



# MITIGATING AND PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN OUR FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

LEARNING REVIEW 2019

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## BACKGROUND

At Action Against Hunger we know that gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) are both a cause and consequence of hunger. Knowing this, the organisation has taken steps to promote gender equality with initiatives such as the organisation's Gender Minimum Standards and to look at ways to prevent and mitigate GBV in our work. In 2019, Action Against Hunger wrapped up a two-year pilot project on '**ENHANCING THE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE WITH HUMANITARIAN NUTRITION ORGANISATIONS**', funded by the Bureau of Populations, Refugees and Migration (PRM), within the United States State Department.

The project was piloted in three countries – Bangladesh, Mauritania, and South Sudan – and looked at how Action Against Hunger and its nutrition partners could improve their accountability to mitigate and prevent GBV in the fight against hunger. The

project focused on four main activities:

- 1. TRAINING AND SENSITISING** humanitarian teams on core gender equality and GBV concepts;
- 2. STANDARDISING CORE REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINSTREAMING GENDER** in Action Against Hunger's offices with the rollout of Gender Minimum Standards;
- 3. ADAPTING KEY TOOLS** used by country offices to consider gender equality and GBV, these tools were consisting of surveys, assessments, questionnaires, and checklists, and
- 4. MONITORING AND EVALUATING** the project to collect information about the progress of project activities as they were happening.

An end line project evaluation was conducted to better understand the intended and unintended outcomes, best practices, challenges and recommendations for the future that can be used to inform decision-making for the **ROLLOUT OF A**

## METHODOLOGY TO INTEGRATE GBV RISK MITIGATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN NUTRITION ORGANISATIONS.

An important outcome of the project was around collaboration and coordination, which has brought together the Action Against Hunger headquarters to work collectively on mitigating the risks of GBV in its day to day activities, programmes, and projects. This has created shifts in thinking and practices on the ground mainly around staff as well as the managements in Action Against Hunger country offices. The project approach had helped to create a very important space within the organisations to tackle and embrace challenges linked to GBV in nutrition programmes. However, there should have been emphasis on the ground on the ingenuity of the people and communities experiencing those challenges first-hand. The future projects show focus more on the power of contextualised evidence on

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the potential innovation that exists in the programmes.

Another important dimension is the relevance of the project to nutrition activities. The evaluation found that the project work and its uptake demonstrated that mitigating GBV issues is clearly relevant and has a transformational capacity for the whole sector. Therefore, the activities were appreciated by the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) members, nutritional clusters and all other relevant actors who were engaged in the project in different capacities.

Among many useful outcomes of the project, a thinking framework – **SOMETHING ELSE, SOMETHING MORE, AND SOMETHING DIFFERENT** – emerged from the project evaluation. The framework shows how Action Against Hunger team members in three pilot countries struggled to situate gender equality and GBV risk mitigation in the nutrition programmes until they were able to merge it.

### WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE EVALUATIONS

In the beginning of the project, gender was **SOMETHING ELSE** for team members. They believed integrating gender required specialised expertise and that it was not integral to nutrition activities. As the

project continued, they felt gender was something more, meaning it might require additional structure, resources, and extra time to work. Team members felt that these additional activities would deviate from the organisation’s mandate and expertise. By the end of the project, team members recognised that integrating gender equality and GBV means transforming existing approaches. Fitting gender into nutrition work means identifying issues that are harmful and excludes at-risk or vulnerable groups. Transforming our approaches does not necessarily require more resources, but instead thinking **SOMETHING DIFFERENT** by reassessing and transforming our current ways of working. This includes piloting, sharing best practices, involving teams at all levels, and ensuring programme participants are at the centre of our work.

This change is well-illustrated by an anecdote from a team member in South Sudan: “The culture and habits of the country are patriarchal and difficult to tackle. When I arrived, the project was only beginning. Through its actions across the country programme, I have observed changes in staff behaviour, we are gradually recruiting more women; colleagues are respectful to one another and our working mothers can come to work knowing there is the breastfeeding room to accommodate them. With such inclusive workplace, our

creativity, effectiveness and efficiency are improving, and everyone feels more invested in the success of the country programme.”

### LEARNING AND SHARING

For learning and sharing purposes, learning workshops were organised to share the results of the end line evaluation with Action Against Hunger country teams, partner organisations, nutrition cluster members, and relevant government entities in Bangladesh, Mauritania, and South Sudan.

Also, a blog page was created to present the evaluation process that was an opportunity to document the learnings, visualise the data real-time, and communicate the emerging highlights of the evaluation. The blog also provided an opportunity for the respondents to communicate and share their views and insights on the project activities.

In a larger scope, the learnings from the end line evaluation were also shared during a learning workshop in Geneva, Switzerland. Participants for this event were Members from the GNC, UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Tech Rapid Response Team (RRT), and Action Against Hunger Spain participated in this event.

Overall, external staff appreciated the



efforts made by Action Against Hunger in mitigating the risks of GBV in nutrition through practical approaches. However, there is still a lot that needs to be done in integrating gender lenses and mitigating GBV by all actors including gender-aware programme designs, systematic monitoring, evaluation, and learning, evidence sharing, continuous awareness raising at all levels on why gender matters.

### WHAT IS NEXT FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER?

Action Against Hunger is committed to integrating the learning from this pilot project and other initiatives across the Action Against Hunger network to mainstream gender equality and integrating measures to mitigate and prevent GBV. At Action Against Hunger, we will:

- **CREATE AWARENESS AND CONTINUOUS ORGANISATIONAL** support on mainstreaming gender in our activities and programmes.
- **SUPPORT PRACTICES AND INITIATIVES** on gender equality and GBV risk mitigation.
- **EMBRACE A LEARNING CULTURE** by exploring and sharing the tacit knowledge that helps create dialogue, discussion, and learning.
- **INVEST IN COMMUNICATION FOR LEARNING** by documenting sharing data including tools, documents, ideas, dialogues with Action Against Hunger and other humanitarian and development networks.
- **CREATE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE** by bringing together other actors, organisations, networks, and individuals for experience and knowledge sharing.

