

# [Women and food security](https://assignbuster.com/women-and-food-security/)

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There is a strong link betweenfoodsecurity, good nutrition and gender. A gender approach to food security can enable shifts in gender power relations and assure that all people, re-gardless of gender, benefit from, and are em-powered by development policies and practices to improve food security and nutrition.

This brief gives an overview on why and how to consider gender aspects in both short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term development coopera-tion that address food security. Every woman, man and child has the right to ade-quate food. In far too many cases, women and girls are overrepresented among those who are food-insecure, partly because women often are denied basichuman rightssuch as the right to own property, to find decent work, and to have aneducationand goodhealth.

People's overall access to food relies to a great extent on the work of rural women. Women comprise, in average, 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. 1 Hence, securing women's human rights is a key strategy in assuring food security for all. Women are involved in a variety of agricultural operations such as crops, livestock and fish farming.

They produce food and cash crops at subsistence and commercial levels. At community level women undertake a range of activities that support natural resource management and agricultur-al development, such as soil and water conservation, afforestation and crop domestication.

Women often have 1 FAO 2011 (see references under " Further reading"). unique perspectives on, as well as understanding of local biodiversity importance for the development of adapted and improved varieties. Also for dietary diversity women have a decisive role. Poor households headed by women often succeed in providing more nutritional food for their children than those headed by men.

There is a strong correlation between a higher level ofgender equalityand lower level of child mortality.

Cultural traditions and social structures often mean that women are more affect-ed by hunger andpovertythan men even though women, and in particular expectant andnursingmothers, often need special or increased intake of food. And too often, child hunger is inherited: a mother who is stunted or underweight due to an inadequate diet often give birth to low birth weight children.

The critical link between women's social status and nutrition The wide differences in women's nutrition among coun-tries that have similar income levels indicate that some-thing other than income affects women's nutrition. Re-search indicates that cultural norms about eating and women's low social status often affect women's diets.

In 2003, India and Bolivia had similar gross national in-comes, but 36 percent of Indian women were under-weight, compared with only 1 percent of Bolivian women. 3 2 ADB 2013. 3 Ransom, E. ; Elder, L. (2003) Nutrition of Women and Adolescent Girls: Why It Matters. Population Reference Bureau. [ BRIEF ]

Women and Food Security

Women face numerous obstacles to access productive inputs, assets to land and services required for rural livelihoods. These include access to fertilizers, livestock, mechanical equipment, improved seed varieties, exten-sion services, agricultural education and credit. Women receive for example only 5 percent of agricultural exten-sion services worldwide.

As rural women often spend a large amount of their time on additional household obli-gations they have less time to spend on food production or other income opportunities. Women also have less access to markets than men which hamper their opportu-nities to earn an income even further, and thus their pos-sibilities to be able to buy food.

With fewer assets and heavier burdens, women are more vulnerable to shocks and less well positioned to respond to e. g. the effects ofclimate changeor other rapid changes in the environ-ment. Social and economic inequalities between men and women result in less food being produced, less income being earned, and higher levels of poverty and food inse-curity.

If women farmers had the same access to re-sources as men, the agricultural yield could increase by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2. 5 percent, which could re-duce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent.

Another emerging challenge in food security and nutri-tion that needs to be addressed is to enhance women and men's resilience to climate change; e. g. by diversified production as well as strengthened capacity to respond to challenges related to climate change, building on the different needs and coping mechanisms of women, men, boys and girls.

Disasters, especially droughts, and emergency situa-tions are the most common causes of food shortages in the world (WFP). In humanitarian contexts discrimina-tion of women and girls may be reinforced, and the oc-currence ofdomestic violenceincrease during times of food scarcity.

Because of women's specific roles and experiences in food production and preparation, it is crucial to include them in emergency-related food securi-ty planning and decision making as potential change agents and decision makers, rather than as the " victims" they often are portrayed to be. Gender dynamics within households must be taken into account in situations of displacement when food aid and other relief items are distributed.

This includes men's and 4 UNDP 2012. 5 FAO 2012. women's ability to access and equitably distribute relief items within households. Humanitarian interventions that radically altergender roles, for example by giving women greater control over water and food distribution, may impact power dynamics negatively and can also lead to increased gender-basedviolence.

The four dimension of food security from a gender perspective Availability. Inequalities in ownership of, access to and control of livelihoods assets negatively affect women's food production and food security. Tenure insecurity for women results in lower investment and potential envi-ronmental degradation.

It compromises future production potential and increases food insecurity and reduces women´s income and the availability of food. Stability. Differences in risk and vulnerability between men and women can affect the stability of their food security in different ways. During times of crisis, women and girls are often forced to reduce their intake in (fa-vour?) of other household members.

In cases of cropfailureor natural disasters, cultural traditions make it easier for men to leave their farm in search for employ-ment elsewhere, leaving women behind to struggle for feeding their families and making ends meet. Utilization. Women´s role in food utilization for food security is perhaps the most critical and outweighs the importance of their role in food production and how they spend the income they earn.

Women are typically re-sponsible for food preparation and thus are crucial to the dietary diversity of their households. Access. Access to food within the household is deter-mined by cultural practices and power relationships within thefamily. Although food may be available, adequate amounts to maintain nutritional intake may not necessari-ly be as accessible to women compared to men. Source: FAO (2013): Gender and climate change research in agriculture and food security for rural development.

Food security and agricultural programmes can strength-en human rights and be more effective if they also tackle the constraints around women's access to resources. This is done through addressing the issue of unequal gender roles, responsibilities and workloads. To acknowledge women's role in food security, contributions are needed at all levels in a variety of result areas.

Entry points for Sida can be identified within the following areas: Women's right to food ? Assure women's human rights including the rights to education, knowledge and employment and women's equal rights to land, water and other resources that are necessary for raising the productivity of their agricul-tural activity, food and nutrition security.

Promote women's productive activities by providing trainings, credit and access to improved and appropriatetechnologyto reduce their work load. ? Ensure that women are empowered and trained to exercise their rights and take active participation in decision-making bodies. ? Mother-and-child health and nutrition programmes can break gender barriers in childcare by including men and boys in nutrition and health education activities.

Women's access to land?

Contribute to the reforming of laws on tenure, land distribution, land reform and family law, including marital and inheritance laws, to become gender equal. ? Support education and capacity building for govern-ment officials, legislators, and local land officials on genderequalityin access to land and property rights. ?

Advocate the creation of mechanisms to monitor the enforcement of policies, targets and laws on women's access and rights to land. ? Promote women's access and rights to land in custom-ary law e. g. by supporting women's participation in bodies responsible for interpreting customary law. ? Support awareness-raising and access to information among women regarding land rights, including infor-mation about complaints mechanisms.

Women's equal participation in labour markets ? Support government legislation that guarantees equita-ble employment conditions that protect workers in both formal and informal employment. ? Extend the coverage of social protection to all catego-ries of rural workers and ensure that they incorporate women's special needs. ?

Support policies and investments in labour-saving technologies and support public investments that make it easier for women to participate in the labour market. ? Intensify the provision of better-quality education and vocational training for women.

Policy processes and frameworks ? " The right to adequate food": 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ? Women's specific role for rural development: 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms ofDiscriminationagainst Women (CEDAW), (Article 14) ? Special attention to the gender gap in nutrition: 1992

The Global Plan of Action on Nutrition of the In-ternational Conference on Nutrition ? Highlight the close interlinkages between gender equality and women's empowerment: 1992 the Mil-lennium DevelopmentGoals(MDGs) ? Emphasize the specific role that women play in food security: 2004

The Voluntary Guidelines to sup-port Member States' efforts to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security ? Highlights full and equal participation of men and women for achieving sustainable food security: 2006 World Summit on Food Security and The World Food Summit Plan of Action (e. g. 16, 1. 3) ?

Gender issues in food security and nutrition: 2012 The First Version of the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition GSF ? Women's empowerment & equality of opportunity: 2012 UN Secretary General " Zero hunger Challenge" ? The importance of empowering rural women as critical agents: 2012 Rio +20 Outcome Document ? Food insecurity indicator allowing disparities in food access based on e. g. gender: 2013 FAO's Voices of the Hungry ?

Support women's engagement in producer organisa-tions, cooperatives, labour unions, outgrow schemes etc. to strengthen women's voice and decision-making power. ? Support women's groups and other forms of collective action that builds relations and networks addressing gender gaps by reducing transaction costs, pooling risks, developing skills and building confidence.

Women's access to financial services ? Improve financial systems and services, e. g. loans and insurances, to respond to the needs and constraints of women producers and entrepreneurs. ? Ensure that women are being consulted and included in discussions, decision-making, planning and provi-sion of financial services.

Support financial institutions, governments and NGOs to offer financial literacy training to ensure that wom-en can make informed financial decisions. ? Promote technological innovations, such as prepaid cards and mobile phone plans for making loan pay-ments and transfer cash, to facilitate for women to gain access to capital.

Women's access to technology ? Promote productivity enhancing agricultural tech-niques, including machines and tools, improved plant varieties and animal breeds, fertilizers, pest control measures and management techniques that address women´s needs. ? Invest in labour-saving and productivity enhancing technologies and infrastructure, e. g. water sources in villages, fuel efficient stoves, and roads, to free wom-en´s time for more productive activities.

Promote women's training on farming adaptation techniques such as rainwater harvesting and agrofor-estry, and on agricultural diversification to increase their resilience. ? Promote extension services that are more gender-responsive, i. e. considering all the roles of women and are closely linked to women's activities.

Support participatory gender-inclusive research and technology development programmes. Example of indicators ? Share of population (women/men) in targeted areas suffering from starvation (impact level indicator, measures effect on target group) ? Proportion of population (women/men/girls/boys) below minimum level of dietary energy consump-tion (impact level indicator, measures effect on target group) ?

A monitoring system providing food-security data disaggregated by sex, geographic location (or oth-er as relevant in the specific context) in use (out-come level indicator, measures capacity development) ? Share of women and men using agricultural exten-sion services (output level indicator, measures ca-pacity development) Gender mainstreaming in humanitarian assis-tance ? Collect sex-disaggregated data for planning, imple-mentation and evaluation of food aid.

Ensure that women and men take part equally in deci-sion-making, planning, implementation and manage-ment of food aid programmes. ? Design services to reduce women´s and children's time spent getting to, and from food distribution points. ? Ensure that women's access to services is routinely monitored through observations and discussions with affected communities.

Asian Development Bank (2013) & FAO (2013): Gen-der Equality and Food Security – Women's empower-ment as a tool against hunger, FAO (2013): Training Guide: Gender and climate change research in agriculture and food security FAO (2012): Global Strategic Framework for Food Se-curity and Nutrition FAO (2011): The state of Food and Agriculture – Wom-en in agriculture Gender in agriculture: Platform for knowledge sharing Global Gender ;

Climate Alliance and UNDP (2012): Gender, agriculture and food security IFAD, FAO ; WB (2009): Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook IFPRI, 2012 Global Food Policy Report, chapter 4: Closing the Gender Gap IASC (2006): Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action World Bank (2012): World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development World Food Program: Causes to hunger ; the Zero Hunger Challenge UN Human Rights Council (2010): HRC's Advisory Committee on discrimination in the context of the right to food