

**“FEMINIST APPROACHES:
DELIVERING A HUNGER-FREE WORLD”**

**WOMEN DELIVER
2023**



INTRODUCTION



Hunger is on the rise - According to the *2023 Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC)* thus far, **more than a quarter of a billion people face acute levels of hunger**. External shocks (conflicts, pandemic climate crisis, Ukraine war etc..) and systemic injustices (social/gender) frame the fragility of the existing global food systems.

In 2023, acute food insecurity reached an alarming level with nearly 258 million people in 58 countries/territories that were in crisis or worse acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above, or equivalent) - up from 193 million in 53 countries/territories in 2021. **More than 40 percent of the population** in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above or equivalent in the GRFC resided in **five countries/territories** - the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nigeria (21 states and the Federal Capital Territory - FCT) and Yemen. Besides, in 30 of the 42 major food crises analysed in the *GRFC 2023*, **more than 35 million children under 5 years** of age suffered from wasting, with 9.2 million of them severely wasted (the most lethal form of undernutrition and a major contributor to child mortality). **The global food crisis has worsened the undernutrition situation of adolescent girls and women** whose livelihoods, income and access to nutritious food have been disproportionately affected by conflict, climate change, poverty and other economic shocks, including that of the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020 ([UNICEF, March 2023 in the GRFC](#)).^[1]

Gender inequality is a major cause and consequence of hunger and poverty. It shapes food dynamics at the household and community level - women, girls and other marginalized people are significantly disadvantaged in their access to and control over food, from production through to consumption.

Women and girls are over-represented among people who are food insecure, because they are often denied basic human rights - such as the right to own land, access to decent work, education and health services. If women and other marginalized people had the same access to productive resources as men, yields on women's farms would increase significantly, and food insecurity would be substantially reduced. Moreover, bridging this gap would put more resources in the hands of women and strengthen their voice within the household - a strategy proven to have multiplier effects on the food security, nutrition, education and health of their children.

Thus, gender equality is a precondition for ending hunger and is a foundation for an effective humanitarian response and sustainable development.

Action Against Hunger wants to engage in working towards dismantling patriarchal power structures, promote feminist leadership and approaches and power sharing as key to achieving our vision of a world free from hunger. At the Women Deliver Conference, Action Against Hunger calls upon Governments and donors to improve their policies and humanitarian frameworks to uphold the rights of women, youth and marginalized communities who are most impacted by hunger in patriarchal structures of society.



OUR APPROACH

Action Against Hunger believes that gender equality is an intrinsic human right and an end in itself, addressing gender inequality is particularly essential to Action Against Hunger because it is also a major cause and consequence of hunger. All human beings regardless of gender, should be free to develop their abilities, receive an education, access decent work, and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, rigid gender roles, identities or discrimination.

Over the next five years, the Action Against Hunger has committed to continue strengthening our evidence-based advocacy and focus on developing numerous and diverse partnerships and coalitions to take on a bolder approach to public engagement that challenges the injustice of hunger.

In order to achieve gender equality, Action Against Hunger believes that we must address the root causes of gender inequality and take a transformative approach in addition to meeting practical needs. This requires us to take steps to empower individuals, transform gender and power relations, to support gender equitable structures, systems, fairness and justice in the distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between women, men and gender diverse people according to their respective needs. This includes challenging patriarchal structures, norms, privilege and power through solidarity and collaborative work with feminist organizations. Thus, Action Against Hunger recognizes that community driven approaches, collaboration and long-term partnerships are critical in the journey to empower women and girls, transform gender relations and build gender equitable systems.

HOW ACTION AGAINST HUNGER WORKS TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN COMMUNITIES:

- Action Against Hunger and its partners respect an equitable gender approach and create specific conditions for programmes and activities to benefit women and youth.
- We give women, in our programmes as much as in decision-making bodies, a strong and legitimate voice.
- We advocate to reduce women's workload to achieve better nutrition. Indeed, The health of women and adolescent girls is closely linked to the physical and mental health as well as nutritional status of their future children. Thus, in order to break the intergenerational vicious cycle of malnutrition, it is fundamental to integrate nutrition and health interventions (both physical and mental), such as family planning, micronutrient supplementation and pre- and post-natal care, the management of mental health disorders in minimum health services, and the improvement of personal and environmental hygiene.
- We give women the means to be leaders and actors of change by developing their capacities and accompanying them to do so.

EXAMPLE OF CHAD:

- In Chad, Action Against Hunger works with local women's organizations to raise awareness of menstrual hygiene and create pads, particularly in schools, places of worship and health facilities. Action Against Hunger works with a training center that offers certified training in the manufacture and sale of washable sanitary pads, so that the women who benefit can produce and sell the pads and sanitary kits to Action Against Hunger which distributes them free of charge. Moreover, Action Against Hunger facilitates the inclusion of a chapter dedicated to menstrual management in the school curriculum, and the training of teachers on the subject.
- **MORE INFO** → [Hygiène et santé menstruelle : quand les règles accentuent les inégalités \(actioncontrelafaim.org\)](https://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/hygiene-et-sante-menstruelle-quand-les-regles-accentuent-les-inegalites)

OUR KEY DEFINITION

- **Our definition of Feminist Approach:** A feminist approach means committing both to an outcome (the advancement of the rights of men, women, boys, girls and people of all genders and identities), but also to a process (our ways of working, our program design and implementation, our policy and campaigning, and the values which underpin our decisions as employees and leaders).
- **Our definition of Gender Equality:** Equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between people of different genders. It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between men, women and gender diverse people and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It is about recognizing diversity and disadvantage to ensure equal outcomes for all, and therefore often requires women specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities. Gender equality does not mean erasing gender differences, but that people's rights, responsibilities and opportunities are not dependent on their gender.
- **Our definition of Gender Transformative Approach:** Gender Transformative approaches, policies and programs seek to explicitly challenge and change harmful gender relations to promote equality and achieve program objectives by:
 1. examining power differences, intersecting inequalities and gender roles, norms, and dynamics;
 2. recognizing and strengthening positive intersectional gender norms that support equality and an enabling environment for change;
 3. promoting the relative position of women, girls, and marginalized groups (rather than simply improving their condition);
 4. transforming the underlying social, legal and economic structures, policies, and social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.

A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH RECOGNIZES THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY WITHOUT EXPLICITLY CHALLENGING POWER AND PRIVILEGE (PATRIARCHY), AND THAT A FEMINIST AND RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IS NEEDED TO MAKE SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS.



THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS NEED TO BE TAKEN

Denial of access and control over productive and financial resources combined with the burden of unrecognized and unpaid care work deprive women of the money, time and energy to properly care for under-nourished children, thus feeding the intergenerational circle of under-nutrition. Whilst assigned gender roles in patriarchal societies unfairly put the burden of under-nutrition on women and girls during the initial 1,000 days of a child's life, the lack of equal rights for women and girls prevent them from coping with such a responsibility. As momentum is galvanized for the 2023 *Women Deliver Conference* bringing together thousands of decision-makers including governments, civil society, the private sector and international agencies:

WE ASK:

- By 2025, Governments develop and implement policies that prioritize the economic equality of women by **1)** guaranteeing their control and ownership over financial & productive resources and **2)** adopting and funding social protection policies and programs that reduce, recognise and redistribute unpaid care work.

Gender-based violence and lack of sexual and reproductive health rights fuel undesired and early pregnancies. In the absence of essential services such as health, WASH, psychosocial support and social protection programmes, women and girls are let down by their Governments to care for undernourished children. Thus, ensuring universal access to these essential services, such as recognizing Sexual and Reproductive Health rights as essential services and integrating into all relevant policies and plans (including contraceptive, antenatal care, FP, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH), safe abortions service) for women and girls in all their diversity, LGBTQI+ people, vulnerable groups and key populations, indigenous people, refugees, migrants is necessary:

WE ASK:

- By 2025, Governments and donors integrate gender transformative approaches within WASH and health policies, especially in humanitarian frameworks, and end legal barriers to the full realization of sexual and reproductive health rights.



Trauma related to physical or sexual violence experienced by women can have an impact on their nutrition and health. Loss of appetite, loss of will to feed herself or her family is a common symptom of depression. When a breastfeeding mother is traumatized it can affect her ability to breastfeed. After a violent trauma many mothers do not produce milk and are unable to meet the needs of their children, weakened they are more likely to suffer from hunger and undernutrition^[2]. Sexual violence can be used as a weapon against civilian populations in the context of conflict. Again, this violence is particularly targeted at women:

WE ASK:

- By 2025, Governments and donors put in place survivor-centered policies and humanitarian frameworks that tackle gender-based violence and provide a full package of support to GBV survivors, including in conflicts.

Lack of women's meaningful participation in decision-making at all political levels means their needs and struggles go unnoticed when in fact the facts are very clear: women and girls are the most impacted by hunger as a result of institutionalized discrimination:

WE ASK:

- By 2025 Governments put in place policies to facilitate meaningful participation of women in decision-making at all levels, including in peace-building processes, and the voice of women, youth and marginalized communities is amplified ahead of relevant nutrition security political moments.





ZOOM ON THE LINK BETWEEN UNRECOGNIZED AND UNPAID CARE WORK/HUNGER

According to the *World Food Programme*, **almost 4 billion people rely on agrifood systems for their livelihoods**, half of them are women prevented from realizing their potential as they are held back by inequality and discrimination, marginalized and denied agency, working in poorer conditions and with lower wages, carrying a greater burden of unpaid work.

Unrecognized and unpaid care work, often accumulated with straining and poorly paid income generating activities, leaves women with too little time and energy to perform proper hygiene and nutrition care practices, leading to malnutrition. Indeed, women's obligations **prevent them from practicing exclusive breastfeeding**, leading them to wean their children too early and/or to have inappropriate breastfeeding practices.

Additionally, the impact of unrecognized and unpaid care work, and its interconnectedness with poverty, has a direct consequence on **women's mental health**. This negatively affects women's care practices; knowing that children with depressed mothers have been proven to face a greater risk of malnutrition, delayed growth and infant mortality^[3].

In this context, States have the responsibility to relieve caregivers, especially women, of unrecognized and unpaid care work by **recognizing, redistributing and reducing the care work they perform**.

The importance of this paradigm change is reflected in *Sustainable Development Goal* target n°5.4: "*recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies (...)*". The effective implementation of the human right to social protection, through the development of universal social protection floors^[4], which will **help transform assigned gender roles and inequalities** by recognizing, reducing and redistributing poor women's unpaid care work, is a priority. By redistributing wealth and recognizing the economic value of care work through basic income security, social protection counterbalances the economic inequality women face; and by reducing the amount of care work of women and redistributing it from poor households to institutions through affordable essential services, universal social protection floors counterbalances gender inequalities.

● **READ OUR POLICY BRIEF** → [Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work through universal social protection.](#)

^[1] [Global Report on Food Crises 2023 | Food Security Information Network \(FSIN\) \(fsinplatform.org\)](#)

^[2] [Genre et faim : pourquoi les femmes sont elles plus touchées par la sous-nutrition ? \(actioncontrelafaim.org\)](#)

^[3] Action Against Hunger – International, (2009). *Policy on mental health and childcare practices*. Paris. p. 5, 7

^[4] Defined by the ILO's *Social Protection Floors Recommendation n°202*, unanimously adopted in 2012.

CONTACT

Tanit IGLESIAS ZAYAS - Country Office: France
Gender and Protection Advisor
tiglesiazayas@actioncontrelafaim.org

Rozana MAJUMDAR - Country Office: United States
Technical Advisor - Gender Transformation
rmajumdar@actionagainsthunger.org

Léa CROS - Country Office: France
Advocacy Analyst - Rights and Essential Services
lcros@actioncontrelafaim.org

Yvonne TAKANG - Country Office: Senegal
Regional Advocacy Advisor
ytakang@wa.acfspain.org

actioncontrelafaim.org

