realities, capacities, and needs of individual household members<sup>6</sup>.

Moreover, as evidenced by a study conducted by CARE<sup>7</sup> and analysis of Oxfam’s Rapid Gender

Analyses (RGA),<sup>8</sup> there are still significant gaps in gendered food security analyses. In comparison, gender dimensions related to livelihoods and economic empowerment are much more explored, and sometimes this is conflated with food security, under the assumption that economic empowerment will lead to greater food security.

This assumed linkage between income generation and food security was also included in the design of the programme, applying various approaches to support women’s economic empowerment (WEE), from support to Income Generating Activities (IGA) to different cash modalities. This provides an opportunity to both assess the effectiveness of different modalities in promoting WEE and measure the impact this has on food security levels.

Lastly, there is a false assumption that WEE will automatically lead to women’s empowerment in other spheres, such as increased decision-making power within the household or a reduction in gender-based violence. To address this gap, the programme included roll-out of targeted gender transformative approaches, such as Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS), to promote transformation of harmful gender norms, roles, relations and practices at household and community levels contributing to more gender-equitable food security.



Uganda: Women’s Farmer Group in West Nile practising climate-smart agriculture, ensuring improved food security for themselves and their households.

Photo: Joseph Okwerowun.



Mali: Woman working in the market garden in Gao – a food production and income-generating activity – together with her cooperative.  
 Photo: Micailou Napon.

While there is anecdotal evidence on the impact of these gender transformative approaches, their effectiveness in driving gender-transformative change has not been systematically assessed. Furthermore, little is known of the impact of such approaches on food security at the household level, including for individual household members.

Against this background, this report explores the above assumptions with a focus on three specific learning topics:



### Measuring gender equality and food security:

Contribute to addressing gender data gaps on food security through collection and analysis of gender related food security data.



### Gender-transformative approaches and food security:

Assess the impact of gender transformative approaches on addressing gender inequalities at household and community levels, including – but not limited to – food security.



### Women's economic empowerment (WEE) in volatile security contexts:

Analyse the effectiveness of different modalities used for WEE in volatile contexts and assess the link between women's income generation and food security.

## 2.1 Learning questions and methodology

It is crucial to incorporate disaggregated data into the design and evaluation of programming to ensure the diverse experiences and voices of all affected individuals, particularly women and marginalised groups, are included.

The following learning questions were identified to address gender data gaps in food security:

1. What are the gendered intra-household effects of project activities (cash food distribution, support to food production, etc.) on individual and/or household coping strategies related to food security?
2. What gender inequalities do we observe amongst individual household members?
3. If individual-level data is not available, what do we observe in relation to female versus male-headed households?
4. What are the methods, possibilities and obstacles for collecting individual level food security data?

To assess gendered impacts on food security, Oxfam adapted the Coping Strategy Index (CSI) questionnaire to include individual-level questions (see [Annexe 1](#)). An additional column was added to ensure the collection of data relating to individual household member coping mechanisms (by sex and age group), while not affecting household CSI scoring. The baseline and endline survey assumed one respondent per household, and qualitative data collection was complemented by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) on food security.

The process produced learning at two levels. First, learning on the concrete outcomes of the gendered analysis, and how these can be applied to future programming. Second, the formulation of practical recommendations to improve collection and analysis of gender sensitive food security data.



**Uganda:** Farmer Group members on the climate-smart agriculture demo plot in West Nile, where they grow drought-resistant crops for food security.  
Photo: Ellen Eide.



## 2.2 Summary of findings



*Since our [food and economic security] programmes are designed at household level, it could explain why we do not have gendered intra-household data analysis. Basically, we are blindfolded due to that.*

**Alex Wani Yoele** – Senior Food Security and Livelihoods Coordinator, Oxfam South Sudan (January 2024)



*Let us have [clear gender transformation] indicators we are able to track at the end of the project, where we are able to measure and ask ourselves did we make any difference, did we have any impact [with the activities we included]?”*

**Everlyne Situma** – Humanitarian Strategist, Oxfam Kenya (June 2024)



Despite the interest and willingness to include additional CSI questions in the data collection, countries varied in their ability to report comprehensive intra-household food insecurity data.

While data on male- and female-headed households was successfully gathered, the findings on intra-household food insecurities were not comprehensive due to several challenges in collecting the data, providing limited evidence for thorough comparison and analysis.

However, the following findings were identified:

### A) Differences in coping strategies between female and male-headed households:

In the baseline and endline studies from the programme’s activities in Syria and South Sudan, the rCSI between male-headed households (MHH) and female-headed households (FHH) was examined as individual level data.

For **Syria**, the data reveals notable differences in coping strategies between MHH and FHH, with FHH more likely to rely on less preferred and less expensive food options, borrow food, and purchase food on debt. For instance, over a monitored period of 14 days, 19% of FHH reported using less preferred food options five times compared to 9% of MHH. Similarly, 47% of FHH borrowed food compared to 33% of MHH, indicating higher borrowing rates among FHH. Additionally, 20% of FHH purchased food on debt four times (during another monitored period) compared to 9% of MHH. In a workshop in which these findings were shared, Oxfam and partners’ staff suggested the possible explanation that FHH are more focused on ensuring the children and household are food secure.



**Syria:** Fatima Huwayja Al-Bilal in her garden, which is thriving thanks to irrigation and CVA for agriculture in Hatla, Deir Ez-Zor.  
**Photo:** Oxfam Syria.

These patterns suggest that FHH face greater challenges in food access and are more reliant on coping mechanisms. However, such assumptions should be further explored in context-specific analyses, considering the different circumstances of men and women in an intersectional manner. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing targeted interventions to address food security disparities within households.

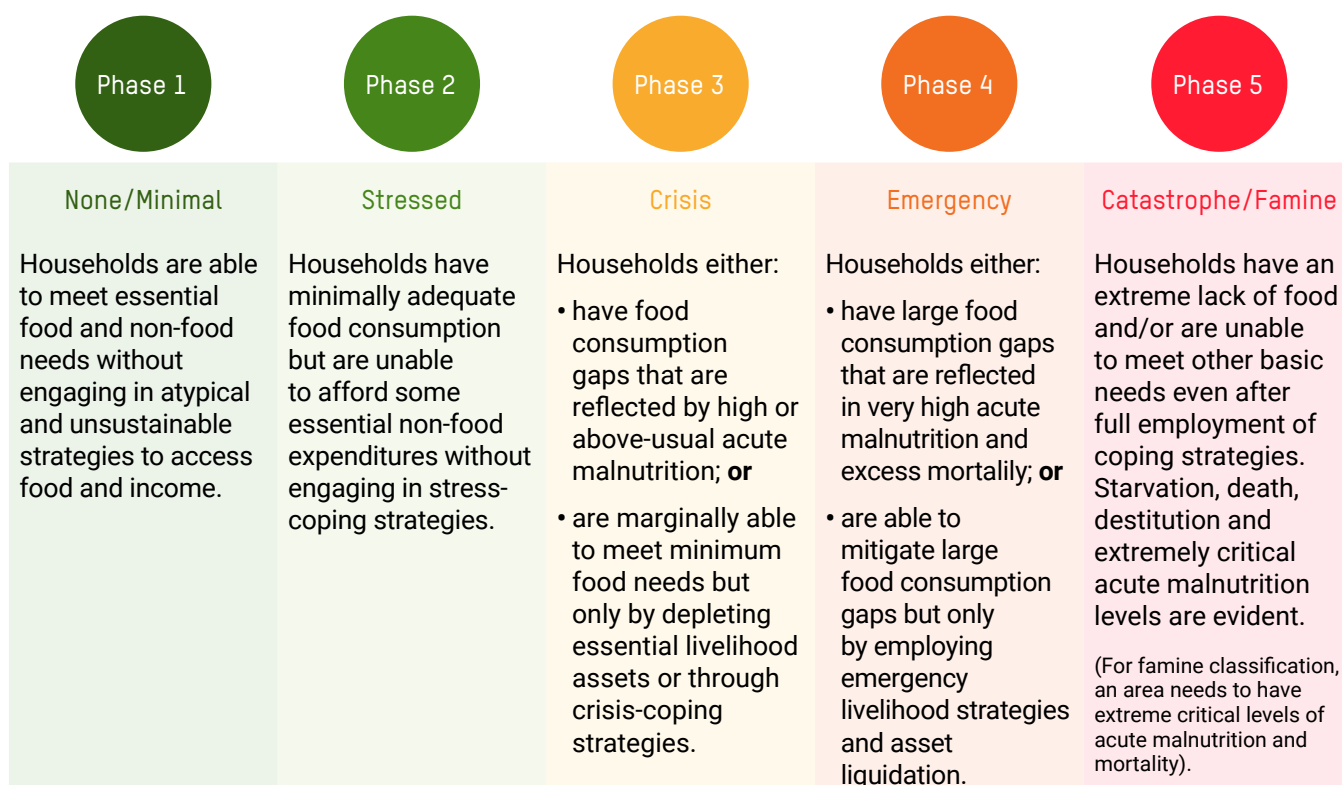
The opposite applies for **South Sudan**, where the endline survey analysis indicated more men with high coping thresholds (56%) than women (46%) in the programme areas (Akobo and Nyierol). FHH seem to more frequently adopt coping mechanisms – such as resorting to less preferred meals, reducing meal frequencies, and restricting adult consumption – than MHH. On average, the rCSI was 19 for MHH and 15 for FHH. The Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) also showed disparities, with FHH having a slightly lower average score (4.3) compared to MHH (4.5). Additionally, 51% of FHH were classified under low dietary diversity, compared to 45% of MHH. These findings suggest that FHH face greater challenges in food access and are more reliant on negative coping mechanisms.

### B) Gender disparities exist at an individual intra-household level:

In **Mali**, individual-level food security data revealed that women appear more food secure than men based on meal consumption during crises, food consumption scores (FCS), and rCSI (e.g., women having the slightly lower average rCSI of 18.77 compared to 18.78 scored by men). However, further analysis is needed to confirm these findings, to identify if they are significant enough and understand if they reflect reality or are influenced by previous programmes. The endline measures indicate a lower use of negative coping strategies in FHH (e.g., an average rCSI of 2) compared to MHH (e.g., an average rCSI of 3). Additionally, a similar project funded by Germany (GFFO) in the same area provided comparable support activities, which may have impacted the results. The GFFO study on gender inequalities highlighted significant intra-household disparities in diet and nutrition, challenging the assumption that targeting poor households effectively reaches all vulnerable individuals<sup>9</sup>. Roughly three-quarters of underweight women and undernourished children are not in the poorest 20% of households, and around half are not in the poorest 40%.

In **South Sudan**, under a project funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation and Norad, Oxfam investigated gender analysis in food security assessments through qualitative (FGDs and key informant interviews (KIIs)) and quantitative (surveys) methods for the IPC dataset collection<sup>10</sup>. The qualitative analysis indicates significant gender disparities in food consumption and livelihood opportunities within households. South Sudanese women and girls consistently consume fewer meals compared to men and boys, due to both economic constraints and cultural norms that prioritise men’s dietary needs.

Figure 1: IPC Phases of Acute Food Insecurity



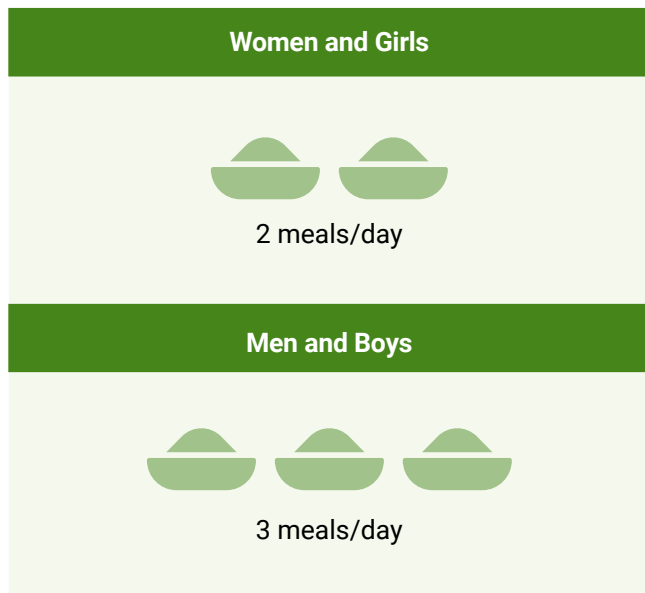


## Gender Disparities in Food Consumption and Livelihoods

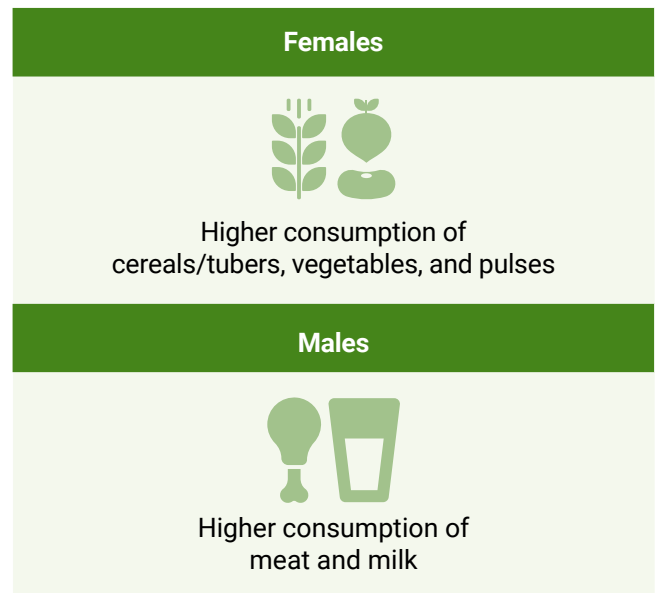
### South Sudan Report - Main Findings:

- **Meal Consumption:** Women and girls consistently consume fewer meals than men and boys.
- **Food Insecurity:** FHH are mostly in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) phases of food insecurity. While MHH are also predominantly in Stressed and Crisis phases, a small percentage are shown to be in the Emergency (IPC Phase 4) phase. This reflects the overall distribution of food insecurity phases across all three areas, highlighting that both MHH and FHH face significant food insecurity, but with MHH having a slightly higher percentage in the most severe phase (Emergency).
- **Diet diversity:** In Pibor, the head of the fish is reserved for men, symbolising their authority. In Yambio, women are barred from consuming certain meats like chicken gizzards and crocodiles. Across Pibor, Wulu, and Yambio, females primarily consume cereals/tubers, vegetables, and pulses, while males consume more meat and milk.

**Figure 2:** South Sudan Report - Average Daily Meal Consumption by Gender

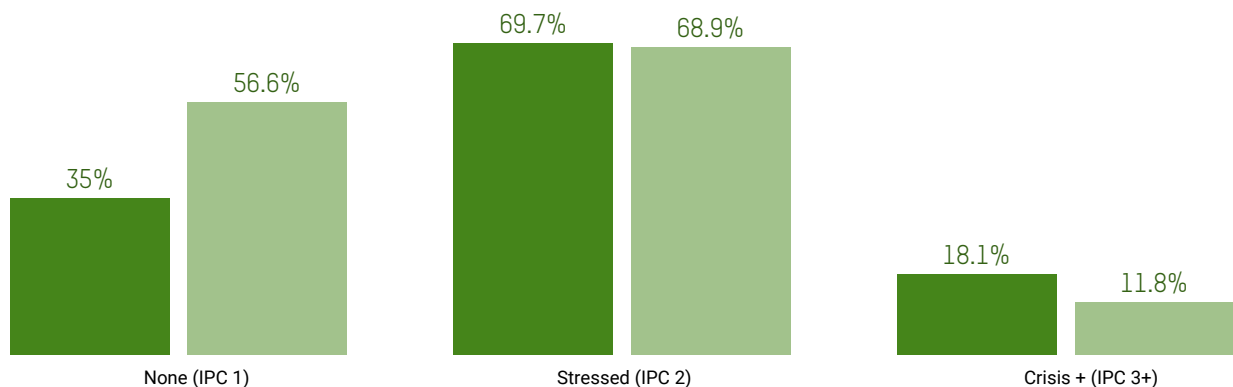


**Figure 3:** South Sudan Report - Diet Diversity by Gender



**Figure 2 -** This figure highlights the disparity in meal consumption within households across Pibor, Wulu, and Yambio, showing that women and girls consistently consume fewer meals compared to men and boys. This is due to economic constraints and cultural norms that prioritise men's dietary needs.

**Figure 4:** South Sudan Report - Total Food Insecurity Levels of Head of Households by Gender



**Figure 4 -** This figure highlights the overall disparity in food insecurity levels between MHH and FHH across Pibor, Wulu, and Yambio, showing that MHH have a higher percentage in the most severe food insecurity phase (Crisis +), while FHH are more likely to be in the less severe phases (None and Stressed).

## Why Females Are More Food Insecure

Despite the overall IPC phase distribution, the South Sudan report indicates that **females are more food insecure** due to several factors:

- 1. Cultural Norms and Dietary Prioritisation:** Cultural norms prioritise men's dietary needs, leading to women and girls consuming fewer meals and less diverse diets.
- 2. Control over Resources:** Men often control household income and food stocks, limiting women's access to food.
- 3. Cultural Restrictions:** Specific cultural restrictions limit women's and girls' access to certain foods.
- 4. Livelihood Opportunities:** Women face restrictions on accessing higher-value markets and require permission from male household members to participate in cash-for-work programmes.
- 5. Economic Barriers:** Women have limited livelihood options and face economic barriers that impede their efforts to achieve financial independence.

**Conclusion:** we see significant differences in food security and consumption patterns between genders within households. Further disaggregated data gathering is crucial to capture the full scope of gender disparities and individual-level impacts of food insecurity and to accurately understand and address these disparities.



**South Sudan:** Nyahok and Charbiel, heads of their respective households in Gakdong community (Akobo), have used part of their unconditional cash to start businesses, selling tea to earn money to feed their children.  
**Photo:** Ellen Eide, Oxfam Denmark.

### C) Findings are context specific:

The findings from Mali and South Sudan highlight how gender-related food security can vary significantly between different contexts and situations. In Mali, based on our limited data, women appear more food secure than men, with higher meal consumption during crises and better food consumption scores. Conversely, in South Sudan, women and girls face greater food insecurity, consuming fewer meals and encountering more barriers to accessing resources than men. These differences underscore the importance of context-specific analyses and interventions, as cultural norms, economic conditions, and the impact of overlapping projects can all influence different food security outcomes for men and women.

## D) A need for more refined tools and processes:

While some data was collected, the process revealed that current methodologies are insufficient for capturing the full scope of intra-household food security dynamics. The following concrete challenges and obstacles were identified:

- **Lack of specific tools:** There is no comprehensive toolbox for collecting gender-sensitive food security data, complicating the data collection process.
- **Complex and time-consuming assessments:** Ensuring reliable samples and analysing the data is incredibly difficult and time-consuming. This complexity is compounded by the need for accurate and reliable data.
- **Ethical questions and cultural sensitivity:** Incomplete or biased data and analysis is often caused by a lack of understanding of the complexity of data collection – particularly among enumerators and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) colleagues – as well as cultural sensitivities and privacy concerns. This highlights the need for more capacity building on the importance of gathering this type of data, and ensuring culturally sensitive and ethically sound data collection practices and analysis.
- **Lack of inclusiveness and gender sensitivity:** Data for all household members was collected through one respondent per household, which limited the reliability and inclusivity of data. Furthermore, women respondents were not systematically interviewed by female enumerators.
- **Integration with existing indicators:** Introducing individual-level analysis within standard household-level indicators (e.g., CSI) requires further investigation to determine the suitability of existing scoring systems. This integration significantly increases the time, effort, and cost required for assessments, risking assessment fatigue among programme participants and complicating data collection and analysis.
- **Resource constraints and feasibility:** Combining qualitative and quantitative data is necessary to capture the full scope of gender dynamics. However, this approach leads to increased costs, longer data collection periods, and more complex data analysis. Detailed gender-sensitive assessments are critical for impactful programming but must be balanced against resource constraints and feasibility.
- **Sensitivity of intra-household dynamics:** Asking about intra-household differences and dynamics is a sensitive and private matter, making it difficult to pose questions and obtain honest answers.
- **Resistance from practitioners:** MEAL practitioners and data collectors may resist additional questions, as traditional MEAL tools like CSI were designed for household-level data, as opposed to individual or intra-household.



Syria: Learning event in Deir Ez-Zor, with participants discussing CVA for agriculture activities.  
Photo: Oxfam Syria.

## 2.3 Recommendations

1

**Develop guidance and tools for individual level sex and age disaggregated food security data collection:**

Improve the collection and analysis of gender-responsive food security data by developing comprehensive guidelines and tools. These should include recommendations for handling sensitivities and provide examples of good practices to ensure ethical and effective data collection.

2

**Make collection methods gender sensitive:** Ensure that all household members are included as respondents in household surveys, and that a single individual does not answer for the whole household. Furthermore, provide female enumerators and gender-segregated spaces.

3

**Include gender data collection in baseline and endline assessments:** Ensure that gender-responsive food security data is systematically included in both baseline and endline assessments. This is crucial for tracking changes over time and understanding the impact of interventions.

4

**Standardise data collection across projects:** Implement joint orientation sessions for data collection in similar projects to ensure unified methods (e.g., gather the same type of intra-household data both in the baseline and endline to be able to compare in-country and between countries). This standardisation will facilitate comparisons between different countries and enhance the overall quality of the data collected. Ensure that data collection teams are well-trained to collect high-quality data and consider using gendered enumerators to improve the accuracy and sensitivity of the data collected.

5

**Ensure consistent follow-up with the people we work with:** Ensure that women and men who participate in several projects in the same geographical zone are systematically surveyed to assess evolutions between different projects.

6

**Integrate qualitative and quantitative assessments:** Complement household-level indicators (e.g., CSI) with qualitative research (e.g., KIIs or FGDs) to better understand individual and gender-specific needs. This mixed-methods approach provides a more nuanced understanding of intra-household dynamics but requires careful planning to avoid assessment fatigue and ensure data reliability. Conduct case studies to compare the usefulness of different methods for collecting individual-level data, identifying obstacles, good practices, and considerations around the sensitivity and privacy of questions.

7

**Engage multiple household members:** The opportunity to talk to different household members can provide more honest answers about individual-level food security. In some contexts, talking only to the head of the household might result in overestimations of food security to avoid the stigma of being perceived as poor. Engaging multiple household members helps to capture a more accurate and comprehensive picture of food security dynamics.

8

**Reflect, learn, and continuously improve:** The process of collecting gender-responsive food security data is iterative. Regular feedback and reflection on what worked well and what did not are essential for continuous improvement. This includes adapting methodologies based on field experiences and emerging best practices.

9

**Systematically address outcomes of gender-responsive and context-specific needs assessments in programme design, promoting gender-responsive or transformative food security interventions:**

Develop programmes that prioritise equitable food distribution within households, ensuring women and girls have access to adequate nutrition, and specifically target WEE and participation in decision making. Address cultural norms that restrict women's and girls' access to specific foods and work towards more equitable and inclusive food security outcomes.

## 3.1 Learning questions and methodology

The analysis of gender and food security data presented in section 2 points to context-specific inequalities in food security between women and men. Oxfam's work is based on the understanding that unequal power relations are a main underlying cause of all forms of inequality. Power exists not only as control over others, but also in more subtle forms, such as collective power through organisation, solidarity and joint action, or individual power or personal self-confidence, often linked to culture, religion or other aspects of identity.<sup>11</sup>

Cultural norms around gender hinder the ability and autonomy of women and girls to exercise power, or influence the policies, structures, decision-making spaces and social norms that affect their lives, including those related to food security. For instance, patriarchal norms negatively affect women's access to productive resources, excluding them from political representation in decision-making spaces that control such resources.

This makes women – both within households and the wider community – more vulnerable across all dimensions of food security, including availability, access, utilisation, and stability.<sup>12</sup>

To address these imbalances the programme included activities specifically aimed at gender-transformative change: Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) implemented in Uganda and South Sudan, and Participatory Action Learning Systems (PALS), implemented in Kenya. These community-led methodologies inspire participants to envision and pursue change through peer action-learning. Each process is co-created by facilitators and participants to respond to the context and needs of the concerned group and unfolds over three overlapping phases:

1. Visioning and catalysing change at individual and household level;
2. Mainstreaming gender justice into programmes and organisations; and
3. Movement building: networking and advocating for gender justice at all levels, including policy and decision making.<sup>13</sup>

To capture learning on gender-transformative approaches, semi-structured online FGDs and in-person interviews were conducted with Oxfam staff and partners in South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda.

Data from these interviews was triangulated with multiple sources (see [Annexe 2](#)) and analysed to assess impact at project and community level.

The following learning questions guided the analysis:

1. Who changes as a result of gender-transformative approaches?
2. What type of change have we observed, and what is the contribution of gender-transformative activities to these changes? Are the observed changes related to food security and gender inequalities?
3. What are the enabling factors and obstacles related to gender-transformative change?



Uganda: Piranym Farmer Savings Group presenting their gender balance tree during GALS training in Zombo, West Nile.  
Photo: Joseph Okwerowun.

#### Example of GALS in practice:

**Vision Road Journey:** helps participants develop a common vision, fostering a proactive approach to gender equity.

**Gender Balance Tree and Empowerment Map:** reveal specific gender-related challenges, promoting a shared understanding for solution building.

**Challenge Action Tree:** helps visualise assets and gaps, guiding participants in creating targeted strategies for empowerment and gender equity.

## 3.2 Summary of findings



*It starts with you, but it shouldn't end with you, and that's one of the key principles of GALS.*

**Peace Chandini** – Women's Rights Coordinator, Oxfam Uganda (May 2024)



The evidence points to personal and individual change for both women and men, as well as relationship changes within the household and the broader community. Most of the programme's gender-transformative activities focused on individuals and households. Shifts in gender roles at the household level depend on the willingness of individuals to adapt their views and behaviours, while broader transformation within the community depends on the engagement of men and community leaders. It also requires the willingness of a critical mass of men and women to reconsider often deep-rooted beliefs related to gender norms.



*We sat down together, my husband and I, and drew the vision road journey, here we started drawing the poultry and garden [food security activities]. When done, we put the poster by the door, so every time we walk out of the door, we see what we need to achieve today. We have not specified who does what, because we do it together. It is joint family work, not only the woman's responsibility/job!*

**Ajio Molly** – Poultry programme participant from Aligo Youth Farmers Group, host community Imvepi, Uganda (August 2024)

While gender-transformative approaches such as GALS present individuals with tools to reflect on their own situation and create change in their own lives, gender-transformative changes at different levels are inter-connected and interdependent, underlining the importance of approaches and methodologies such as GALS to encompass all levels.

Shifting the mindset of both women and men is an interconnected process: men must agree for women to take up a leadership role, while women need to agree to change their roles and responsibilities. It is therefore crucial to involve couples in the process together. That said, male engagement was described as an obstacle faced by some partners, as men tended to prioritise activities that bring direct financial gain and did not always see the relevance of activities that centre on awareness raising and transfer of knowledge.



**Uganda:** Ajio Molly, poultry programme participant from Aligo Youth Farmers Group, presenting her family's vision road journey.  
Photo: Ellen Eide.

In general, there is a lack of available data relating to intersectionality in gender-transformative change. However, disparities in participation and the effects of gender-transformative activities are reported based on age, settlement patterns, education, and marital status. Groups with special needs, including widows, internally displaced women, refugee women, and young married girls, face obstacles in participating due to other care and livelihood duties.



Oxfam staff, partners and project participants reported four types of interconnected changes:

1. On an individual level, gender-transformative approaches have led to **improved self-confidence and a sense of autonomy** for both female and male participants. Participants described gaining a new vision and sense of purpose, as well as a better understanding of one's own abilities and those of both household and community members to contribute to that vision. In particular, strengthened self-awareness and confidence reinforced women's ability to speak up in public, challenge gender norms, and defend their rights.
2. At household and community level, changes have materialised in **the division of labour, roles and responsibilities of women and men**. Both genders have shown an increased awareness of the need to collaborate, leading to improved planning at household level and strengthened cooperation in production activities (selection, preparation, production and collection). Perceptions around traditionally male and female activities have changed, resulting in women becoming more involved in traditionally male activities (such as fishing or cattle herding) and men becoming more aware and involved with care tasks, easing the burden on women and dividing tasks more evenly. This is important to mitigate the risk of project activities adding to the time poverty of women. There are also reports of shifting mindsets in relation to the ownership of household assets. Such ownership is generally male dominated, but women have started to challenge the barriers they face in owning land and other assets. While a positive impact of the programme on female control of assets was reported, these assets are often related to direct humanitarian support or the domestic sphere. Changes related to traditional gender roles are slow, and often met with resistance. Men play an important role in raising awareness of the benefits of gender transformative change.
3. Altered perceptions on gender roles and responsibilities have led to the **reinforced participation of women in decision-making processes**. Increased self-determination has strengthened women's ability to manage their own income generating activities, while to a lesser extent, their participation in decisions at the household level has also increased. Female decision-making remains mostly linked to domestic or care work or happens in the absence of men in the household, for instance when a woman becomes a widow. Programme activities relating to food production have led to more inclusive leadership and decision-making processes, with women being involved in typically male domains (such as decision-making on crop selection and management of irrigation systems). Change is also reported at community level, with an increased participation of women in public meetings, and women taking up leadership roles in groups and project committees. However, evidence remains limited and further investment is needed to deepen and sustain this change.
4. Gender-transformative changes have influenced **WEE and food security**. Tools such as the vision road journey and the gender balance tree have raised awareness of gender inequalities and served as practical planning and monitoring tools that highlight food security issues. Improved collaboration between household members, and changes in perceptions on the gendered division of labour, have led to strengthened production processes and an increase in women's income, allowing them, in turn, to invest in the household. Altered perceptions have also allowed women to make the shift from subsistence farming towards large-scale farming activities. Furthermore, an improvement in women and children's nutritional status was reported, with men becoming increasingly aware of the importance of their involvement in the health and nutrition of children (often regarded as an exclusively female domain).



*In one of our sessions on the topic gender balance tree, we had a discussion with male and female participants. During that discussion, some women were opening up and challenging the men, realising that they have been denying our rights to ownership.*

*For example, in our Nuer culture, women are not supposed to own cattle. During that discussion, some of the men said we need to give a chance to the women to actually be able to also own properties in the community.*

**Mborigumba Moses** – CFI Programme Manager (Nyiröl), CIDO South Sudan (May 2024)





**Kenya:** Halima Abdo of Manyatta Konso Women's Group collecting eggs from her chickens to enhance her and her family's food security.  
**Photo:** Misheck Macharia

The main **obstacles to sustainable gender-transformative change** are **deeply engrained socio-cultural norms**. Men are often considered the head of the household, and report feeling unsafe discussing finances with women. Women bear the burden of unpaid care work and face high levels of time poverty, while men often control their mobility, labour, and time. Gender-based violence (domestic violence, GFM, ECM) remains high, while its root causes are not sufficiently addressed. Additional investment is needed to address women's and communities' needs more broadly, including through peace building, literacy, vocational training, access to social services, access to political processes, governance, and advocacy.

**External shocks**, such as (climate-related) shocks, attacks and displacement, also impact gender-transformative change and risk leading to a reversal of progress in the future. Despite these challenges, programme participants reported that gender-transformative approaches (such as GALS) helped prepare households and communities in becoming more resilient to shocks. Rapidly changing contexts can create opportunities for gender-transformative change. For instance, drought and food insecurity can lead to changes in perception on gender roles and ownership (dams, cattle, crop production, etc), and the process of settlement creates new economic opportunities and social spaces for women of pastoral communities, as reported in Kenya.

However, evidence from South Sudan indicates that while crises have forced shifts in roles and responsibilities, such as increased participation of

women in income generation for the family, these changes have not led to more equitable power dynamics. Women continue to face barriers in accessing resources and decision-making power, and traditional gender norms persist, limiting their agency. This indicates that power dynamics do not depend on household income, and that broadening the roles of women beyond their traditional tasks of household and care work does not automatically generate increased gender equality. In fact, these dynamics can lead to negative effects, adding to women's triple burden and leading to increased gender-based violence. Specific actions and sensitisation, including a context-specific Do No Harm approach, are needed to change gender dynamics and promote gender justice, while safeguarding all community members.

At the **institutional level**, Oxfam staff and partners' gender justice remains a priority. Policies and procedures have been developed, and staff are overall engaged. While excellent trained gender staff are available within both Oxfam and partners, gender knowledge does not always reach other staff, and learning is not systematically documented and shared. Allocated resources remain insufficient, and gender-transformative activities are overall underfunded. Within the project, for instance, there was insufficient funding to cover all phases of GALS. As such, while a start was made at individual and household level, additional time and resources will be needed to achieve sustained community-wide progress and the creation of a movement to address gender inequality at the political and policy level. Ideally, achieving gender-transformative results requires long-term programming.



Uganda: John Bosco Okaya, GALS Champion and Facilitator, training community members on the GALS tools.  
Photo: CEFORD.



*I discovered I was the cause of the disagreement in the household, whereas my madam was overburdened with a lot of domestic chores, and I was still adding more. [...] Eventually the children also started participating in the planning, in the discussion. For me that was the genesis of turning around. When I started using the gender balance tree and break down the issue of gender further. We looked at roles that I do at household level and the role that madam does at home. That is how I discovered the issues around the house that created the rift between me and madam and created the rift between my family. [...] But of course, also me, I have my own gender stereotypes that have been developed over a long period of time that I needed support to acknowledge and to go against. You see tradition always told me as a man there are certain things one should do and not do, and I remained on one side of the coin, I would not look how things were on the other side [...] Now, when I discovered the other side of the coin, I realised that I need to take on domestic chores too, such as going to fetch water [a typical woman's trait in Uganda] [...]. One month later men started approaching me; "Bosco, what is it that you're doing at your household level? My wife told me that she wished all men were like you". The women and thereafter men were observing me, and they started taking this message [that household chores should be shared] back to their own families. It resulted in that I started training these men in my house. [...] The moment some community members begin to change their attitude, and other people can see it, they will start to follow.*

**John Bosco Okaya** – GALS Champion and Facilitator, CEFORD Uganda (August 2024)



## 3.3 Recommendations

1

### Fix the basics:

- Allocate sufficient time and resources to implement a full cycle of gender-transformative approaches, as per the three phases of GALS (individual and household level change, mainstreaming of gender justice at community-level, and advocacy and movement building), to ensure a broad participant reach.
- Include specific gender-transformative objectives and indicators in programme frameworks and sufficiently budget for monitoring and evaluation.

2

### Make gender justice a routine, not an event:

- Ensure a long-term, multi-year approach to gender-transformative change. One-year projects can serve as pilots or steppingstones but should be embedded in longer-term engagement in communities to ensure sustainable and transformative change.
- Mainstream gender-transformative aspects into all programming, and ensure socio-economic conditions allow people to change. Integrating gender-transformative activities into broader food security programmes enables marginalised groups to access conversations about social change.
- Gender-transformative change is linked to other areas of work. It is therefore important to build partnerships with internal and external actors to address gaps (literacy, education, health, gender-based violence, childcare, leadership and political participation, policy and advocacy) and engage in a holistic, integrated approach to gender justice.

3

### Contextualisation is key:

- Systematically include women participants in project design and monitoring.
- Contextualise theoretical concepts and employ a gender-responsive conflict-sensitive approach.
- Use local languages, user-friendly tools, and materials available in the communities.

4

### Ensure inclusive processes:

- Consider women's time poverty (e.g., pay attention to the triple burden by creating safe and accessible spaces, at convenient times, and with childcare provisions available to enable women to participate).
- Address the needs of marginalised groups, widows, people with disabilities, the elderly, internally displaced people (IDP)/refugees, people from remote communities, young women, adolescent girls, survivors of gender-based violence, women of ethnic/religious minority groups, people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), pregnant and lactating women.
- In polygamous households, make sure to include all wives and their children (best practice is to register each woman separately).
- Promote positive masculinities through GALS and more dedicated modules focused on gendered conflict and violence. Work with men, boys, elders and leaders in the communities and households of participating women to encourage community and household ownership and avoid suspicion or household rifts.
- Engage youth and children, especially in communities where early/child marriage is practised and create adapted tools for them.
- Engage all community stakeholders and create dialogue platforms with community leaders to discuss gender transformation and sensitise communities on the value of women's participation.

5

### Support staff to become agents of change:

- Invest in gender training for all staff (gender capacity to go beyond technical staff) to ensure transversal basic knowledge and use of gender-responsive approaches.
- Break silos between teams and programmes, ensuring that people with different hats in the organisation (e.g., programme managers, different gender staff, etc.) regularly connect, and work together to support partners.
- Focus on personal change processes in the training of staff and trainers. Engaged and convinced staff and trainers are key to the success of gender-transformative approaches.

6

### Invest in knowledge building and learning:

- Include learning objectives related to gender-transformative change in programme design and dedicate specific budget lines to support learning.
- Sufficiently budget for and conduct gender analysis and needs assessments and use results systematically to inform every aspect of programming using gender-responsive budgeting principles.
- Create space and ensure necessary resources to document successes and challenges and share these internally and externally in an accessible manner.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation methodologies are relevant and appropriate to capture gender-transformative social change using Oxfam's feminist MEAL principles.
- Go beyond gender-disaggregation and pay attention to intersectionality in data collection and analysis, paying particular attention to marginalised groups, age, settlement patterns, education, and marital status.



South Sudan: GALS training with diverse women's groups from the community in Akobo East.  
Photo: Taban Archangelo.

## 4.1 Learning questions and methodology

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) ensures women can equally participate and benefit from decent work and social protection; access markets and have control over resources, their own time, lives and body. It increases voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to economic institutions. In the programme, several strategies were implemented to support WEE, including:

- direct support to producers (technical support on production practices, provision of seed capital, inputs and equipment to groups and individuals, the rehabilitation of irrigation structures and the establishment of production sites);
- different cash modalities (unconditional cash transfers, cash and voucher assistance (CVA) for agricultural inputs, group cash transfers, and cash for work); and
- support for the establishment of IGAs, such as support to individuals and groups, the reinforcement of technical, financial and commercial capacities, market access support, the establishment of savings groups, and linking with financial institutions.

To analyse the effectiveness of different WEE modalities in volatile contexts, and assess assumed links between income generation and food security, the following learning questions were identified:

- What are the most effective strategies for promoting and supporting WEE (IGA, cash, savings groups, market gardens) in a volatile security context?
- Are our assumptions related to the link between WEE and improved household food security confirmed?
- What are the main obstacles and enabling factors to support WEE?
- How do we ensure a Do No Harm approach?

Baseline and endline study data from Mali, Burkina Faso and Syria was assessed. Learning workshops were organised with staff, local authorities and partners, and additional studies were conducted ([see Annexe 2](#)) to address the learning questions. Case studies and preliminary results were shared in an online workshop with staff and partners from all six countries involved in the programme.



**Uganda:** South Sudanese women in Rhino Camp engaged in IGA to improve economic empowerment and food security.  
Photo: Ellen Eide.

## 4.2 Summary of findings

In Deir Ez-Zor governorate, **Syria**, CVA was provided to 2,950 farmers (1,449 women and 1,501 men) to support their agricultural activities, while also benefitting from the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure. The initiative used an area-based approach, aligning with other projects to ensure comprehensive community development. The aim of this strategy was to increase access and control for farmers over productive assets (land, agricultural income, livestock, harvested goods, etc.), while enhancing decision-making related to economic activities, including budgeting for income generation and expenditure management. It has not yet been possible to assess the long-term impact of the irrigation canal and the cash for agriculture in the scope of the programme – as at least one agricultural season needs to pass – but significant short-term improvements in both WEE and food security were noted. The programme's gender-responsive and gender-transformative consumption scores improved significantly, with poor consumption scores for households dropping from 25% to 2%, and acceptable

consumption scores increasing from 54% to 81% (77% for FHH and 82% for MHH). Market access improved in particular for women, with 76.19% of FHH reporting improved market access, compared to 59.49% for MHH. Nevertheless, challenges persist, and FHH remain disadvantaged compared to MHH when it comes to coping strategies, as described in section 2.

The adaptation of new agricultural techniques varies notably between MHH and FHH, with most households (70%) not adopting new techniques. Among MHH, a majority of 59% are willing and planning to adopt new techniques, in contrast to a mere 14% of FHH. This stark difference highlights the challenges faced by FHH in embracing new methods, due to various barriers, with women citing a lack of technical knowledge (48%) and a lack of resources (33%). The disparity between MHH and FHH suggests a need for targeted interventions to encourage and support FHH in adopting new practices, ensuring they are not left behind in the process of innovation and development.



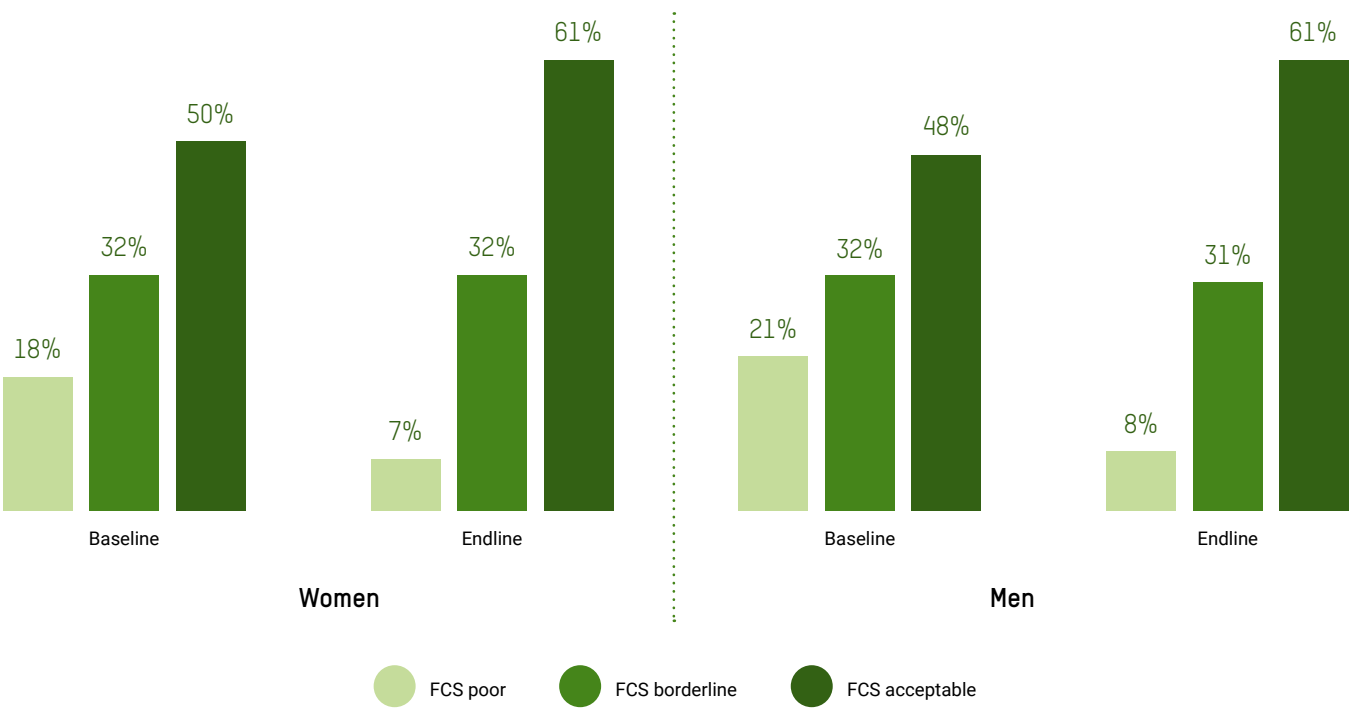
**Syria:** Family in Hatla, Deir Ez-Zor, and Oxfam staff discussing the improvement of farming yields thanks to CVA and irrigation rehabilitation.  
**Photo:** Oxfam Syria



In Mali, multiple strategies were implemented to improve the food security status of the people Oxfam works with, including targeting FHHs, collective market garden activities, cash modalities, and support to Saving for Change (SVC) groups. SVC is Oxfam’s approach to promoting microcredit among members of market gardening groups, using the profits from harvesting and selling vegetables. It has helped strengthen the economic autonomy of hundreds of women in the Bourem Cercle, a region in northern Mali that has been greatly affected by the effects of climate change. The endline study indicates positive effects of the programme activities on food security indicators. As addressed in section 2, the mean rCSI was 2 for women and 3 for men at the endline, compared with 18.77 and 18.78 respectively in men and women at baseline. Changes in FCS for men and women between the baseline and endline surveys show a significant improvement.

The acceptable FCS increased for both women (from 50% to 61%) and men (from 48% to 61%), and the poor diet score decreased significantly in both groups, from 18% to 7% in women and from 21% to 8% in men. However, it should be acknowledged that evidence of WEE is not analysed in a systematic way and is mostly based on testimonies from the focus groups and a final learning workshop with partners and local authorities (see section 4.3).

Figure 5: Changes in FCS for men and women (source endline report Mali)







**Burkina Faso:** Women farmers sorting through their produce of onions from their market garden in Yatenga.  
**Photo:** Nassouri Yacouba.

In **Burkina Faso**, the project implemented multiple strategies including collective market gardens and support to collective and individual **IGAs**. No general CSI/FCS were collected through the project endline, but data suggests that the project has made a positive overall contribution to reducing the scale of the food crisis and malnutrition. According to 98.73% of endline respondents, the agricultural inputs and food rations distributed have been decisive in improving food security. Only 1.27% of respondents indicated that the project had not helped towards reducing the scale of the food crisis and malnutrition. They felt that the various allocations and support provided by the project were not enough to bring about significant changes. Despite the programme's efforts to strengthen the resilience of participants, their living conditions remain fragile, mainly due to the programme's short duration.

In addition to the endline, a specific study was conducted to better understand the effects, enabling factors and obstacles to the support of WEE through IGAs, such as petty trade, handicrafts, processing of agroforestry products, cattle rearing and market gardening. Most of the women (72%) in the project practised individual IGAs, 25% of women in a group with other women, and 3% individually and in at least one group. IGAs were financed by the programme in collaboration with local extension services (which provided capacity building and monitoring), micro finance institutions (mainly the **caisse populaire**), or family members of the women involved. Funding was provided on a case-by-case basis, with a contribution from the woman in question or from a group of women.

Results from the study indicate that IGAs are a source of income for women and contribute to improving their living conditions, their contribution to household expenses (food, medical care, children's education, clothing, etc.), the food security of participants and

their households (better/acceptable consumption score), while increasing women's autonomy. 40% of survey respondents were able to contribute to 50% of household expenses. Regarding food security, 7% of women have a poor food consumption compared to 23% at baseline (i.e., their FCS is less than or equal to 21), 25% have a borderline food consumption, and 68% have an acceptable food consumption.

Collective IGAs are seemingly more successful as they cultivate solidarity between women, enabling them to share their experiences as women, but do not bring about significant changes in the living conditions of women and their households. While promoting the inclusion of women in cooperatives contributes to social cohesion in a fragile context, IGAs can also be a source of conflict within households, as women no longer have enough time for domestic and care work. Literacy programmes were identified as an important contributing factor to the success of IGAs. However, significant obstacles remain, such as women's limited ability to use digital technology to promote their products, increase visibility, and access sales opportunities. Furthermore, the seasonality of raw materials and a stark rise in prices, as well as high levels of insecurity, constitute a threat to the sustainability of IGAs. Insecurity has led to the closure of certain markets, making it impossible to travel long distances in search of raw materials. This results in additional costs and disruptions to production.

The project supported different WEE approaches in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The **Do No Harm** approach involves understanding the impact of aid on existing conflicts and its interactions within a particular context, with the goal of limiting or preventing unintended negative effects. The Do No Harm principle urges us to conduct a deep analysis and understanding of the contexts in which we work to ensure that conflict is not inadvertently exacerbated by our actions.

Throughout the programme, some good practices were identified and shared during an online learning session with staff and partners in all six countries, including:

1

**The operationalisation of a conflict-sensitive context analysis allows for the systematic identification of risks and implementation of adaptive measures.**

In Burkina Faso, the context analysis identified community conflicts relating to land and community management mechanisms. The programme established a social dialogue to facilitate the sustainable use of land by women. Negotiations with traditional authorities and local communities enabled women to acquire land for market gardening. This resulted in the establishment of deeds of assignment or land transfer at community level for the sustainable use of the gardens, under the lead of the local authorities. Furthermore, the programme carried out an analysis of cash distribution to participants, enabling team members to identify the risks and mitigation measures. One of these adaptive measures led to interactions with the administrative authorities to deal with their prohibitive measure in relation to cash distribution. Lastly, the analysis allowed for the identification of certain social events and their compatibility with the planning of activities. All activities, including those relating to IGAs, are now organised outside of community events (such as funerals or market days) to avoid clashing with community sensitivities.

In Syria, the Oxfam team received training to identify and mitigate gender risks. Important mitigating measures to reduce gender-based violence included priority support to pregnant and lactating mothers with separate waiting areas provided, and gender sensitisation to mitigate risks at distribution points. In Mali, teams relied on communities for information to both update strategies to suit the context and reduce the risk of appropriation by armed groups.

2

**Several good practices for inclusive and transparent targeting were identified.**

In Burkina Faso, host communities and IDPs were included in the targeting process based on objective criteria, transparency in the selection of IGA participants, and the establishment of a representative accountability committee. To reduce targeting risks that might lead to conflict (through exclusion or inclusion), the programme team in Mali used a community-based approach, verified by the household economy approach (HEA), to identify participants. This enabled technical services, local authorities, and communities to be involved in the targeting process by setting up complaints and selection committees to represent all socio-economic levels. Disseminating and raising awareness of the targeting criteria has enabled communities to better understand the targeting process. The operationalisation and distribution of a toll-free telephone number also helped to ensure transparency around targeting activities. Validating and sharing the lists at a general meeting enabled participants to test the reliability of the final lists.

3

**The Do No Harm approach must include robust and inclusive accountability and feedback mechanisms.**

In Syria, a community feedback and response mechanism was established, with active community engagement to promote inclusivity. This mechanism is carefully documented and monitored by the MEAL team, with records securely stored on an online platform accessible exclusively to the MEAL team. Consultative community meetings and ongoing feedback processes ensure participation rights are upheld. The effectiveness of these measures is demonstrated by documented community feedback and continued stakeholder engagement, preventing discrimination and exclusion.

In Burkina Faso, complaints and feedback committees were established in all municipalities. Furthermore, all stakeholders (extension services, traditional and religious authorities, beneficiaries, administration, etc.) were mobilised in the implementation process, followed by community accountability meetings. These meetings enabled the team to gather feedback from stakeholders to make corrections in the implementation of activities.

## 4.3 Recommendations

1

### **Implement long-term and multi-approach interventions with a focus on sustainability:**

- Women who are transitioning from self-sustenance to income generation and contributing to household food security are vulnerable to shocks. Combine different types of activities (market gardens, saving groups, IGAs, cash transfers) to reduce the risk of these shocks affecting women's livelihoods and household food security.
- Reduce financial barriers and facilitate access to financial services for women to help them invest in their economic activities. This includes formal and informal services, such as supporting the establishment of community-based savings and credit groups or providing them with startup grants.
- Provide training programmes focused on developing skills in areas such as entrepreneurship, financial literacy, digital marketing, modern agricultural techniques, and value addition. These skills empower women to explore new opportunities and manage their resources more effectively.
- Work in partnership with other actors (extension services, other NGOs, farmers organisations, financial institutions, private sector) involved in WEE or related areas, with explicit objectives that other actors must be able or willing to support women-led IGAs in particular after the programme's end.
- Provide support to the entire value chain in which women are active to avoid, for example, production disruptions due to shortages of raw materials.
- Work on women's access to markets and promote gender-responsive market spaces (e.g., with childcare, gender-segregated toilets, etc.)
- Integrate social cohesion into programme implementation strategies. In terms of improving food security and livelihoods of communities in conflict-affected areas, a stable situation for farming activities (or animal husbandry, etc.) is required. Integrating community-based peace building initiatives with livelihood interventions should therefore be considered as an option.
- Ensure access to reliable water sources to allow women to cultivate crops year-round, improving food security and income stability. Ensure sustainability through the introduction and maintenance of solar-powered irrigation systems to support agricultural productivity, particularly during the dry season.

2

### **Ensure approaches are adapted to women's specific needs:**

- Implement targeted interventions to encourage and support marginalised women's groups in attending trainings and adopting new practices, ensuring they are not left behind in the process of innovation and development.
- Ensure that women are actively involved in decision-making processes at all levels, from community planning to policy development. This promotes gender equality and ensures that initiatives are tailored to their specific needs.
- Recognise that working with collectives, groups of women, or supporting individual economic practices will have specific advantages and challenges depending on the context, communities' desires and unique needs. A specific approach should therefore not be determined beforehand, and only be identified based on a thorough context analysis.
- Raise awareness and inform the husbands and wider family members of project participants about the benefits of their activities.
- Recognise the importance for IGAs to be contextualised and suitable for women (given the gender norms and gendered social/mobility restrictions they face) and include the possibility of promoting more non-traditional types of IGAs for women ( e.g., non-home based and more higher income options, formal employment, etc.).

3

### Ensure a Do No Harm approach:

- Systematically conduct and operationalise a gender-responsive conflict-sensitive risk analysis.
- Ensure issues related to gender-based violence are systematically addressed, and that women's time poverty is not inadvertently increased through programme activities.
- Ensure inclusive and transparent targeting practices, and include community leaders, to avoid exclusion or inclusion leading to conflict.
- Ensure robust and inclusive feedback and accountability mechanisms. Integrate community complaint mechanisms and make sure they are free and accessible. Organise feedback meetings with local stakeholders and community members.

4

### Invest in learning and MEAL:

- Agree to learning questions at the start of a project or programme in an inclusive manner, making sure they are relevant to partners and staff, as well as the communities they work with.
- Budget for sufficient MEAL resources at country level, but also at the level of other relevant Oxfam International bodies (such as Oxfam in Africa).
- Ensure impact assessments are conducted after the end of the programme. Six months after the programme's end a follow-up study is required to measure the impact on women's additional income, and on their leadership and decision-making at household or community level.
- Ensure consistency between baseline, endline and learning areas in the project's MEAL system, from the outset.



**Uganda:** Piranyim Farmer Savings Group presenting the GALs tools during a training in Zombo, West Nile.  
**Photo:** Joseph Okwerowun.

## 4.4 Testimonies from Syria

Fatima, a 27-year-old mother, lives in Huwayja Al-Bilal, Hatla, Deir Ez-Zor governorate. She shares a home with her husband, their six children, and her husband's family, including her disabled mother-in-law. The family owns a three-dunum<sup>15</sup> plot of land, which once was their main source of income. Despite managing a large family and caring for her mother-in-law, Fatima significantly contributes to the family's land and farming activities. Her day starts early. Fatima completes the various household responsibilities, including chores and taking care of her children, and begins her work on the farm alongside her husband. Fatima ploughs the land, while her husband buys seeds and supplies. They work together to fertilise and water the crops. However, the high cost of fertilisers and irrigation limit their ability to farm the entire plot of land and produce a stable income.

In 2024, Fatima was part of the agriculture support grants project in Hatla. Supplemented by complimentary training on efficient irrigation and farming practices, Fatima's grant helped her to repair her agriculture equipment, purchase seeds, fertilisers and a water pump, and allowed her to pay off various food and agriculture debts. The grant and additional activities transformed her farm, boosted Fatima's household income, and enabled the storage of harvested crops for the winter. This ensured the family's food security and decreased their financial burden. The farm now grows a wider variety of vegetables (including aubergines, tomatoes, and peppers) both for the family's own consumption and to be sold at the Hatla market (approximately 500kg). Fatima now plans to expand her farming and invest in solar-powered irrigation.



*The land turned green this year, thanks to the support on irrigation and cash for agriculture. I never thought I would see my fields so full of life.*

**Fatima** – Huwayja Al-Bilal, Hatla, Deir Ez-Zor (July 2024)



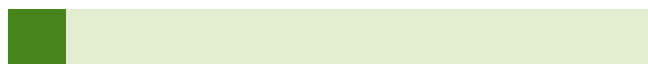
Syria: Fatima Huwayja Al-Bilal in her garden, which is thriving thanks to irrigation and CVA for agriculture in Hatla, Deir Ez-Zor.  
Photo: Oxfam Syria.

Muna, a 33-year-old mother of five, lives with her family in Lower Hatla, Deir Ez-Zor governorate. They rely on their four-dunum<sup>16</sup> farm for income and food. Muna grows cotton on two dunums and seasonal vegetables on the rest, providing fresh produce year-round. However, damaged irrigation systems and water pumping sets have caused a decrease in water supply, severely impacting Muna's crop production and the quality and quantity of her yields.

Under Norad funding, Oxfam's agriculture support grants in Hatla have assisted Muna to purchase supplies such as higher quality seeds, organic fertilisers, and repair tools, in addition to improving her farm's irrigation system. Coupled with the training sessions offered on efficient irrigation and farming practices, the support grant has improved Muna's efficiency in planting, weeding, and harvesting, allowing her to grow more, larger, and higher quality crops, while increasing her family's income and access to food.

The volume of her crops increased from two to four dunums, resulting in a 230% increase in income (from prior seasonal earnings of 1,000,000 SYP (approximately 70 USD) to 3,300,000 SYP (approximately 230 USD)) and a significant improvement in food security for her and her family (an acceptable FCS of 81% was measured after the project ended). Muna hopes for continued projects to help farmers like her. She plans to diversify her crops and invest in solar-powered irrigation to further enhance her farm's productivity.

**In Syria, the programme ensured the economic empowerment of its participants** through financial support and improved agricultural infrastructure. In total, 43% of women have either become the leading providers of their households or are actively involved in both income generation and decision-making for their families, including:



**9% of women** reported becoming the primary providers and decision-makers for their families in terms of how the grant was utilised; and



**34%** indicated that they contribute to household income and participate in decision-making.

These figures highlight the programme's role in empowering women economically, especially for FHH.

In addition, by addressing basic needs and improving living conditions, the programme contributed to social stability, reducing the risk of displacement and migration. The availability of subsidised bread from rehabilitated bakeries ensured consistent access to staple food, decreasing household food insecurity and fostering a sense of security within communities.

Overall, the programme's multi-faceted approach positively impacted households by enhancing food security, economic opportunities, and social cohesion, leading to a more resilient and self-reliant society.

# Annexe 1: Adapted CSI questionnaire with individual-level questions

## Coping Strategies Index

In the past 7 days, if there have been times when you did not have enough food or money to buy food, how many days has your household had to:

COPING STRATEGY: (Sample coping mechanism, kindly adapt to country context)	a. Frequency	b. Severity Ranking (1-4)	c. Total (= Frequency X Severity)	d. Which members in the household adopt this coping mechanism? If all members of the household, kindly indicate "all".	
				Sex	Age group Under 5; 5-14 years 15-24 years 25-59 years 60 and over
Rely on less preferred and less expensive foods		1			
Borrow food, or rely on help from a friend or relative		2			
Purchase food on credit		2			
Gather wild food, hunt, or harvest immature crops		4			
Consume seed stock held for next season		3			
Send household members to eat elsewhere		2			
Ration the money you have to buy and prepare food.		3			
Limit portion sizes at meal times		1		Specify sex of the family member(s)	Specify age group of the family member(s)
Restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat		2		Specify sex of the family member(s)	Specify age group of the family member(s)
Feed working members at the expense of non-working members		2		Specify sex of the family member(s)	Specify age group of the family member(s)
Reduce the number of meals eaten in a day		2		Specify sex of the family member(s)	Specify age group of the family member(s)
Skip entire days without eating		4		Specify sex of the family member(s)	Specify age group of the family member(s)
<b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLD SCORE</b>					

## Annexe 2: Summary of data used for analysis

### Measuring gender and food security:

- Baseline, midterm and final evaluations (Mali, South Sudan, Syria, Uganda)
  - Africa Research and Data Ltd (October 2024). End of project evaluation & learning Norad project. [Kenya]
  - D.D conseils (August 2024). Evaluation endline du projet Norad dans la région de Gao, cercle de Bourem, communes de Bamba, Bourem et Temera. [Mali]
  - Oxfam South Sudan (July 2024). Combatting Food Insecurity Project in Akobo East and Nyirol Counties. Project endline survey report.
  - Oxfam Uganda (October 2024). Norad Combatting Food Insecurity (CFI) Project. Endline evaluation report.
  - Oxfam Syria (July 2024). Baseline and endline study for the project entitled “Combatting food insecurity among the most vulnerable groups in six countries”, Norad funded project.
- CFI – Norad Learning Workshop: Component 1 Gender/Intra-Household Food Security Data – 23 July, 2024.
- Oxfam in South Sudan IPC dataset collection, August, 2024.
- Evaluation Finale du Projet réponse humanitaire multisectorielles (Eau, Assainissement et Hygiène, Sécurité Alimentaire et Protection) aux crises humanitaires en Afrique Occidentale, centrale et orientale, March 2024. <https://oxfam.box.com/s/eayitm9htogrmimtw6hyesma7oua2h5p>
- CFI – Norad Syria discussion – on alternatives to Gender/Intra-Household Food Security Data – 2 February, 2024.

### Gender-transformative approaches and food security:

- CFI – Norad Learning Workshop: Component 2 Gender transformative approaches and food security – 23 July, 2024.
- CFI – Interview with YSAT, IFRAD, AFCE, Oxfam Uganda staff, May 24, 2024
- CFI – Interview with Oxfam PACIDA, Kenya staff, May 22, 2024
- CFI – Interview with Oxfam CIDO, South Sudan staff, May 24, 2024
- CFI – Interview with GALS Champion CEFORD staff John Bosco Okaya, Aug 18, 2024
- CFI – Interview with GALS Champion Oxfam Uganda staff Joel Dengel, Aug 22, 2024
- CFI – Interview with GALS Champions Rhino Camp Kia Rachiel & Bala Simon, Aug 16, 2024
- Oxfam (December 2019). Gender@theheart. A compendium of 3 approaches
- Oxfam South Sudan (2023) GALS session monitoring follow up report SIDA
- Oxfam South Sudan (2024). Gender analysis, gender & food security report (GALS monitoring in Awerial and Wulu counties)



- Devscapes Consulting Limited (February 2024). A report on the gender analysis assessment for the PACIDA- Norad project in North Horr and Saku sub-counties in Marsabit country, Kenya.
- Oxfam in Uganda (July 2024). GALS Learning Documentation Report
- Oxfam South Sudan (2024). Combatting Food Insecurity Project in Akobo East and Nyirol Counties. Project endline survey report.
- Oxfam Uganda (2024). Norad Combatting Food Insecurity (CFI) Project. Endline evaluation report.
- Africa Research and Data Ltd (October 2024). End of project evaluation & learning Norad project.[Kenya]
- Oxfam. [Imagining the future. The GALS methodology for livelihoods and gender justice](#)

## WEE in volatile security contexts:

- CFI – Norad Learning Workshop: Component 3 supporting women’s economic empowerment in a volatile context – 24 July, 2024.
- D.D conseils (August 2024). Evaluation endline du projet Norad dans la région de Gao, cercle de Bourem, communes de Bamba, Bourem et Temera. [Mali]
- Expertise Grain de Sénévé (August 2024). Rapport de l’évaluation finale : projet « lutte contre l’insécurité alimentaire chez les personnes les plus vulnérables dans six pays ». [Burkina Faso]
- Oxfam Syria (July 2024). Baseline and endline study for the project entitled “Combatting food insecurity among the most vulnerable groups in six countries”, Norad funded project.
- Oxfam Burkina Faso (2024). Rapport de l’évaluation des activités génératrices de revenu du projet « Lutte contre l’insécurité alimentaire chez les personnes les plus vulnérables dans six pays » (Norad).
- Oxfam Burkina Faso (June 2024). Rapport de l’atelier bilan des activités, projet « lutte contre l’insécurité alimentaire chez les personnes les plus vulnérables dans six pays » (Norad).
- Oxfam Syria (July 2024). After Action Review Report. Project title: “Combatting food insecurity among the most vulnerable groups in six countries.” Norad funded project
- Oxfam Mali (2024). Rapport de l’atelier d’apprentissage, de capitalisation, de rédaction des bonnes pratiques, des leçons apprises et des cas de succès.

# Notes

1	Oxfam. (2019). <b>Gender inequalities and food insecurity</b> . Oxfam International. Retrieved from: <a href="https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620841/bp-gender-inequalities-food-insecurity-150719-en.pdf">https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620841/bp-gender-inequalities-food-insecurity-150719-en.pdf</a>
2	CARE. (2022). <b>Food Security and Gender Inequality: A Synergistic Understudied Symphony</b> . CARE. Retrieved from: <a href="#">Final-Version-Food-Security-and-Gender-Equality.pdf (care.org)</a>
3	CARE. (2020). <b>Left Out and Left Behind</b> . CARE Policy Report. Retrieved from: <a href="#">Invisible Women and Girls Hunger Report (care.org)</a>
4	CARE. (2021). <b>Don't Leave Them Behind: Global Food Policies Continue to Fail Women</b> . CARE. Retrieved from: <a href="#">Care_ForGood_Proposal_Template.indd (careevaluations.org)</a>
5	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. (2024). <b>Gender-sensitive IPC Food Security analysis</b> . IPC Manual. Retrieved from: <a href="#">Gender-sensitive IPC Food Security analysis   IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (ipcinfo.org)</a>
6	Oxfam. (2019). <b>Gender inequalities and food insecurity</b> . Oxfam International. Retrieved from: <a href="https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620841/bp-gender-inequalities-food-insecurity-150719-en.pdf">https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620841/bp-gender-inequalities-food-insecurity-150719-en.pdf</a>
7	CARE. (2022). <b>Food Security and Gender Inequality: A Synergistic Understudied Symphony</b> . CARE. Retrieved from: <a href="#">Final-Version-Food-Security-and-Gender-Equality.pdf (care.org)</a>
8	Oxfam (2023), <b>Livelihoods and Food Security in Oxfam's Gender Analyses</b> (Nov 2023). Retrieved from: <a href="https://oxfam.box.com/s/ltd27aoto46fodpz7g639v1ojgd42l54">https://oxfam.box.com/s/ltd27aoto46fodpz7g639v1ojgd42l54</a> (unpublished)
9	D.D. Conceils, March 2023
10	Oxfam South Sudan, Aug 2024
11	Oxfam South Sudan (2024). Gender analysis, Gender & food security report
12	Oxfam South Sudan (2024), Gender analysis, Gender & food security report
13	Assessments to measure impact will be done when the agricultural season has ended, by end of year 2024.
14	Saving for Change (SFC) is an innovative community savings group programme created by Oxfam America.
15	Three dunum is equivalent to 3,000 square metres.
16	Four dunum is equivalent to 4,000 square metres.
17	Oxfam (2021). <b>Transforming gender inequalities: Practical guidance for achieving gender transformation in resilient development</b> . Retrieved from <a href="https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621183/gd-transforming-gender-inequalities-160421-en.pdf?sequence=1">https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621183/gd-transforming-gender-inequalities-160421-en.pdf?sequence=1</a>
18	UNFPA (2021). <b>Thematic Note – Gender responsive and/or transformative approaches</b> . Retrieved from <a href="https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/thematic%20note%201_gender_final.pdf">https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/thematic%20note%201_gender_final.pdf</a>
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20	Oxfam South Sudan (2024). Gender analysis. Gender & food security report.

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### Cover photo:

Kenya: Illo Guyo of Elbesso Pastoralists Women's Group milks her Galla goat as part of the programme to restore drought-impacted livelihoods in Marsabit.

Photo: Misheck Macharia.





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