Women and Hunger

Women play a central role in the fight against hunger
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Over the last 25 years, Action Against Hunger has worked in many countries in which women have faced extraordinary challenges in their fight against hunger.

The era of ‘the killing fields’ in Cambodia left an after-math of decades of fear and the implementation of treacherous coping mechanisms within households just in order to survive. Women, the frontline fighters in gaining access to food for their families, risked injuries from mines while searching for wild foods and harvesting what little they could grow. In the early years of this decade, these same women, through a programme run by Action Against Hunger, led a fair selling their own produce and passed on the methods they had learnt through giving classes in a demonstration garden and farm. For women who had feared speaking out in their own communities just a few years earlier, this first fair was a very symbolic occasion.

Women and Hunger provides a collection of experiences from Action Against Hunger’s work with women highlighting the extreme difficulties and inequalities facing women throughout the world. It exemplifies the often unmanageable workload faced by women through time-consuming tasks of fetching water, firewood, searching for sufficient food, taking care of the health of their family and looking after the home. The difficulties of these tasks are often exacerbated in times of conflict as is the case in many of the countries in which Action Against Hunger works. Yet despite the burdens, the potentials of how women can become empowered provide encouraging stories.

This hard-hitting evidence provides an overview of the challenges faced by women and, particularly with the support of Action Against Hunger, of the success stories that are possible.

Frances Mason
Trustee – Action Against Hunger UK
Women play a central role in the fight against hunger

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Recommendations

• Responses to hunger crises need to be analysed not only on a community and household level, but also on an individual gender level.

• Gender consciousness is necessary while caring for the specific needs, capacities, opportunities and risks of men and women. It is a necessary condition for qualitative, effective and sustainable humanitarian aid.

• Gender considerations must occupy the central stage of programme thinking, and not be reduced to an additional factor.

• Gender complementary responses have to be found that these privileges and responsibilities can be negotiated between equal partners.

• Gender refers to men and women, both of which have different roles, specific risks and individual responsibilities. It is the duty of humanitarian actors to support these so that these privileges and responsibilities can be negotiated between equal partners.

• Gender considerations must occupy the central stage of programme thinking, and not be reduced to an additional factor.

Observations from working with women

Action Against Hunger works in places where the majority of household food production is carried out by women. Women spend long hours in the fields, tend domestic livestock and vegetable gardens, gather firewood, haul water, prepare and cook food, take care of children and manage household finances. In most cases, women use almost all their income to meet household needs. At the same time, traditional culture and land laws often prevent women and girls from gaining an education and obtaining access to communal resources and public services that would allow them to improve their families’ livelihoods. Our work in approximately 40 countries is closely linked with the role women play in improving their families’ livelihoods. This report is an attempt to illustrate the specific risks and capacities women encounter in dealing with food shortages. This includes an analysis of the general workload women have at household and community levels, and questions how this workload is affected by particular crises. How, for example, does conflict, a financial crisis or drought affect relationships within the household? What do they mean for women - as both wife and mother? Can outsiders support gender roles exposed to an extreme situation, and if so, how best can we do so?

Women’s situation equals families’ situation

The division of labour between men and women in the production and processing of food varies greatly according to region and individual communities. However, in general, women take care of household food production and small-scale cultivation of cash crops, while men tend to be responsible for larger scale crop production and the herding of livestock. Men are especially involved in cash generating activities associated with mechanisation. For example, in Afghanistan where women produce most of carpets and handicrafts, men are charged with selling such products. In such contexts, women remain almost fully dependent on men to turn their labour into cash needed to purchase food. Men often also occupy a greater role in social networks outside the family home. As a result, female-headed households have unequal access to commercial and social capital, and are left more vulnerable to food shortages than houses dominated by their male counterparts.

Even where women produce most of the carpets and handicrafts, men are charged with selling such products. In such contexts, women remain almost fully dependent on men to turn their labour into cash needed to purchase food.

fine-tuned systems can have grave implications for the nutritional status of a household. One Nepalese woman told Action Against Hunger that the last months of breastfeeding are high-risk time for children due to competing demands on time leaving the baby fed irregularly. Extensive workloads in the field during peak agricultural seasons contribute to child malnutrition as, apart from the lack of food, mothers do not have adequate time for child rearing, thereby leading to an increase in poor hygiene and the risk of catching diseases. The conflict in Nepal has forced women to take on progressively heavier workloads as the male workforce migrates away from the village for long periods - either to join or flee conscription by Maoists rebels or government security forces.

Women are the pillars of family nutrition. Social inequalities are often exacerbated by caste, ethnicity and gender-based discrimination. The result is that a woman’s workload can drastically increase as contributions that are normally the responsibility of a husband fall on the shoulders of his wife. Even in normal times, subsistence agriculture leaves women little extra time for activities other than working their land. Balancing housework, caring for elders and looking after children can be a difficult juggling act. In crisis, women are regularly forced to plough the fields, while men seldom support their wives by taking up “typical” women’s work.

In such a context, what can appear to be little shocks to

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Supporting women

It is Action Against Hunger’s firm belief that only by integrating and promoting a gender perspective into our work, will populations in danger have the promise of success. According to the World Food Programme, 80% of productive labour in rural Africa and 60% in Asia is provided by women. Only by harnessing this potential can we take a step towards alleviating hunger and food insecurity and promoting sustainable development.

Working without cash or recognition

A woman’s extensive workload is often not recognised by the wider community or even their own family. Worse still, it hardly ever translates into economic gain. Extensive research by Action Against Hunger in 11 villages in Armenia illustrates how decisions are predominantly made by men and that women’s issues are often missing from community considerations. This study is not unique, but it is representative of the wider situation faced by many women around the world. The project Action Against Hunger has started will exemplify how humanitarian action can work to reverse such inequalities and serve as a catalyst for change.

Over utilisation of women’s time; under utilisation of men’s time

According to the United Nations Development Programme, women are responsible for 53% of the world’s total working hours, compared to 47% for men. While 78% of men’s work is paid, only about a third of women’s work is rewarded with cash. In rural Pakistan, women are in charge of 50% of the cultivation and harvest of wheat, in addition to their domestic duties.

Women play multiple roles, in the community, the productive sector and the household. It is our experience that to understand why communities, regions or whole countries face food shortages, one must not only look at the resources available to a household, but also question the time assigned to various tasks in a woman’s day. Other considerations include how violence, poverty and disease pandemics affect the workload of both sexes, and whether these divisions are structural or cultural.

Humanitarian action can work to reverse such inequalities and serve as a catalyst for change.

“A I only attended our community meeting once because I am very busy and my husband is old and he is a shoemaker and I work at other people’s houses (cleaning the house, laundry, baking the bread, etc.). I do not have time to go to meetings; anyway, they are discussing community issues, not household issues.” Woman in Afghanistan, cited by AREU

In Northern Uganda the demand on women’s time is so great that they can neither meet productive and reproductive demands, nor have time to raise their issues in the community. Such are the demands on their time that many have no time to come to feeding centres with their children. Even in such situations, men refuse to assist women in their reproductive work, apparently because of socio-cultural beliefs. The result is that there is no one else who is able or willing to take care of the children. Other social factors, such as displacement, have had an impact, leaving families to look to their immediate relatives for help, and not their extended family as is customary in some African cultures.

Women’s contribution to local and national economies also goes unnoticed as their work is often in the informal sector, within which, compared to men, women undertake a limited range of activities. In times of economic difficulty, women often take on the domestic activities of other households. This creates an all-female supply and demand market that is not visible in official unemployment statistics.

What are men doing?

Men’s role in the household and the community is largely defined by manual labour, cash income through labour and accumulation of profit. Their status is widely defined through ownership of productive resources, numbers of livestock and tangible goods. Disease, structural economic decline, violence and droughts can all have devastating effects on men’s income, social interaction and self-respect within the household.
Losing their partners’ contribution

Again and again, it is women who feel the negative impact caused by the loss of men’s status and income contribution. In Northern Uganda, Acholi men have almost completely lost their role in supporting their families. Traditionally their role is connected to cattle herding, transferring pastoral knowledge to the younger generation and the management of ancestral land. However, chronic conflict and social dislocation has meant Acholi men can no longer meet their responsibilities of providing household resources and providing security for their families or clan. In the new semi-urban context their traditional expertise has little or no use in compensating for lost roles. Their status as internally displaced people leaves men with little choice other than to be idle or abandon their family in search for employment - both of which undermines their self-respect and cultural legitimacy as head of the household. Men in displaced settings are seen as doing little more than drinking in the village square while women work for themselves, their children and their husbands. The effects on families and local culture are devastating, as clans are broken up and women no longer count on male values and their responsibilities to provide for their families.

Women facing crises no longer count on male values and their responsibilities to provide for their families.

Men bound to hide, women to compensate

Many women in Chechnya have told us similar stories of men losing their socially assigned roles in the face of economic impotence. War has taken a huge toll in Chechnya, with almost every family having lost at least one member. A decade into the war, it is again women and girls that have had to compensate for the loss of time contributed to the household by men. Traditional gender beliefs, however, have ensured that women face discrimination in accessing means of production and lack social contacts to provide sufficient income for their families. Such beliefs have also prevented women from engaging with markets which were managed by men before the war. According to Action Against Hunger’s food production surveillance database, 59% of current cash income is sourced by contracting debt, and despite significant food aid assistance, food has become the main expenditure of female-headed households.

“Three members of [my] family (father, mother and brother) exploded on a mine when driving the tractor.”
M. Itum Kale, Chechnya 2005

Care for the sick and weak

The burden of HIV/AIDS in many African countries is also responsible for increasing women’s workload, as the pandemic unduly affects female-headed households. In a majority of cases it is the women who end up caring for the sick (including themselves), while also supporting the household. Their care duties often include people within the extended family, and as a woman cares for more elderly and sick relatives, inequalities within the household increase and leave it more fragile to external shocks. Such examples demonstrate how with the ever-increasing workload of the female partner a household can be pushed closer to the razor’s edge, whereby a woman’s ability to support her dependents becomes unsustainable. Solidarity and the sharing of labour within the household may in many circumstances aid the collective survival of all its members. However, some of the worst examples of inequality and exploitation also take place within the household - something that unfortunately tends not to be investigated. Without analysing the intra-household distribution of resources and time, the root causes of a nutritional and food crisis might never be uncovered. We must understand how to support women while decreasing their workload to ensure efficient humanitarian assistance.

Disintegration of coping strategies

In the face of violence

Families are often caught up in Colombia’s triangle of violence between the army, paramilitaries and rebels. Displaced from their rural farms, women find shelter in villages and small towns close to their original home. Men, meanwhile, go further a field as their superior mobility and geographical independence allows them to seek opportunities denied to them in small urban centres. In a study sample of an Action Against Hunger project for example, only in 17% of cases did men retain former ‘bread-winner' status within displaced families, mainly labouring on other people’s land earning low wages.

Solidarity and the sharing of labour within the household may in many circumstances aid the collective survival of all its members.

Women, left alone with their children and often with elderly dependents, have enormous difficulties in accessing new sources of income compatible with their household duties. While the same survey found 60% of female-headed households worked for their better-off neighbours, this form of employment is seldom a secure source of income and can be very sporadic. Most are forced to be engaged in subsistence agriculture on very small plots to support the basic food needs of their families. It is also common for young girls and boys to engage in sexual practice to access consumer goods and status—and in doing so expose themselves to the risk of HIV/AIDS infection.

To guarantee efficient humanitarian assistance, we must understand how to support women, while decreasing their workload.
A recent Action Against Hunger assessment in Chipinge and Zvishavane, Zimbabwe, found that nearly 70% of households are female-headed. The great majority of these women are widows, and their teenaged children drop out of school in search of work. Most sell vegetables, pan for gold or sell their bodies. They are known as “food crisis teenagers” and become more and more visible in the streets where people identify young adult girls with their “boyfriends” as the new face of hunger.

Men: “the breadwinners”? Globally, one third of households are headed by women and it is clear that these are usually economically poorer than those headed by men. Nevertheless there is a dominant structural assumption that sees men as “the breadwinner”. This view still hampers any serious efforts to support community and economic development, as in reality women have little voice in communal affairs, and suffer from a male bias in institutions and labour markets.

Deprivation & violence There is another reason why we must reverse the results of poverty, violence, disease and natural hardship that lead to the disintegration of coping strategies of household units. Unequal gender roles and economic uncertainty in Great Britain are known to increase domestic violence in partnerships far more than the status, class or education of the victim. The same mechanisms are at play all over the world and women are the main victims of this violence.

Pandemics put a heavy burden on families

In many parts of the world, HIV/AIDS affects not just individuals, but entire communities. Globally, women make up 50% of those who carry the virus; in Africa it is 58%. For women the HIV/AIDS pandemic means they have to care for their sick relatives as the same time as finding alternative sources of income and money. Children often have to help in compensating for lost income and are often taken out of school to work for money and to save on school fees. When the man of the household dies, his wife often loses access to their land, as many communities are based on male hereditary laws. The death of the mother often leads to the break up of the family, leaving children vulnerable to poverty and malnutrition. In regions where HIV/AIDS is most prevalent, the disease is contributing greatly to a loss of knowledge transfer from the older generation to the next, negatively affecting agricultural productivity and social values.

Even if internally displaced people receive assistance, their economic status has deteriorated to such a stage that even small extra cash burdens brought on by sickness, unwise investment or other reasons can cause economic hardship. For households in food crisis zones this not only means the difference in postponing a much needed purchase but can all too often imply the selling of tools, seeds and livestock, which are the guarantee for future productive activities. Studies among pastoral populations in the Sahel have shown that cattle herds need up to ten years to regenerate to the levels they were before a severe drought. Under such conditions, disempowered and shamed partners can resort to violence especially if one of the partners is unequally “better off”. It is well known that displaced populations that remain poor are often those with the least access to labour markets, as well as being dependent on social services with little prospect of socioeconomic alternative. The result is often a more violent environment. In Colombia, for example, 62% of displaced women are victims of domestic violence while the average figure in the same geographic region is estimated at 47%. In addition, women are often forced to give sexual favours to members of armed groups to protect their possessions, gain access to resources or to save their children from forced recruitment.

Displacement has generated many single parent households. In times of insecurity, men lose their mobility and are increasingly unable to generate income for their families. In response, men adopt a passive role or abandon their household in search for employment. Men and young adult boys might have to leave their family as warring factions threaten their lives. In the vast majority of cases, single-headed households are female-headed households. In Costa Atlantica in Colombia for example, 36% of all internally displaced people households are single-headed, and of these 96% are female-headed. These women face an uphill battle to obtain sufficient food for their families, with 22% cohabitating with one or more families due to lack of resources. Due to stereotypical assumptions of the “ideal” household, these women find themselves falling through social safety nets making it difficult for them to provide sufficient means for their families. With the abandonment of a male partner, female-headed households often lose their connections as well as knowledge about social and political mechanisms and networks that they need to maintain a livelihood and to access productive resources and markets.

At first glance, the conflict might look like an opportunity to reform the role and equality of women in Colmbian society. However, being the sole breadwinner of the household comes with a high price. Increased status leads to aggressive gender and hierarchical conflicts, resulting too often in physical attacks, multi-sexual relations and rape against women. Unable to defend their few assets, women look to local men, such as government soldiers or village youths, to provide security and protection. These social relations are both unstable and unreliable and often lead to short-lived partnerships and an increased likelihood of sexually transmitted diseases infection, especially among young girls.
Lack of control over essential decisions

Gender is one of the primary factors affecting entitlements, both within and outside the home. While women are the primary caretakers of families around the world, cultural beliefs of both sexes appear to reduce women’s decision-making power both within the household and at community level. This reduces their ability to care for the family as their needs are not seen in public and often are overlooked by development action. While on some issues women articulate or even believe in gender stereotypical ideologies that benefit men – for instance, maintaining that child care is women’s responsibility – on other issues there is observable opposition by women towards family authority structures, male control over cash, and domestic violence. The strong pull of peer-pressure also contributes to women’s self-regulation and conformity. There is a strong sense of what is appropriate for women and for men, and punitive social stigmas exist for those who do not conform to the rigid system of “cultural” social regulation.

Inside and outside the house

A gender assessment by Action Against Hunger in Armenia found how communal and household decision-making processes play out in reality. In 2003, Armenia was a country scarred by the break-up of the Soviet Union. The sudden abandonment of many economic sectors and workplaces disappeared and individuals had to rebuild little experience of a demand-driven economy saw many industries collapse. This meant that factories and workplaces disappeared and individuals had to rebuild their lives, largely without functioning markets where products could be brought in exchange for cash. This was especially true in 11 rural villages in Sissian, where the Action Against Hunger assessment studied gender relations and how these influenced local dynamics. The research found that decisions related to agriculture, use of land, timing of planting and cultivating methods are mostly made by men, with only 4% of the women stating that they can influence these decisions. Interestingly, during interviews and focus groups it was found that agriculture is divided into two parts: the so-called technical part (renting agricultural equipment, buying petrol, fertilisers and executing heavy jobs) was attributed to men; women made decisions over what to plant in the garden, how to collect crops, and how best to manage work during the harvest season. Men took charge of much of the commercialisation of agricultural products (64% compared with 36% of women), including decisions relating to when, where and for how much produce would be sold on the local market. This left women dependent on their husbands, as they remained the guardians of financial resources. Decisions on household expenditure, however, are found to be almost totally in control of women. Women purchase household necessities, including children’s education, food and other bills. When questioned separately who they thought made decisions in the family, 24% of men said that all decisions were made by them, while only 2% of women said the same, thereby illustrating the relativity of power and perception.

Gender flexibility among the poorest

The research also showed that gender relationships in families belonging to the poorest strata of society and those just at the border of subsistence are most flexible. This is largely so because they are dominated by household survival rather than following peer pressure and gender stereotypes. Men and women in these social groups often crossed the line of what is perceived to be their role to support their partners. The study found that economic survival proves to be the strongest factor in transforming socially constructed behaviour and roles.

The research also showed that gender relationships in those families that belong to the poorest strata of society and those just at the border of subsistence are most flexible. This is largely so because they are dominated by household survival rather than following peer pressure and gender stereotypes.

Looking at a cross section of these communities, the Armenian survey found two other typical constraints to women’s participation in community involvement. Firstly, 73% of women surveyed came to their current villages due to marriage and remain dependent on their husband’s family and his social networks. Secondly, women in these villages are rarely involved in political or entrepreneurial institutions and have little voice in them. This included local councils, school administrations, agricultural offices, social services, local business regulators and entrepreneurial institutions.
Women’s education - key to promoting the female voice

The gender shackles around Afghanistan’s veiled women might make gender parity appear centuries away. A closer inspection tells of a more multi-faceted reality.

Afghanistan: educated women raise their voice

As Action Against Hunger’s Head of Mission in Kabul remarks: “The situation differs according to geographical regions, the freedom of movement, exposure to information, the local culture of discussion and expression. In areas like Hazarajat, women sometimes have their word regarding household matters but men always have the last word. In the more ‘radical traditionalist’ areas of Southern Afghanistan, matters are surprisingly different. In Ghor, women’s participation depends largely on their level of education. Similarly, women who have been in displacement camps in Pakistan came into contact with new views on community organisation and social ideas. Women returnees today appear to be more educated and willing to re-vindicate their rights.”

Women’s participation in public life is key to a more equal society as well as in designing effective humanitarian action.

The Women’s Leadership project of “Democracy Today” in Armenia works with Action Against Hunger to reverse the absence of women from the public space and promote gender equality in villages. The project paves the way towards gender equality in the community and ensures that issues specific to women are taken into consideration in community politics. It also helps women to redefine their contribution to communal living in a public setting and helps to establish them as equal, valued citizens. It aims to achieve these goals through education, village meetings, the promotion of gender discussion and the creation of market opportunities for women. In doing so, we stand a better chance of tackling the overall goal of poverty reduction.

Women enjoy various influences on household decision-making. This is directly linked to their education, social awareness and engagement in community activities.

Women’s education - key to promoting the female voice

The gender shackles around Afghanistan’s veiled women might make gender parity appear centuries away. A closer inspection tells of a more multi-faceted reality.
Supporting women’s role in providing food

The World Bank promotes women as the panacea for combating food insecurity around the globe. According to research in Central America, money invested in women is 17 times more efficient than when given to their male counterparts. Other research consistently supports this view: the active participation of women, whether in education, income generation, social protection or participatory governance, contributes consistently to more effective development. Evidence from Bangladesh indicates that lending to women has greater positive impacts on household income than does lending to men. Women use resources more productively and sensibly, their borrowing is more closely associated with schooling and nutritional status than men’s borrowing that is often lost on drinks or in local tea houses. In terms of agricultural productivity, the evidence is equally strong. If a woman is farming a plot, she will use fewer household labour resources, and economise the seeds available to her more than a man farming the same plot.

Tripling women’s “triple days”

Despite this, development actors highlight the danger of tripling women “triple days” yet again. “Triple days” refers to the fact that women are often considered wives, farmers, and caretakers at the same time. As mentioned earlier, women in Northern Uganda appear to be primarily responsible for both domestic and productive work. They nevertheless express anxiety about the extent to which both types of work were being carried out in their homes while they have to attend to their hungry children in the feeding centres.

Development action must promote policies based on a holistic gender model that is aimed at tackling both under-utilisation of men’s time while promoting a reduction of the over-utilisation of women’s time. Only by understanding gender roles fully and by listening to the opinions of women, can development organisations plan accordingly and lessen the devastating effects on the nutritional status of households.

Humanitarian interventions must include women of all social groups at all stages of the decision-making process. Political exclusion of women from public decisions, as well as consultation at grassroots level needs to be consistently addressed and actively monitored if action to fight food insecurity is to be successful. Finally, implementation of humanitarian action needs to be backed with financial resources (especially in transitional economies) to empower women through education, training and capital investment.

Relieve women’s working days and empower women’s participation

Women are responsible for the majority of domestic and productive work, yet they have little control over the benefits of their work, accumulated wealth or decision-making processes. Food shortages, whether caused by drought, social factors, poverty, conflict or political calculus, shift gender roles at both household and community level, resulting in heavier workloads for women - be they a child, wife or grandmother.

As an organisation working to fight hunger, Action Against Hunger places gender equality at the centre of its programming. Our response must contribute to understanding the needs of both women and men, as well as their capacities and vulnerabilities in providing food for their families. Projects strive not to exacerbate gender discrimination and increase workloads, but to support equality and relief that lessens the burden of women’s “triple days”. By being a leading humanitarian actor, we can achieve this by allocating resources to women. In doing so, communities can recover from food crises and both sexes can be enabled to exercise their rights. This means looking at how and why the needs of men and women are different within the house and in the wider community, and responding coherently to these needs.

Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General called the fight against malnutrition the most crucial issue towards achieving the Global Millennium Goals and eradicating poverty. Hunger might originate in insufficient food consumption or be due to unbalanced diets, but throughout the world women are the main guarantors of nutrition - both on a domestic and community level - as they produce, prepare and distribute nutritionally balanced and affordable meals, to working in demonstration gardens attached to the centre. In these gardens, women are taught how to successfully grow nutritious food and methods of food storage and conservation to help provide food access throughout the year. As residents in Action Against Hunger’s therapeutic feeding centres, women are also taught essential skills to improve nutrition within the home. These range from nutrition demonstrations using local foods to prepare nutritionally balanced and affordable meals, to working in demonstration gardens attached to the centre. In these gardens, women are taught how to successfully grow nutritious food and methods of food storage and conservation to help provide food access throughout the year. This kind of education enables women to be more independent in managing the nutrition and health of their families, thus preventing further morbidity and mortality.

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Health educators and community health workers trained by Action Against Hunger address cultural practices which result in poor family health care, including child malnutrition. This can be done by simply helping women understand their natural cycles, methods of family planning and simple messages about treatment of common symptoms such as diarrhoea and fever. Home visitors and health workers in the feeding centres educate mothers around myths surrounding breastfeeding and infant feeding practices. In Sudan, for example, it is a common belief that if the husband resumes marital relations, or if the mother becomes pregnant again, the baby will die if breastfeeding continues. This can lead to an early cessation of breastfeeding and malnutrition in young babies. In some countries, cultural dietary beliefs prohibit women from the consumption of highly nutritious foods or restrict their access to them, leading to malnutrition in the family, with the mother often the most affected.

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food to their families. Working with communities, Action Against Hunger must look at women not only as the “mother and carer of everybody” but pay close attention to their needs and trust them in their knowledge. Family nutrition is a joint venture that should include men and women equally. Promoting women’s control of resources should go alongside improving their access to formal and informal education.

In providing a catalyst for change to unequal gender relation due to hunger, humanitarian work must keep in mind that the household is both the place of incredible solidarity as well as a space where the worst level of inequality and discrimination can take place.

In attempting to provide a catalyst for change to unequal gender relations due to hunger, humanitarian work must keep in mind that the household is both the place of incredible solidarity as well as a space where the worst level of inequality and discrimination can take place.

Gender needs to be seen not as an additional factor, but as the core of our programmes. As women are the main provider of food, the solution to hunger ought to be found in consultation and participation with women.

“Men cannot care for children like mothers do… We worry because of the insecurity in the country. Men may be away or are drinking… so no one will be there to pick up the child when we need to run away.”
Mother in Gulu, Uganda 1999

Footnotes

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Our nutrition programmes are aimed at evaluating, preventing and providing treatment of acute malnutrition for the most vulnerable people, especially children and women. Action Against Hunger pioneered the therapeutic milk formula that is now widely used in the treatment of severe malnutrition.

Food security

Fighting against hunger is much more than distributing food. Action Against Hunger combines emergency relief with programmes that help develop dependable sources of food and income. By providing seeds, tools and training programmes for income-generating activities such as farming, gardening, animal breeding, fishing and food conversation, we help communities regain their self-sufficiency, thus encouraging long-term sustainability.

Water and sanitation

Water is one of the best weapons against hunger. Action Against Hunger provides access to safe drinking water by tapping springs, drilling wells and installing water systems.

Where we work

ACF International Network delivers programmes in around 40 countries worldwide.