

Gender and Youth Action Plans: Process Guidance and Templates



Gender and Youth Activity

This document describes the steps needed to prepare Gender and Youth Action Plans. Action Plans outline actionable next steps based on the conclusions and recommendations established in Gender Analyses and Youth Needs Assessments conducted during the inception phase of a Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA). The Action Plans are part of the complete Gender Analysis and Youth Needs Assessment packages. To support the development of Action Plans, this document provides an example **Management Response Template** and an **Action Plan Template** to assist RFSAs in finalizing these steps and submitting their complete Gender Analyses and/or Youth Needs Assessments to USAID/BHA for approval.

Each Gender Analysis should include a Gender Action Plan, and if the program has a significant youth dimension, the Youth Needs Assessment should include a Youth Action Plan. While the Gender Analysis and Youth Needs Assessments should remain separate, RFSAs can combine input into one Gender and Youth Action Plan for simplicity.

Action Plans clearly outline how to implement and integrate the results of the Gender Analysis or Youth Needs Assessment into the:

- Theory of Change (TOC);
- Activity re-design explanation/justification to reflect data; and
- Implementation of activities for the remainder of the program, including indicators, monitoring, evaluation, learning, research plan and approach, and target populations.

Suggested Steps

The Action Plan may be presented as an Excel Sheet (see [Management Response and Action Plan Template](#) for download). The instructions on how to fill the table are both in this document and embedded within template.

The steps to develop Gender or Youth Action Plans are:

1. In the process of developing a Gender or Youth Action Plan, **systematically review the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of all studies** undertaken during the refine and implement period. In many cases, several analyses or assessments may have been conducted, and it is important to

consider all relevant gender, youth, and social dynamics findings, conclusions, and recommendations in the review, prior to developing the action plan.

- **TIP:** During this phase, the program team may need to be directly involved in brainstorming recommendations coming out of the Gender Analysis or Youth Needs Assessment. Senior management or the program team should ideally review the findings and discuss possible recommendations internally and with the research team(s). This allows the program staff to collaborate with the researchers to develop feasible, appropriate, and actionable recommendations relevant to the program’s design.
 - **TIP:** Across all studies within the refine and implement year, align the scope, research questions, and data collection tools to ensure information is not duplications. Identify early on where studies have related and different findings to allow for deeper inquiry and more robust analysis across studies.
 - **TIP:** Hold regular coordination meetings and cross-study debriefs to reduce the duplication of data, which helps avoid overburdening the research population.
2. Led by the program’s senior management, **determine and document whether the RFSA accepts each conclusion or recommendation.** The Management Response Template supports the program in deciding whether to **accept, partially accept, or reject** the relevant gender, youth, and social dynamics research findings, conclusions, or recommendations. Record these decisions in the Management Response Template.
- **TIP:** There are often very good reasons to reject analysis findings, conclusions, or recommendations, and senior management should not hesitate to initiate a robust discussion of the merits of individual recommendations. For example, external evaluators may be unaware of opportunities and constraints of USAID/BHA funding when making their recommendations, or a recommendation may involve costly, unsustainable interventions. Some conclusions or recommendations may be rejected because they are insufficiently supported, and the report should acknowledge limitations of the data, rather than trying to hide the conclusions.
 - **TIP:** The staff involved in this review may vary but, at a minimum, should involve key personnel; all sector leads; the gender, youth, and social dynamics team; the monitoring, evaluation, and learning team; and the authoring consultant(s) or internal researchers. Additional participation by all relevant technical staff can help ensure a stronger endorsement for the decisions made.
3. **Identify any management or other program actions needed based on the research findings, conclusions, or recommendations.** This may include adjustments to the TOC, strategies, activities, approaches, indicators, target groups, measurement approach, intensity of interventions, or intended partnerships. Management actions may include any training that staff would be required to undergo to better support gender and youth integration broadly across the RFSA.

Record these decisions in the Action Plan Template. This tool helps the program decide on necessary program actions based on study findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and to present those actions, indicators, responsible individuals, budget implications, and timing.

- **TIP:** The final version of the Action Plan should be both comprehensive and concise to ensure its effectiveness. Include all newly proposed or revised actions, but avoid excessive length, as a lengthy plan tends to be unused.
 - **TIP:** The final version of the Action Plan should be integrated into the program’s work plan, and other relevant program documents, and regularly updated throughout the program cycle based on incoming data, lessons learned, and shifting context and priorities.
4. **Prioritize items from among the list of management and program actions** based on do no harm factors; likely impact for program participants and accountability to their wants and needs; and availability of resources such as staff time and budget. Revise the list of management and program actions in the Action Plan Template.
- **TIP:** It may happen that not all proposed management and program actions can take place due to budgetary constraints or other considerations. It is therefore important to prioritize action items according to the likely impact, from high to low, and the level of effort, from low to high.
5. **Assign responsibility and a time frame or a period of implementation** for each set of actions. Record these decisions in the Action Plan Template. Some sets of actions may be proposed for the remainder of the activity and others may have a shorter timespan but may have an incidence on the starting time frame of other sets of actions.
- **TIP:** Make sure action items with implications on others are sequentially ordered.
6. **Describe the strategic approach** that you have developed to enable the activity to reach its objectives. Some may involve establishing strategic partnerships or training a cadre of trainers, while others may require developing or adapting a particular curriculum.
- **TIP:** Some sets of actions may be self-explanatory in the way they are articulated, and others may require some details to explain how the proposed action will contribute to reaching activity objectives.

Management Response Template

Instructions (also found in the [Management Response and Action Plan Template](#)): This sample Management Response Template is a tool that supports program decision-making on whether to accept, partially accept, or reject the relevant gender, youth, and social dynamics research findings, conclusions, or recommendations.

Program teams can use this template to document and discuss findings and ensure buy-in from various levels of staff. While this template will help guide the process of developing an Action Plan, it is not required as part of the Gender Analysis or Youth Needs Assessment package.

The Management Response Template should contain the following elements:

- **Research findings, conclusions, or recommendations:** All relevant gender, youth, and social dynamics findings, conclusions, and recommendations explicitly suggested in the analysis or assessment report should be included in the Management Response Template. The template should also document any additional findings, conclusions, or recommendations suggested by senior management and program staff based on evidence, findings, or conclusions in the

analysis/assessment report. Some conclusions or recommendations may be rejected because they are insufficiently supported, and the report should acknowledge limitations of the data, rather than trying to hide conclusions.

- **Source:** Title of the research study, or “program team” if not mentioned in a research study.
- **Management Response:** Options include accept/partially accept/reject.
- **Reasoning and possible rewording of adjusted recommendations:** When rejecting or partially accepting a recommendation, document why a particular recommendation is not accepted and show amendments made to a partially accepted recommendation.

Table (Found in the [Management Response and Action Plan Template document](#))

	Research Findings, Conclusions, or Recommendations	Source	Management Response	Reasoning, and possible rewording of adjusted recommendations
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Action Plan Template

Instructions (Found in the [Management Response and Action Plan Template document](#)): The Action Plan Template is a tool that helps the program decide on necessary program actions based on study findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and to present those actions, indicators, responsible individuals, budget implications, and timing. If the actions necessitate revisions to the TOC, strategies, activities, approaches, indicators, target groups, measurement approach, intensity of interventions, or intended partnerships, then these should be noted in the action plan.

The Action Plan Template (Found in the [Management Response and Action Plan Template document](#)) is a downloadable Excel file that can be presented to USAID/BHA at the end of the Gender Analysis or Youth Assessment report. It should only reference newly proposed or revised actions.

In addition to the tables that are part of the Action Plan Template, please include a few paragraphs, up to a page, as an introductory narrative to the Action Plan Template. This narrative can be part of the overall Gender Analysis or Youth Assessment Packages. The narrative should also include a paragraph describing the process that was followed, as well as the people who were consulted.

The Action Plan should ideally contain the following key elements:

- **Relevant study findings, conclusions, or recommendations:** Any accepted or partially accepted findings from the research studies, along with any additional findings, conclusions, or recommendations from the program team.
- **Actions:** Planned actions intended to achieve expected results that address study or program team findings, conclusions, or recommendations. These should be organized in accordance with the TOC. Cross-cutting or management actions can be included as a separate section. Where appropriate, explain how the team will achieve stated actions.
- **Level of impact:** The anticipated impact in relation to the number of participants reached, its relative importance within the overall activity, and its potential for sustainability. Rating goes from High, to Medium, to Low.
- **Level of effort:** The anticipated level of effort required to achieve the level of impact indicated in the previous column. Consider whether the proposed action will require many staff, conducting intensive training across numerous entities, engaging ministries or institutions that are unwilling to commit, or be very expensive to complete. Rating goes from Low, to Medium, to High.
- **Level of priority:** An assessment of the overall priority of the proposed action, based on the ratings in the previous two columns. The highest priority usually corresponds to a high impact combined with a low level of effort, and the lowest priority would be given to a low impact combined with a high level of effort.
- **Indicators:** A description of the indicators used to measure results. If original program indicators need to be revised, record those shifts in this section. If new indicators need to be introduced, record the new indicators in this section. Also, update them in the program’s Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan. The indicators can be highlighted as output indicators and outcome indicators.
- **Target population:** A description of the groups of participants intended to be reached through the proposed action.
- **Consortium partner responsible for completing action and supporting partner(s):** Specifies the responsible implementing partner, sector/purpose and/or job title(s) who will take the lead in ensuring the action is addressed in the manner laid out in the plan. Name the supporting partners to make this action possible. Type of partners: these supporting partners can be internal, such as consortium partners, or external to the consortium, such as an agency within a ministry, or youth clubs, etc., external partners would often require the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the relationship. If external—indicate whether an MOU is in place or is still to be formalized.
- **Budgetary implications (if applicable):** Funds required to implement the planned action. Sometimes a tradeoff is necessary in order to assign a budget to a new or extended activity/intervention. Note that many recommendations will not have budgetary implications. In the table, only select **YES** or **NO**, and describe possible implications at the bottom of the table, as well as whether this budget change is approved by leadership.
- **Timeline:** The months/years during which the action will be implemented.

About the Gender and Youth Activity (GAYA)

The Gender and Youth Activity (GAYA) Associate Award works to improve the quality and impact of emergency and non-emergency food security and resilience activities by addressing the barriers and challenges implementing partners face when integrating gender and youth within their work. Understanding and meeting the unique and intersectional needs of women and youth across their lifespan and addressing the root causes of inequalities are essential to achieve broad and equitable impact in food and nutrition security. GAYA supports partners implementing emergency and early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience programs. GAYA is awarded through the Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Leader with Associate Awards Activity, and funded by the USAID/BHA and is implemented by Save the Children and Mercy Corps.

Learn more about GAYA at www.fsnnetwork.org/gaya

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