

Annex. Research focus on gender in the Central American Dry Corridor

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High murder rates, violence, including GBV, and climate change have contributed to high levels of displacement from the Guatemalan and Honduran Dry Corridor. Efforts to control irregular migration have largely focused on deporting irregular migrants, who often return to their communities of origin with even fewer resources. In this context, contributing to improving the prospects for peace means supporting vulnerable and food-insecure households to build assets and generate income so they can become resilient to climate change. Intentional inclusion of both women and men contributes to reducing the gender asset gap among the poorest households. Resilience-building programmes, however, address only one of migration's many drivers. The effects of such programmes on migration may therefore be neither immediate nor predictable.

The research focus on gender in the Central American Dry Corridor sought to understand precisely how and why World Food Programme programming, specifically its resilience building and emergency recovery interventions, benefits women, men and different ethnic groups (Ladino and Maya in Guatemala, and Ladino and Lenca or other indigenous groups in Honduras), and how this might contribute to improving the prospects for peace.

The next section outlines the research approach along with the specific WFP context in which it was executed. The second section presents the theories of change and the corresponding preliminary findings. The third section concludes with the key findings and recommendations.

The research approach and the WFP context

The research for this annex involved a review of WFP programme documents and the wider literature on Guatemala, Honduras and the Dry Corridor. The document review was supplemented by remote interviews with 10 WFP staff members at its headquarters, regional bureau and country offices. This process informed the selection of research locations in the Chiquimula and Zacapa departments in Guatemala and in the La Paz and Santa Barbara departments of Honduras. The data was analysed and used to develop two theories of change, which articulate how WFP could contribute to improving the prospects for peace through specific programmes and identify conflict sensitivity concerns at the community level.¹ The analysis was then used to identify actionable entry points for future programmes to make intentional contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

The research focused on Food for Assets (FFA) resilience activities.² These are implemented under the Pro-Resilience (ProRes) programme in Guatemala and Honduras.³ In both countries, WFP's FFA assistance provides conditional cash,

¹ The research collected focus group data, which does not support intra-household gender analysis.

² The context analysis of this annex can be found in the full report, from which this section draws; see Valencia, S. C., *WFP's Contributions to Improving the Prospects for Peace in the Central American Dry Corridor: Spotlight on Climate Change* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2022).

³ WFP's Food Assistance for Assets activities provide unconditional cash, vouchers or food transfers while communities build or rehabilitate assets, with the aim of improving long-term food security and resilience. See WFP, 'Food for Assets', [n.d.]. In Honduras, WFP had started off giving emergency response assistance but the programming transitioned to resilience building, with a focus on asset creation.

vouchers or food transfers while communities build or rehabilitate assets with the aim of improving long-term food security and resilience. The ProRes beneficiaries were either former Pro-Resilience Action (ProAct) programme beneficiaries or new beneficiaries who had only worked with WFP for the past one or two years.

Interventions in both countries were informed by WFP's 2015 and 2022 gender policies.⁴ The 2015 policy, under which ProRes was developed, had a gender transformative agenda. Gender transformation is defined as 'transforming unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resource and decision-making between women and men, and the support for gender equality and women's empowerment'.⁵ According to WFP, women's empowerment 'is the process whereby women obtain and exercise agency in their lives and have equal access with men to resources, opportunities and power'.⁶ Through its work, WFP intends to create conditions that contribute to reducing the gender gap in capabilities, and access to resources and opportunities. WFP also intends to increase women's ability to make choices and decisions in different domains, including about economic empowerment.

Guatemala

In Guatemala, data was collected between 21 and 25 March 2022. The researchers facilitated five focus group discussions (FGDs)—four mixed-gender groups and one women-only group—and four group meetings with officials from government departments responsible for agriculture, health and nutrition, as well as mayoral staff and United Nations Peacebuilding Fund staff and representatives from an implementation partner.

WFP Guatemala has been implementing FFA resilience programmes in the Dry Corridor since 2014. Between 2016 and 2018, the country office implemented the regional ProAct programme in response to the El Niño phenomenon in the Central American Dry Corridor. WFP is currently implementing ProRes as a follow-up programme to ProAct.⁷ ProRes seeks to build resilience by increasing productivity and the adaptive capacity of communities vulnerable to food insecurity and climate shocks, especially drought.

WFP implements a number of activities under ProRes, from soil conservation activities at the individual household level for those who own land and in groups for those who rent land, to vegetable gardens, reforestation and watershed management, poultry schemes (egg-layers), the introduction of savings groups, providing disaster risk financing and financial education, supporting climate services, promoting dignified employment opportunities—especially among youth—and integrating nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions.

Honduras

In Honduras, data was collected between 28 March and 1 April 2022. The researchers facilitated 10 FGDs—four mixed-gender groups (including one youth group), three women-only groups and three men-only groups—and three group meetings with implementation partners and WFP field staff. The researchers also participated in a narrative walk, where selected respondents showed the researchers the assets they were repairing under the programme.

⁴ WFP, 'WFP Gender Policy 2022', May 2022.

⁵ WFP, 'WFP Gender Policy 2015–2020', July 2015.

⁶ WFP (note 4).

⁷ Both ProAct and ProRes were financed with support from the EU.

WFP Honduras has been implementing FFA resilience programmes since 2012. FFA programming in Honduras has adopted a community resilience focus, whereby WFP supports the formation of a group among intended beneficiaries in the same community to carry out joint asset creation activities.⁸ A condition of receiving funds as part of this type of programme is that a member of the beneficiary's household has to be part of the community group and actively contribute to group activities linked to asset creation.⁹ A number of programmes have taken place in La Paz since 2012, particularly targeted at Lenca indigenous communities. Under ProRes, WFP is building water-harvesting tanks and greenhouses for groups; setting up rural credit unions, which are funded by a proportion of group sales; and introducing reforestation and watershed management. In Santa Bárbara department, WFP is implementing a recovery response programme to support communities recovering from hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020. This programme is a pilot to test bridging post-disaster recovery with resilience building. WFP is helping communities to repair old and damaged infrastructure: a hanging bridge in the first community and water pipes in the second.

Limitations of the study

Some limitations of the study are acknowledged. First, the gender deep dive was conducted in English with Spanish translation. While great care was taken to explain different concepts, some nuance may have been lost in translation. Second, gender is a complex theme to discuss in Guatemala and Honduras, as aspects of gender equality challenge some local customs. This created tensions between intended beneficiaries' beliefs about gender and the programme's gender equality goals. There is therefore a risk of response bias in that some interviewees may not have shared their true thoughts on gender equality. Third, the report is based on a small sample drawn from two districts in each country. The findings and conclusions are therefore limited to the participants and may not necessarily be transferable to other districts. Fourth, data was collected from Ladino and Indigenous peoples who live in largely mono-ethnic communities, and there was therefore no opportunity to observe interactions between members of different ethnic groups. Finally, although attempts were made to organize focus groups with a balance of men and women, most of the participants were women as most men of working age were at work during the day. Thus, women's experiences and perspectives may appear to dominate.

Preliminary findings

This section outlines WFP's activities that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment through its FFA resilience programmes in the Guatemala and Honduras Dry Corridor. As noted above, women's empowerment comprises increasing women's capabilities, access to resources and opportunities, and their power to use their capabilities, resources and opportunities to improve their lives. Two theories of change (TOCs) are presented that describe how WFP's programmes might contribute to women's empowerment and improving the prospects of peace.

The first TOC considers WFP's FFA resilience programmes and their contribution to the empowerment of rural women and men by providing equal access to resources, opportunities and services that support continuing agricultural production in a changing climate, and to income-generating activities. The first TOC also considers

⁸ Community resilience programmes are regarded as more sustainable and contributing to greater sharing of risk than individual approaches to resilience.

⁹ WFP Honduras country office and field staff, Interviews with author, Honduras, Mar.-Apr. 2022.

the impact of the various activities on strengthening resilience to climate change and their potential impact on migration.

In rural Guatemala and Honduras, opportunities for rural women to participate in community activities are constrained by the patriarchal norms and informal rules that govern access to decision-making platforms. The second TOC considers the contribution of FFA resilience programmes to group participation and providing leadership opportunities, which are aspects of empowerment. WFP groups create opportunities for women to participate in, and potentially to lead, mixed-group activities.

Theory of change 1: Gender, livelihoods and migration in a changing climate

*If WFP's resilience and recovery programmes reduce the gender gap in access to agricultural resources and services, **then** this can contribute to reducing climate-induced migration by creating the conditions in which previously food-insecure families can thrive in their communities, which would contribute to improving the prospects for peace.*

Context

Climate change, food insecurity and the lack of safety nets are driving migration from both the Guatemalan and the Honduran Dry Corridor.¹⁰ In Guatemala, most migrants are men, while in Honduras equal proportions of women and men migrate.¹¹ A significant proportion of migrants from both countries are husbands or older sons. In their absence, women take on their agricultural work, which adds to their workload.¹² In addition, women are faced with the responsibility of meeting household food and other needs with less labour and more barriers to accessing essential resources, such as land and economic opportunities.¹³

Remittances can contribute to household food security and economic empowerment, and strengthen a household's resilience to shocks.¹⁴ However, low wages in the agricultural or garment sectors, where most migrants work, make remittances small or sporadic.¹⁵ The household members who remain need support to improve household security and to build resilience to climate and economic shocks.

Increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable individuals and households, particularly in rural communities, increases overall community resilience.¹⁶ In the Guatemalan and Honduran Dry Corridor, empowering rural and indigenous women to adapt to climate change and diversify their sources of income can help to increase overall resilience to climate and economic shocks.

This TOC explores the effects of WFP's work on addressing food insecurity and strengthening resilience in communities with varied levels of violent crime. As noted above, Chiquimula and Zacapa have elevated levels of violent crime compared to La Paz and Santa Barbara in Honduras. FGDs in Santa Barbara noted that one community

¹⁰ Ayales, I. et al., 'Climate migration in the Dry Corridor of Central America: Integrating a gender perspective', Christian Aid, June 2019.

¹¹ Ayales. et al. (note 10).

¹² World Food Programme et al., *Food Security and Emigration: Why People Flee and the Impact on Family Members Left Behind in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras* (WFP: Panama, Aug. 2017).

¹³ Ayales. et al. (note 10).

¹⁴ Rothe, D., 'Gendering resilience: Myths and stereotypes in the discourse on climate-induced migration', *Global Policy*, 30 Mar. 2017.

¹⁵ WFP et al. (note 12).

¹⁶ Rothe (note 14), pp. 40–47.

was located in a trafficking corridor and that this contributed to violence in the community.¹⁷

Analysis

The FGDs in the four departments identified four threats to security: climate change, intimate partner and sexual violence, robbery and, to a lesser extent, gang violence. Climate change was the only threat that the FGDs associated with migration.¹⁸

Climate change-related drivers of migration

The FGDs noted that climate change drives migration from communities through increased food insecurity and unemployment. Both women and men in the FGDs were concerned about food insecurity. Yields had decreased and there were fewer local agricultural jobs as farmers in the four departments, regardless of the size of their farms, had been adversely affected by frequent droughts.¹⁹ Consequently, they were more food insecure. These local findings echo a 2021 survey, which noted that food-insecure households in the Dry Corridor regions of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras had lost 40–45 per cent of their *primera harvests* (harvests from the first agricultural cycle).²⁰

FGD participants noted that there were few employment opportunities in their communities and surrounding areas. Jobs were mostly in agriculture and for men. The few women who worked in agriculture performed specific tasks, such as cutting melon. Other women worked in small food shops and the domestic sector.²¹ Commercial farms have also been adversely affected by climate change and their reduced productivity has contributed to underemployment in the Guatemalan Dry Corridor.²² The lack of rural employment opportunities is corroborated by statistics that show that the rural unemployment rate in Guatemala was 37.5 per cent in 2022.²³ Rural unemployment was higher among women (61 per cent) than men (11.2 per cent).²⁴ In rural Honduras, 31.4 per cent of the population was unemployed but statistics are not disaggregated by sex.²⁵ Barriers to employment for women in both countries were social norms, low levels of education and oversubscribed low-skilled jobs.²⁶ FGD participants noted that single women and men of different ages migrated to look for employment in other parts of their respective countries and of Central America.²⁷ This has been confirmed in other research.²⁸

¹⁷ Focus group discussions (FGDs), Santa Barbara, Honduras.

¹⁸ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

¹⁹ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

²⁰ IPC, 'El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis, Nov. 2021–Aug. 2022', 12 Jan. 2022.

²¹ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

²² McCabe, C. 'In the grip of an El Niño-triggered drought, farming families across Guatemala's Dry Corridor struggle to eat', Oxfam, 18 May 2016.

²³ INE, 'Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos 2021' [National Survey of Employment and Income, 2021], Feb. 2022.

²⁴ Guatemala Institute for National Statistics (INE), Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos. Feb. 2022 [National Survey of Employment and Income, Feb 2022].

²⁵ INE, 'Desocupados en Honduras' [Unemployment in Honduras], EPHPM, June 2022.

²⁶ Eberhard-Ruiz, A., *Guatemala Jobs Diagnostic* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2021); and Michel, V. and Walker, I., *Honduras Jobs Diagnostic* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2017).

²⁷ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

²⁸ WFP et al. (note 12).

Migration opportunities and violence

The FGD participants in the four departments noted that households had several migration options available to them. First, rural to urban migrants looked for work in low-paying sectors, such as the domestic, textile and informal sectors. Second, seasonal farmworkers worked within their countries or within Central America, which echoes findings that seasonal farmworkers move within the region to Guatemala, Honduras and Belize between October and February or March.²⁹ Third, FGDs and interviewees noted that some migrants resettle internally.³⁰ Finally, the FGDs discussed irregular migration, mostly facilitated by coyotes.³¹

FGD participants in both Guatemala and Honduras noted that women and men migrate in almost equal proportions. These local findings confirm other research findings on gender and migration patterns in Honduras.³² However, they contradict research on Guatemala, which estimates that 64 per cent of migrants are men.³³ The transferability of these local findings to the broader context could be limited by the size of the sample. However, the results could indicate that gender and migration patterns in the Guatemalan Dry Corridor are changing in response to worsening food insecurity and growing dependence on markets for food. It is possible that households need more income to match their growing food needs, which has created the need for both women and men to migrate. For young women from rural and indigenous households who face barriers to accessing jobs in local markets, growing household food needs present them with an opportunity to earn income and make strategic decisions about their lives. The influence of this shift in migration patterns, available jobs and preferred destinations on empowering rural young women should be explored in future research.

Women in mixed FGDs in Chiquimula, Guatemala, noted that both internal and irregular migration increased migrants' risk of exposure to violence, particularly sexual violence against women. They noted that local migrant women working in low-paid jobs were more vulnerable to sexual abuse at work, and that women migrating through irregular channels were at risk of rape by other migrants, coyotes, gangs and officials. Two themes emerged. First, men took advantage of their power over women, which they derived from their physical strength, and financial and social capital. Second, among the FGDs which spoke about sexual violence in the workplace, none mentioned reporting such crimes, which could mean that the impunity for sexual violence identified in national statistics is an underestimation.

In contrast, the men's FGDs in both countries did not mention violence against migrants. The men focused on the difficulties for rural jobseekers with few qualifications, especially those from indigenous groups. The challenges of finding work in competitive labour markets, language and ethnic minority discrimination are echoed in reports on both countries.³⁴ This was in spite of the fact that most internal migrants seek jobs in urban Chiquimula or Zacapa in Guatemala or Choloma and San Pedro Sula in Honduras. All four have high murder rates and levels of violent

²⁹ IOM, 'Honduras—Linea base para la identificación de personas migrantes en El Paraíso, Septiembre 2021' [Honduras: Baseline for the identification of migrants in El Paraíso, September 2021], 2022.

³⁰ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras; and Interviews with author, Guatemala.

³¹ Coyotes are human smugglers.

³² Ayales et al. (note 10).

³³ Oxfam, '*Mojados por la Sequía: Hambre y migración en el Corredor Seco de Guatemala* ['Wet' by drought: Hunger and migration in Guatemala's Dry Corridor], 23 Apr. 2019.

³⁴ Eberhard-Ruiz (note 26); and Michel and Walker (note 26). At the national level, unemployment among youth aged 15 to 24 years was 7.2% in Guatemala and 15.5% in Honduras. World Bank, 'Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15–24) (modeled ILO estimate)—Guatemala, Honduras'.

crime.³⁵ This means that there is a culture of silence around violent crime, particularly in violence hotspots. It is possible, however, that women's and men's experiences of violence in these departments are shaped by gender, and therefore different.

The potential effect of migration on economic empowerment shows that it is not necessarily a negative coping strategy. For individuals and households, migration can increase access to basic services, employment opportunities, financial services, schools for children and hospitals. Migration becomes a negative coping strategy when poor households or their members are forced by increased food insecurity and lack of employment opportunities to take high risks to ensure they can survive and access the means to earn a livelihood.³⁶ For instance, some households have relocated from the Guatemalan Dry Corridor to the Petén region, which has vast tracts of prime arable land. FGD participants and interviewees noted that the move often happened after a man in the household had been working in Petén. However, Petén is among the most violent regions in Guatemala.³⁷ Nonetheless, many landless farmers who rent small plots of land each year would welcome the opportunity to own their own plots, even if there are other risks. In addition, the Petén region is not part of the Dry Corridor, which means that agricultural yields are higher.³⁸ Alternatively, households can take the risk of migrating irregularly to the USA, despite the risk of death, violence or being deported and the loss of most of their assets.³⁹

The effect of migration on household members who remain

The experiences of household members who remain in their communities are more varied. FGD participants noted that husbands are more likely to migrate, which leaves wives in charge of the household.⁴⁰ Generally, research shows a husband's migration can increase the wife's participation in joint financial decision making as their husbands send them money to manage and use.⁴¹ However, FGDs and interviews in both countries highlighted that such women de facto heads of household also had more agricultural responsibilities and less access to labour, which was not necessarily empowering.⁴² One example of gender-related constraints was patriarchal attitudes among daily labourers in Guatemala and other countries in the region who preferred being employed by a man.⁴³ These attitudes may be more pronounced in rural and indigenous communities, where gender roles are more conservative and more rigidly enforced. Taking on other responsibilities can also leave women with less time for caregiving, which results in higher levels of child malnutrition.

While not mentioned in the FGDs in Guatemala, national statistics show that when men migrate, there is a reduction in the incidence of domestic violence.⁴⁴ For their

³⁵ ACAPS, 'Central America: Complex crises and migration in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua', 5 Jan. 2023; USAID, UNDP and InfoSEGURA, Infographic on citizen security, Guatemala 2021, 12 Dec. 2022; and InSight Crime, 'InSight Crime's 2021 homicide round-up', 1 Feb. 2022.

³⁶ WFP et al. (note 12).

³⁷ FGDs, Guatemala; FEWS NET et al., 'National livelihood zone map for Guatemala', Guatemala livelihood profiles, Nov. 2016; and Paz, L. H. and Grandia, L., 'Multi-ethnic communal and collective forms of tenure in post-war Guatemala: Lessons from the Petén', Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, Washington, DC, 8–11 Apr. 2013.

³⁸ Britos, B. et al., 'Land market distortions and aggregate agricultural productivity: Evidence from Guatemala', *Journal of Development Economics*, vol. 155 (Mar. 2022).

³⁹ Pons, D., 'Climate extremes, food insecurity and migration in Central America: A complicated nexus', Migration Policy Institute, 18 Feb. 2021.

⁴⁰ FGDs, Guatemala.

⁴¹ Cortes, G., 'Women and migrations: Those who stay', *Échogéo*, vol. 37 (2016).

⁴² FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁴³ Coello, B., 'Increasingly, women put food on the table', World Bank, 19 Feb. 2015.

⁴⁴ USAID, UNDP and InfoSEGURA, 'Analysis of Citizen Security in Guatemala, 2021: Crime incidence as registered by the National Civil Police', [n.d.].

own safety, the FGDs in Chiquimula and Santa Barbara did not explicitly discuss gang violence or organized crime, or how these affected households with migrants. However, research in both countries shows that gangs make a significant proportion of their income from extortion, and it is likely that some or all households were victims of extortion or other gang-related crime.⁴⁵

Contributions to improving the prospects for peace

WFP implements gender responsive FFA resilience building and recovery activities in rural and indigenous Guatemalan and Honduran Dry Corridor households that are grappling with increased food insecurity and poverty.⁴⁶ Through their FFA interventions, WFP empowers women and men living in the Guatemalan and Honduran Dry Corridor to diversify their livelihood activities and generate income. The resulting improvements in food security and economic empowerment could indirectly reduce the incidence of migration as a coping strategy.

Empowering households to reduce food insecurity

Land ownership in both Guatemala and Honduras is concentrated in a few large landholdings, so most smallholder farmers rent their land.⁴⁷ FGD participants noted that WFP facilitates longer leases for plots for landless farmers, which helps them overcome barriers to renting the same piece of land.⁴⁸ Landowners sometimes allocate different rental plots to farmers from year to year, but WFP's support helps farmers negotiate continued use during its programmes. More generally, when farmers can use land continuously, they have an incentive to conserve the soil and use more fertilizer, as they will reap the benefits of their investments.

By facilitating leases for farmers, WFP supports women who face additional gender-related and financial constraints to access agricultural land. According to WFP's research, only 15 per cent of landowners in the Dry Corridor are women, leaving most women reliant on rental markets.⁴⁹ However, a combination of failed harvests and increasing seed and fertilizer prices has raised the associated cost of renting land beyond the reach of most women. One report shows that in Honduras, women who rent land sometimes have to use half their harvest to pay for it, and some are opting not to plant at all.⁵⁰ However, with WFP's support farmers faced with a similar choice can continue renting land, even after a bad harvest.

FGDs noted that women and men in the project received the same training, financial support and seeds to create agricultural assets, which reduces pre-existing gender gaps in access to agricultural inputs and services.⁵¹ Data on Guatemala for 2011 shows that only 45 per cent of households headed by women used fertilizer compared to 60 per

⁴⁵ USAID, UNDP and InfoSEGURA (note 44).

⁴⁶ IOM, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Organization of American States (OAS) and WFP, *El Hambre sin fronteras: Los Vínculos Ocultos entre Inseguridad Alimentaria, Violencia y Migración en el Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica: Un estudio exploratorio* [Hunger without borders: The hidden links between food insecurity, violence and migration in the northern triangle of Central America, an exploratory study] (IOM/LSE/OAS/WFP: 17 Sep. 2015); and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), *Between Rootedness and the Decision to Migrate: Push and Retention Factors of Migration in Guatemala* (CRS: Baltimore, MD, 2020).

⁴⁷ *Borgen Magazine*, 'Land rights in Guatemala for rural and indigenous populations', 3 Aug. 2021.

⁴⁸ The barriers to land and water access are discussed in detail in Valencia (note 1).

⁴⁹ World Food Programme (WFP) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Understanding the Adverse Drivers and Implications of Migration from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras* (WFP/IOM: Panama/San José, 2022).

⁵⁰ Ayales et al. (note 10).

⁵¹ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

cent of households headed by men, which affects productivity.⁵² There was no country level data for Honduras but other Central American countries show similar trends. Furthermore, fewer women than men had access to agricultural extension services, which are essential for adopting new inputs and techniques.⁵³ Consequently, women relied on their networks to access much-needed climate adaptation techniques.⁵⁴

WFP's field officers promote maize, beans and vegetables as part of their nutrition-sensitive interventions with all intended beneficiaries in Guatemala and Honduras. Beans and vegetables have traditionally been considered 'women's crops' and therefore received less focus from agricultural extension officers. In some communities, WFP employs female field officers, which in contexts with strong patriarchal norms can reduce the cultural barriers that prevent women from seeking advice and support from male agricultural extension officers.⁵⁵ In this context of wide gender gaps in access to agricultural resources and services, equal access to FFA resilience-building support helps to increase the size of women's harvests.

FGD participants stated that their families had lived in these communities for a long time—some for almost 200 years—and that they did not want to leave. FGD participants noted that working with FFA resilience-building programmes increased food production in a changing climate, which gives them hope that they can continue to live in their homes.⁵⁶ The FFA resilience-building activities increase production frequency and yields among intended beneficiary households. This has resulted in a self-reported increase in the number and diversity of meals. There is no data to corroborate these anecdotal findings, but the ProAct programme which is based on similar asset-building activities has led to an increase in production and food security.⁵⁷ The immediate impacts of the FFA resilience-building activities were to reassure women and men that agriculture could still constitute a sustainable livelihood in the Guatemalan and Honduran Dry Corridor. In addition, the sum of the gender-responsive actions helped to empower women in rural areas to increase their production levels.

Supporting rural farming households to adapt to climate change reduces the need for household members to migrate in unsafe conditions and increases the capacity of remaining household members to meet their food needs.⁵⁸ Adaptation to climate change can involve: supporting farmers, including women and youth, to produce more crops using sustainable agricultural techniques; supporting access to markets (see below); diversifying to non-farm agricultural activities; and providing access to social protection programmes.

WFP's FFA resilience building has some limitations that can limit future agricultural production. First, some farmers, especially women, rent the land they work on and there is no guarantee that their new lease will give them the same plot of land after WFP leaves. Rural farmers have less power than landowners.⁵⁹ Consequently, farmers could lose access to the assets they have created. Second, while the shared plots allow for group work, which is essential for increasing production and accessing inputs

⁵² FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture, 2010–11, Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (FAO: Rome, 2011).

⁵³ FAO (note 52).

⁵⁴ Bonilla-Findji, O. et al., 'Generating evidence on gender sensitive climate-smart agriculture to inform policy in Central America: Final technical report', CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), 2020.

⁵⁵ Mosso, C., Pons, D. and Beza-Beza, C., 'A long way toward climate smart agriculture: The importance of addressing gender inequity in the agricultural sector of Guatemala', *Land*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2022).

⁵⁶ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁵⁷ WFP, 'Working together to support food security and strengthen community resilience', Jan. 2019.

⁵⁸ FAO, 'Migration, agriculture and rural development: Addressing the root causes of migration and harnessing its potential for development', 2016.

⁵⁹ See Valencia (note 2).

and services, some FGDs in both Guatemala and Honduras noted that the volume of produce and income they generated was low.⁶⁰ In one community in Honduras, this led to member attrition as the members felt that the income generated was too low for the amount of work required.⁶¹ According to research, rural women in Central America typically work for 10–16 hours a day, and 20 per cent of their day is spent on repetitive and unpaid family work.⁶² Their continued participation in resilience-building activities is guaranteed only if the return they receive is at least as valuable as the amount of time they have to sacrifice to participate in the activity.

In its current format, the resilience-building activities can only guarantee food security for the duration of the programme and therefore only delay the decision to migrate. Investing the same resources in household-level FFA resilience-building activities could lead to lasting resilience as the assets created by the household would remain in their possession after the programme has ended. A potential entry point would be to support home gardens to become more productive. Investing at the household level would also make a lasting contribution to reducing food insecurity and the gender asset gap between women- and men-headed households.

Building financial resources and contributing to rural women's economic empowerment

FGD participants in both countries noted that FFA activities are complemented by entrepreneurial activities, such selling eggs, fish and vegetables, to generate income, which is essential for economic empowerment. In Guatemala, FGDs with women and men noted that WFP supplied groups of women with the material and technical resources to establish and maintain egg-laying poultry projects. WFP also organized training sessions for individual women to learn how to produce a variety of products, from baskets to candles and soap. These activities create multiple opportunities for women to generate income after WFP leaves the communities. Diversifying livelihood activities and income sources contributes to economic empowerment and to strengthening the resilience of poor households and communities.

In Honduras, FGD participants noted that their groups had water tanks, greenhouses and in some instances fishponds that enabled them to produce enough vegetables and fish to consume and sell. Providing support for farmers to intensify production increases household and community food security and generates a consistent flow of income. Some of the money was shared among group members and a proportion was used to fund rural credit unions.

FGD members in both Guatemala and Honduras noted that farmers sold their produce in local and neighbouring markets, which could not always absorb all the fresh produce.⁶³ Research on smallholder farmers shows that poor market access is a global problem that is attributable to low yields, variable produce quality and high transaction costs.⁶⁴ Despite these challenges, individual and group sales gave women their own income, which contributed to their economic empowerment.

Through these interventions, WFP in both countries contributed to the empowerment of participating households by providing them with financial capital to invest in agricultural production. In 2014, only 13 per cent of rural households had access to credit in Guatemala and 6 per cent in Honduras.⁶⁵ Some of the factors that limited

⁶⁰ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁶¹ FGDs, Honduras.

⁶² World Bank, 'Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, female (% of 24 hour day): Guatemala, Honduras', 14 Feb 2023.

⁶³ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁶⁴ Villarreal, F. G., *Financial Inclusion of Small Rural Producers* (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Santiago, 2017).

⁶⁵ Villarreal (note 64).

smallholder farmers from accessing credit were lack of title deeds, inconsistent incomes, crime and its impact on investment, and weak links to markets.⁶⁶ While these limiting factors were linked to farmers in Honduras, it is likely that farmers in Guatemala faced similar constraints. Limited access to financial capital is among the main barriers to smallholder farmers' growth as it restricts their access to inputs and machinery, which are essential for obtaining higher agricultural yields. Although smallholder farmers in both countries had poor access to credit, women's access was further constrained by their lack of access to land and income.⁶⁷

The women in the FGDs in Guatemala noted that generating an income was empowering as they could control how they used it.⁶⁸ These local findings echo wider research findings that earning an income empowers women to decide how the money will be spent.⁶⁹ In addition to contributing to their economic empowerment, research also shows that a greater proportion of women's income is spent on improving household food security and nutrition.⁷⁰

Some women in the FGDs in Guatemala noted that they had created women's groups, which were open to non-beneficiaries, where each month one woman received a sum of money to invest in a small business.⁷¹ In Honduras, some communities save project money in a rural credit union, and community members, even non-WFP beneficiaries, can borrow from the money.⁷² The circulation of money generated through WFP activities to both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households contributes to wider community resilience. This can also reduce perceptions of exclusion among non-beneficiaries. The credit provided by FFA resilience-building groups can help women who tend to have low access to formal credit delay the sale of assets and other negative coping strategies that erode farmers' ability to continue to produce and are a precursor to migration.⁷³

To ensure that income-generation projects continue to be profitable after WFP leaves, it should invest in further capacity building for the groups. FGDs with both women and men noted that most participants had received at most a primary school education. These women and men would benefit from attending basic training in business management or financial literacy so they can grow and sustain their projects. The participants also need to find bigger markets to absorb their produce, to enable them to generate a sustainable income.

Growing project income would also increase the volume of money circulating in the savings groups and credit unions. In their current form, the savings groups circulate sums of money that could not adequately respond to multiple borrowers requiring large amounts at the same time. The FGDs told how women and men borrowed money for both investment and consumption, and this credit had facilitated women's economic empowerment. However, there is no data on borrowing trends.⁷⁴ Savings groups and credit unions should direct more funds to women and men who borrow to invest in small businesses, as this increases resilience. Conversely, they should direct less funding to

⁶⁶ Villarreal (note 64).

⁶⁷ FAO (note 52).

⁶⁸ FGDs, Guatemala.

⁶⁹ Doss, C., 'Intrahousehold bargaining and resource allocation in developing countries', *World Bank Research Observer*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Feb. 2013).

⁷⁰ IFAD, 'Economic empowerment of rural women positively impacts social norms and strengthens food security', 1 June 2021; and Larson, J. B., Castellanos, P. and Jensen, L., 'Gender, household food security, and dietary diversity in western Honduras', *Global Food Security*, vol. 20 (Mar. 2019).

⁷¹ WFP staff, Interviews with author, Guatemala.

⁷² FGDs, Honduras; and WFP staff, Interviews with author, Honduras.

⁷³ World Bank, *Closing Gender Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2020).

⁷⁴ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

clients who borrow to address immediate needs, as this can create indebtedness which increases women's vulnerability to poverty.

Conflict sensitivity concerns

First, WFP is supporting smallholder farmers to develop resilience-building assets on rented land. This could create tensions if landowners decide to rent the land to someone else. The farmers would lose access to the assets they have created and, without WFP's assistance, their bargaining power would be low. Second, working directly with women to address their vulnerability to climate change in patriarchal communities can create tensions related to changing gender dynamics, as is explored below. Third, lending money to other community members can create tensions if women, who make up the majority of members, lack the authority to recover unpaid debt. Fourth, in communities with high levels of gang-related activity, more successful individuals and projects could become victims of extortion, which could increase their vulnerability to poverty through continued demands for money and threats of violence in the event that they fail to pay. Finally, the success of WFP's FFA resilience-building activities is dependent on women's labour and time. The FGDs showed that, in some instances, groups had experienced high levels of attrition because women did not perceive that the output was proportional to the work they had done. Different strategies are needed to avoid the tensions that can arise when members who cannot work in groups are excluded from other FFA activities.

Theory of change 2: Mixed-gender group work builds social cohesion

*If WFP implements its resilience-building programmes through mixed gender and age group activities, **then** this will strengthen social cohesion between participants **because** they will be united by their group's common goals and develop relationships built on trust and reliability.*

Context

Decades of violence and inequality in Guatemala and Honduras have eroded trust, which is essential for building social cohesion between individuals. The impact of gender inequality also weakens social cohesion between women and men.⁷⁵ In Guatemala and Honduras, social cohesion between genders is further weakened by patriarchal norms and high levels of GBV. Rural and indigenous communities in Guatemala and Honduras are organized around cultural norms and land tenure policies that favour men. Consequently, men participate more than women in local decision-making platforms.⁷⁶ Women's exclusion from decision making is an obstacle to community resilience and sustainable development as it excludes half the community's capabilities and opinions from shaping the community's development trajectory.

The impacts of climate change in the Dry Corridor regions of Guatemala and Honduras can increase competition for land and water if households start to need more land to maintain their production levels. This can lead to violent conflict in communities with low levels of social cohesion and trust.⁷⁷ Strategies that build

⁷⁵ McDaniel, S. A. 'Social cohesion and gender: Reflections on tendencies and tensions', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2003).

⁷⁶ FAO and Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC), *Forest Governance by Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: An Opportunity for Climate Action in Latin America and the Caribbean* (FAO/FILAC: Santiago, 2021).

⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion on land and water access in the Dry Corridor, see Valencia (note 2).

resilience to climate change and strengthen trust and social cohesion can reduce the incidence of resource-based conflict and the vulnerability of women and low-income households to climate-related shocks.

Analysis

FGDs with both women and men stated that women and girls had to adopt various measures, such as travelling in groups, while carrying out daily tasks such as walking to school or fetching water, and avoiding bars and drunk men to reduce the likelihood of being attacked.⁷⁸ Some women noted that men sometimes used safety issues as a reason for restricting women's movements.⁷⁹ As a result, women's social networks are small and made up of other women who share the same characteristics. Women also have fewer opportunities to expand or diversify these networks. In contrast, men's networks were diverse and made up of men and women they meet at work or in social activities. These differences in networks resulted in most women being at the periphery of their communities, while men were integrated into various community platforms

Most women noted in the FGDs and interviews that they participate in few community meetings, due to social norms on women's inclusion and needing male approval to leave the house. These restrictions mean that women have fewer opportunities to influence decision making. There is little data on women participating in local decision making, but only 3 per cent of the mayors in Guatemala were women in 2019, and only 6 per cent in Honduras in 2017.⁸⁰ These numbers were even lower for indigenous women. Guatemala elected its first indigenous woman mayor in 2003.⁸¹ These low numbers for women in general and indigenous women in particular indicate that women experience multiple race-, ethnicity- and gender-related barriers to participating in decision-making platforms.

The few opportunities that do exist, such as the FFA resilience-building work, create a platform that could help to address such issues, but FGD participants highlighted additional barriers to building mixed-gender social cohesion. Even when women were able to attend meetings, they participated less. The researchers observed this but also noted that women over the age of 50 were an exception, and spoke freely in meetings.

When the researchers asked why some women did not participate, women in mixed FGDs noted that they were restricted by their status as mothers who work at home. Several women's FGDs in both Guatemala and Honduras explained that although they had contributions to make on the issues being discussed, they had never been prioritized since childhood.⁸² They therefore did not believe they could speak in meetings or that their contributions were as valued as men's.⁸³ The women's perceptions of their inferiority were consistent with what other researchers call women's internalization of their subordinate role in the gender hierarchy, which places men and boys above women and girls.⁸⁴ Such perceptions impede women's agency. However, research

⁷⁸ FGDs, Guatemala.

⁷⁹ FGDs, Guatemala; and Interviews with author, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁸⁰ USAID, 'Report on women's political participation and leadership: Guatemala assessment', Sep. 2022.; and Freidenberg, F., 'Women's political representation in Honduras: A comparative perspective on party resistance and inclusive reform proposals', Carter Center, 29 Aug. 2019.

⁸¹ Mejia Lopez, M. L., 'Indigenous women and governance in Guatemala', FOCAL, Mar. 2006.

⁸² FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁸³ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras; and Interviews with author, Guatemala.

⁸⁴ Nuñez, A. et al., 'Machismo, marianismo, and negative cognitive-emotional factors: Findings from the Hispanic community health study/study of Latinos sociocultural ancillary study', *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2016); and Meyers, D. T., 'Gender identity and women's agency: Culture, norms, and internalized oppression revisited', ed. D. T. Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror: Cultural Imagery and Women's Agency* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002).

shows that changes in the lifecycle from a mother to a mother-in-law or growing older give women more authority and fewer restrictions, which would explain why older women in these FGDs spoke more freely than younger women. Older women's agency is also built on years of living in a community, and understanding how rules can be bent or used in pursuit of a goal.⁸⁵ This type of situational knowledge of social norms and how things are done takes years to acquire. However, by watching how and when older women contribute to discussions or counter men's suggestions, younger women in meetings can learn how to express themselves with fewer reservations.

Few men participated in the FGDs, as most men were at work and were represented by their wives or daughters. However, those who did attend participated frequently throughout the discussion. The differences between women's and men's behaviour in meetings can illustrate the difference internalized confidence can make in how individuals participate in decision-making platforms.

Some men in the FGDs in Chiquimula noted that participating in mixed-gender FFA activity groups had resulted in them being ridiculed by other men, which had created some tensions. These responses to mixed-gender working shows that this went against the norm. This echoes some research that uses the examples of gangs to show how men police other men to ensure that they adhere to a 'male code of conduct'. In this context, the censure from other men was verbal; in gangs it can be physical.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, it shows that living in communities that value patriarchal attitudes and norms can make it difficult for more tolerant men to publicly support gender equality. Some key informants noted that gender equality and women's empowerment are contentious in both Guatemala and Honduras, and this is confirmed by research that shows that it is perceived as a foreign idea mostly promoted by international organizations.⁸⁷ This means that gender-transformative work is seen as an imposition of Western values in an attempt to change local beliefs without understanding them. It also raises the prospect of potential tensions among intended beneficiaries who adhere to their cultural beliefs but are forced to accept or tolerate gender equality because they need livelihood assistance.

Contributions to improving the prospects for peace

WFP's mixed group work and training sessions can create greater mixed-gender cohesion by incorporating women and men of different ages. WFP does this by creating groups in which women and men can create and strengthen social relations. WFP then promotes interventions that focus on contributing to the common good in Guatemala and Honduras. These processes are discussed below.

Strengthening social relations

The FGDs in Guatemala and Honduras showed how FFA resilience-building activities can create groups in communities that are a platform for getting acquainted with and building relationships among community members who do not previously know each other.⁸⁸ Group work does not automatically result in strengthened social relations, but

⁸⁵ McHugh, M. C., 'Aging, agency, and activism: Older women as social change agents', *Women & Therapy*, vol. 35, nos 3–4 (2012).

⁸⁶ Boerman, T. and Knapp, J., 'Gang culture and violence against women in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala', Immigration Briefing 17-03, 6 Mar. 2019.

⁸⁷ Interviews with author, Guatemala and Honduras. See also Meeker, K. A. et al., 'Examining risk factors of intimate partner violence victimization in Central America: A snapshot of Guatemala and Honduras', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 21 Dec. 2020.

⁸⁸ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

succeeds when it creates social networks between group members that accommodate different characters and personalities.⁸⁹

FGD participants noted that the groups created opportunities to build working spaces where women and men could work together on a regular basis.⁹⁰ The status of such social networks between women and men was difficult to observe during the fieldwork as the researchers were only with the groups for a short time. There might be barriers that restrict women and men from socializing. Some of the women in a Guatemala FGD noted that their husbands only allowed them to attend mixed-gender WFP meetings. Knowledge of these restrictions would have limited women's willingness to form networks beyond what WFP required.

Nonetheless, stronger networks were observed between women who went on to create separate groups for themselves. The men did not create similar groups. The groups women created discussed issues that were important to them, such as domestic and intimate partner abuse. Discussing such topics shows that women had built networks that were founded on trust and accepted membership from both single and married women. These findings show that WFP's groups were unable to cultivate more mixed-gender social networks, but that women and men in the groups had a common understanding that could be leveraged to engage more on gender transformation.

Promoting gender equality as a common good

A focus on the common good can be considered across three themes: participation, respect for social rules, and solidarity and helpfulness.⁹¹ The process of defining gender equality as a common good requires WFP to negotiate the existing social norms, traditions and beliefs that organize life, including how decisions are made and how resources are allocated.⁹² Part of how WFP negotiates local norms is by engaging with leaders and community representatives to participate in project-planning processes that use gender analyses to frame nutrition and resilience challenges and to propose solutions. By doing this, WFP demonstrates to community gatekeepers that the needs of both women and men are considered when gender equality and women's empowerment are discussed.

WFP's approach to implementing FFA resilience activities can trigger processes that contribute to gender equality and increased social cohesion. As discussed in TOC 1, WFP allocates the same financial and technical support to women and men. This is done in communities where men have tended to be prioritized as recipients of resources and opportunities. By reducing the gender gap in access to training and income, WFP reduces some of the inequalities between women and men that can create barriers to women participating in their communities.

The resilience activities were complemented with meetings on gender equality and human rights, which women and men in the FGDs in the four departments said they had attended at the beginning of the programme. FGD participants added that the training sessions laid the foundations for them to understand WFP's approach, which gave women and men the same benefits and support, and made accommodation for women to attend meetings. Including and prioritizing women's participation, by scheduling mid-morning meetings to enable them to get children ready for school and allowing them to bring along babies and young children, demonstrated to the men and women attending the meetings that their contributions were valued. It showed that WFP was committed to implementing its commitments to women and men, which may

⁸⁹ Dragolov, G. et al., *Social Cohesion Radar: Measuring Common Ground* (Bertelsmann Stiftung: 2013).

⁹⁰ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁹¹ Dragolov et al. (note 89).

⁹² Howland et al. (note 184).

have been in contrast to other organizations that have good gender policies that are poorly implemented.

Male and female FGD participants stated that gender equality as a concept resonated with them but since WFP was present during these conversations, this may have biased respondents' answers. WFP's approach challenges local patriarchal gendered norms that restrict women's participation in and access to daily life. Nonetheless, repeated interactions between community members and WFP staff who are committed to working with women and men can lead to the local adoption of some gender-transformative ideas in communities. If a community identifies and prioritizes aspects of gender equality that it wants to promote for its own good, this can lead to women becoming more actively engaged in other parts of community life, which helps to improve the prospects for peace.

The process of changing existing social norms, traditions and beliefs takes several generations, as it involves unlearning old ways of doing things and redefining new ways and their context.⁹³ However, WFP implements resilience-building programmes for three to five years, which is enough to sensitize communities about gender inequalities and to lay the foundations for more gender-transformative work.

Gender transformation is also a location for tensions between those women and men who want to transform the way of doing things and those who want to maintain the status quo. These tensions arise because the rules for allocating scarce resources are changed. By redistributing resources more equitably, WFP contributes to a redistribution of power between women and men. This requires WFP as both a change agent and a humanitarian actor to navigate the tensions in the community in partnership with local partners.

The examples given above show the different ways in which WFP is promoting gender equality. WFP can also begin to generate transformative conversations on why communities are organized in ways that give resources to men and leave women out. The Dry Corridor has different types of households: de facto and de jure women-headed households, men-headed households and households headed by the elderly or children, partly linked to patterns of migration and violence. These conversations can build on the assertions made by women and men in the FGDs that all households need the resources to produce food.⁹⁴ In the long term, implementing resilience building and facilitating conversations with communities can lead to small, incremental changes in how women access resources and local decision-making platforms, resulting in more inclusive decisions. However, relying on incremental change is not sustainable as some rural and indigenous groups might perceive gender-equality programming to be imposed on them. Once WFP leaves, these groups would have little incentive to continue implementation. Alternatively, communities could adopt norms that appear empowering but are token inclusions or overload women with work. WFP should consider evaluating how communities integrate gender equality into their norms once WFP activities have ended.

Generally, communities where women and men make decisions together are likely to have more social cohesion as both women and men can shape communities based on gender equality.⁹⁵ In addition, this increases the likelihood of reaching equitable and peaceful solutions because communities adopt norms that are based on non-

⁹³ Harper, C. et al., *Gender, Power and Progress: How Norms Change* (Align/ODI: Dec. 2020).

⁹⁴ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁹⁵ El-Bushra, J., Abcil, A-P. and Olson, M., *Women Building Peace: Sharing Know-how, Assessing Impact* (International Alert: London, June 2005).

violent conflict resolution.⁹⁶ However, this is neither a simple nor a linear process. The FGDs found some resistance to women becoming more engaged in and integrated into community processes (see below).⁹⁷

Conflict sensitivity concerns

This theory of change notes the tensions and resistance that result from resilience-building interventions that also seek to reduce gender inequality and empower women.

One manifestation of this resistance is the tensions in some households and communities when women become more active in community meetings or decision making. Some women in the FGDs told how it had not been easy for the men in their families to accept these changes in their behaviour. While not elaborating on how the men had shown their displeasure, it was evident that these small changes brought about tensions in many households.⁹⁸ Some interviewees noted that it was the norm for men to control their wives' movements, and these local findings were confirmed in separate studies in Guatemala and Honduras.⁹⁹ One study has also shown that in most instances, controlling women's movement is a form of psychological abuse, which is often a precursor to physical violence.¹⁰⁰ An increase in women's agency is often accompanied by domestic violence if men are not engaged or feel threatened and attempt to reassert their authority.

The FGDs and interviews in both countries revealed many gender stereotypes that could be rooted in cultural and social norms or may have been used by other organizations when they introduced the concept into communities. For instance, women and men repeated various stereotypes in many of the meetings: that all women are responsible, virtuous and family-oriented, while young women are vulnerable to GBV and must be protected, whereas all men tend to waste money on alcohol or cell phones, and young men have a tendency to drink or abuse drugs. Painting one gender as intrinsically good and another as bad can antagonize potential allies, particularly when communities know from lived experience that these generalizations are inaccurate. These stereotypes can entrench resistance to gender equality and approaches to women's empowerment, as some community members could see endorsing gender equality as endorsing these partial truths. WFP may already be aware of these stereotypes and can mitigate them by ensuring that its training materials do not repeat them, and by engaging in nuanced conversations with communities to show that stereotypes do not tell the full story.

Conclusions

This report shows that WFP FFA programmes that seek to increase resilience and contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment in households in the Guatemalan and Honduran Dry Corridor can contribute to improving the prospects for peace. The findings also show that there are several conflict sensitivity concerns related to WFP's FFA resilience-building work and its approach to empowering rural

⁹⁶ Forsberg, E. and Olsson, L., 'Examining gender inequality and armed conflict at the subnational level', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2021).

⁹⁷ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁹⁸ FGDs, Guatemala and Honduras.

⁹⁹ Local partners and government officials, Interviews with author, Chiquimula, Guatemala; and Meeker, K. A. et al., 'Examining risk factors of intimate partner violence victimization in Central America: A snapshot of Guatemala and Honduras', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 21 Dec. 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Sayara International et al., 'Resumen Ejecutivo: Estudio nacional de tolerancia social e institucional' [Executive summary: National study of social and institutional tolerance], 2021; and Meeker et al. (note 99).

women that could disempower women and create tensions in beneficiary communities. The report makes eight recommendations that should be adopted to strengthen WFP's contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

Relating to TOC 1: Gender, livelihoods and migration in a changing climate

1. WFP should consider investing in resilience-building assets at the household level. This would ensure that landless women and men retain control and use of the assets they create after a programme has ended, enabling them to continue producing diverse crops for their households. WFP could do this by implementing FFA activities, such as soil conservation activities to increase soil fertility and creating water-harvesting assets, in home gardens. Gardens in both rural and indigenous communities typically come under women's control as they are used to produce food for household consumption. Women could therefore gain more control over the production and use of diverse vegetables and legumes. An added advantage is that this would increase the assets under women's control, thereby reducing the asset gap between women and men.
2. WFP should connect the farmers working on resilience building to markets so that their produce can generate consistent income and increase their household and community resilience. Most of the farmers are women. They typically process and preserve some of their harvest, which could be sold in local markets. However, smallholder farmers, particularly women who have other responsibilities, struggle with market access. With WFP's support, the farmers could work with markets that support small producers or target fast-moving informal markets.
3. WFP should adopt different work strategies and technologies for implementing FFA activities to avoid increasing women's working hours.
4. WFP should consider creating modules on business management and financial literacy for women and men who participate in individual and group income-generation activities. These skills would contribute significantly to increasing rural women and men's capacity to run successful small businesses, which would contribute to individual and community economic empowerment.

Relating to TOC 2: Mixed-gender group work builds social cohesion

5. WFP should broaden its consultations with locally elected, traditional and religious leaders and other community representatives to engage in conversations on gender norms in beneficiary communities. During these conversations, the different parties could identify shared principles that would anchor future gender equality and messaging around women's empowerment.
6. WFP should devise strategies to identify and address gender stereotypes in the communities in which it works. This would inform WFP of the kinds of messages it needs to create in order to change harmful narratives.

7. WFP should develop measures to track gender equality and women's empowerment in the communities where it has worked, so it can monitor their progress towards gender equality after programmes have ended. This tracking would help WFP identify what support to offer to communities that have graduated from its programmes.
8. WFP, in partnership with other actors, should consider strategies to provide continuing support to communities that are working to become more gender equal, as this is not an endogenous process. WFP should partner with governmental, non-governmental and civil society organizations to support communities throughout the transformation process and ensure that it is completed. Adopting a multisectoral approach and partnering with many actors are ways in which WFP can increase the likelihood of these communities becoming more gender equal.