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The food crisis and the impact on women and girls

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Meeting with UN Women Executive Board

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Agenda

The Context

for identifying gender dimensions in
food security and nutrition

1



The Recipe

for addressing food insecurity
by overcoming gender inequalities

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The Analysis

for assessing gender inequalities
that curb Zero Hunger





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1. The Context

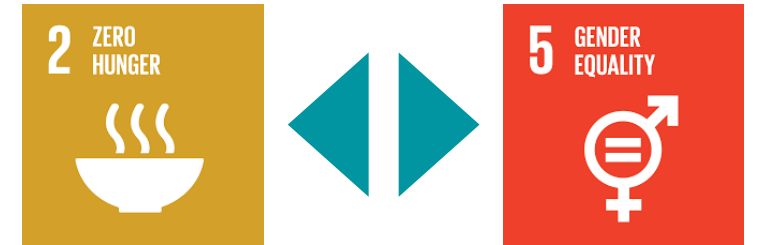
for identifying gender
dimensions in food security
and nutrition



The nexus between gender equality and food security

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) **policy domains often remain disconnected:**

- FSN objectives are rarely reflected in gender-related policies
- GEWE concerns are often missing in FSN policies



Why?

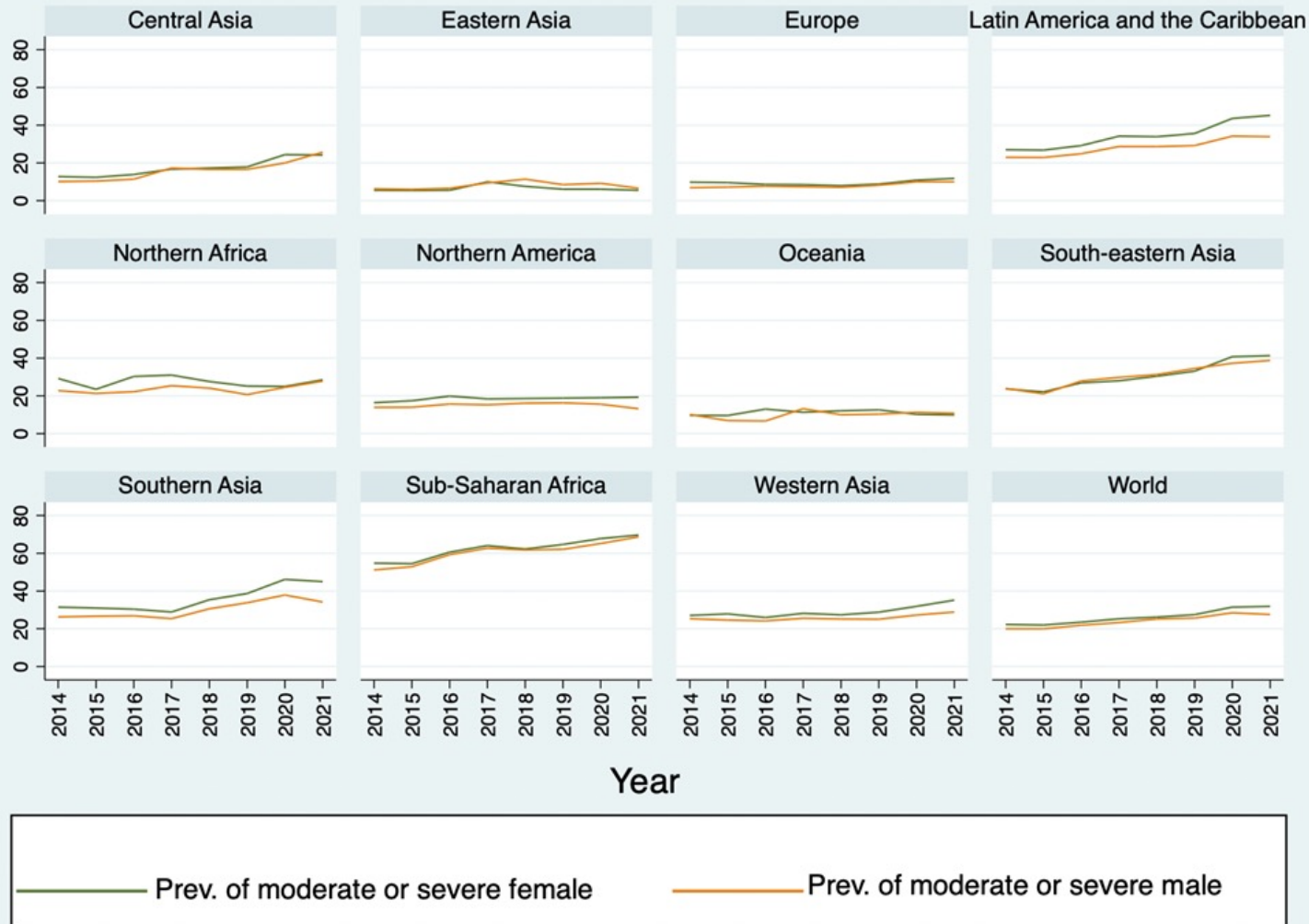
- Rural **women's contributions to FSN are often invisible and undervalued** at household, community and national levels
- Technocrats may have **limited understanding** of how gender inequalities affect FSN outcomes within their sectors
- Ministries, institutions and stakeholders working on GEWE may have **limited engagement** in FSN policy processes
- **GEWE issues are often underestimated**, and thus may appear as irrelevant in FSN policy debates and governance mechanisms
- **Reliable GDD** are still lacking to inform policies, programmes and investment plans in the agrifood sector

Where do we stand in FSN

- **Hunger**: Between **702 and 828 million people** were affected by hunger in 2021 – about 150 million more since COVID-19.
- **Nutrition**: Nearly **3.1 billion people** could not afford a healthy diet in 2020. This is 112 million more than in 2019, reflecting factors like the COVID-related increases in consumer food prices.
- **Anaemia**: Globally in 2019, nearly **one in three women aged of 15-49 years** (571 million) were affected by anaemia, meaning **no progress since 2012**. Anaemia affects more women in rural settings, in poorer households and without formal education.
- **Obesity**: A study on 10 DHS surveys (men and women aged 20–49 years located primarily in Africa and Asia) shows that the average obesity prevalence rate was **13.8% for women and 4.9% for men**. The rate was higher for women in all countries, regardless of urban or rural setting or household wealth.

Food insecurity affects women and men differently

Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in 2014-2021



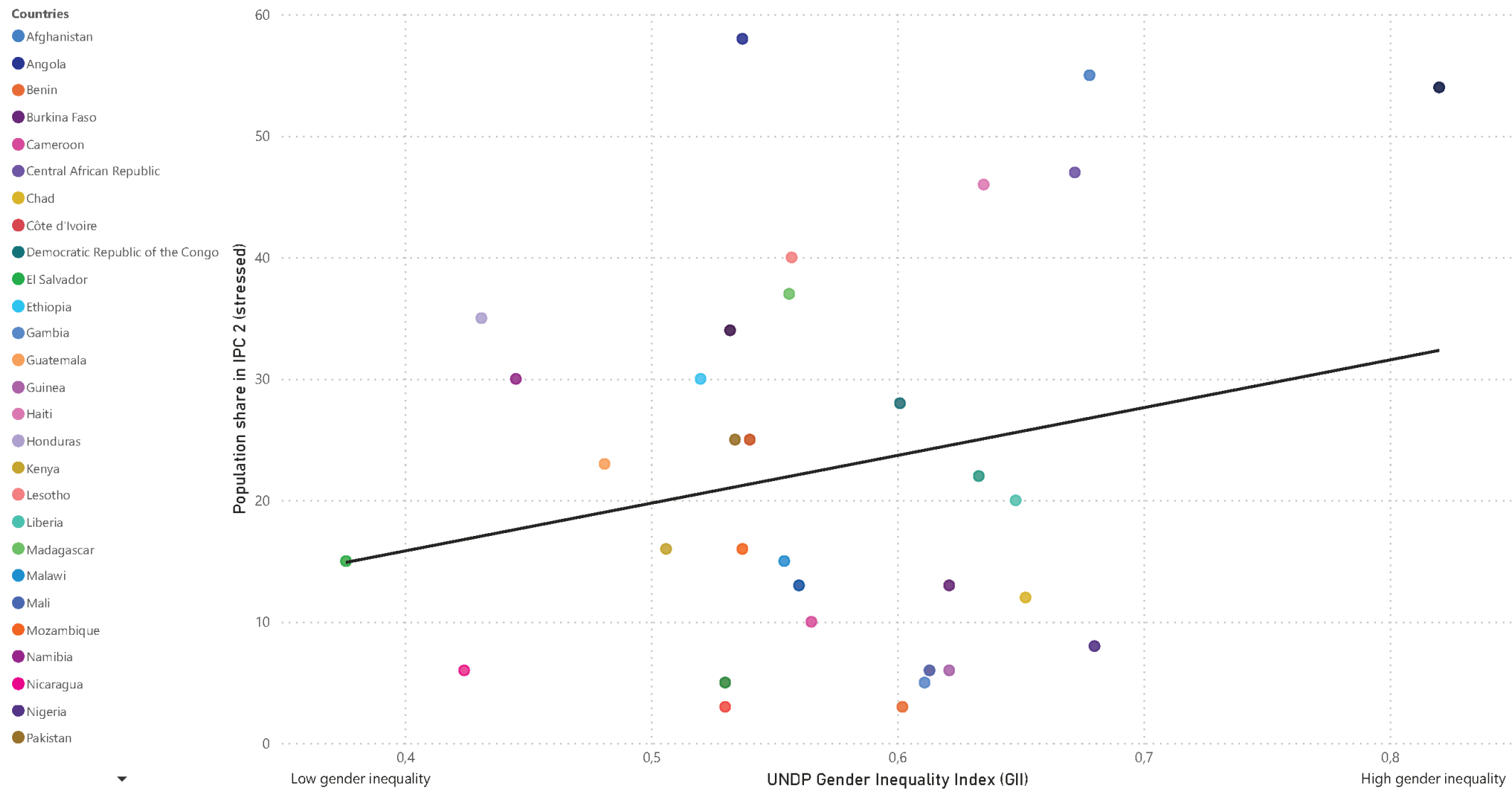
Main takeaways:

The **gender gap** in food insecurity widened further in 2021, driven largely by Latin America and the Caribbean and Southern and Western Asia.

In 2021, the gap reached **4.3 percentage points**: 31.9% of women being moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6% of men. The gap was **3% in 2020, and 2% in 2019**.

Source: FAOSTAT 2022

UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) and Population share in IPC 3 or above



GII is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. A low GII value indicates low inequality between women and men, and vice-versa.



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2. The Analysis

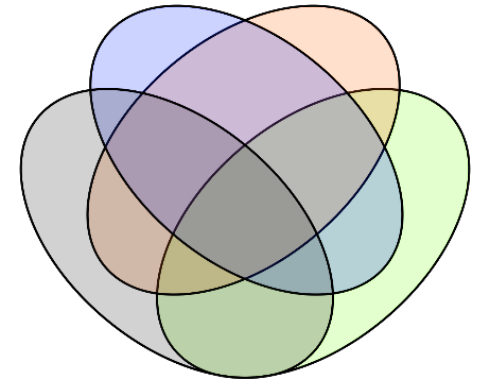
for assessing gender
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Hunger



Food insecurity and intersectionality

Findings from FIES research on 500,000 people worldwide in 2014-2021:

- **Women and rural areas are more likely than men to be food insecure**, and the gender gap is significantly higher in rural areas.
- Even after **controlling for income, education and demographic characteristics**, women are still more food insecure than men, indicating that factors such as **access to resources and gender norms** continue to hinder their food security.
- **Income and education** play a fundamental role to reduce food insecurity.
- **Women aged 35-64** years are significantly more likely than those in the age groups 15-34 and 65+ to be food insecure. The number of children in the household increases food insecurity, while the number of adults in the household reduces food insecurity.
- Similar results apply for **severe food insecurity**, with the exception that **urban households** are more severely food insecure after controlling for income, education and demographic characteristics. This suggests that the extreme poor in urban areas may be less resilient to hunger than those in rural areas.









Lessons about gender gaps in hunger and crises







(Holmes et al 2009; Quisumbing et al 2011; Botreau & Cohen 2020; FAOSTAT 2022)

- **Women tend to be disproportionately** affected by health and economic crises in terms of food and nutrition insecurity, diseases, extra work burden, and economic hardship.
- **Women have fewer options to overcome crises** and face more risks than men of losing their assets or formal jobs.
- **Price spikes have particularly negative effects on female household heads** because:
 - They face labor market discrimination, which confines them to informal, vulnerable and casual employment
 - They often receive less pay than men doing the same work
 - They usually spend a higher share of their income on food than male household heads
- In their households, **women often have less money to spend on food**, which impacts children and other dependents.
- **Tackling gender inequalities** is key to revert the reality that:
 - more **women** are affected by anemia
 - more **babies** are born with low birthweight
 - more **children** are malnourished

Weak gender focus of previous crisis response mechanisms

(Botreau & Cohen 2020)

What	Gender focus?
 Initiative on Soaring Food Prices	No mention of gender inequalities or specific focus on women in the guide.
 Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)	Recognizes the disadvantages that women face in the food price crisis and their disproportionate vulnerability, especially to the long-term effects. The “menu of actions” recommends that “channeling food assistance via women should be encouraged and opportunities to improve program efficiency should be pursued.”
 Global Food Crisis Response Program (GFRP)	No information found.
 Purchase for Progress (P4P)	Takes a “gender transformative approach, directly focusing on women to ensure that they benefit from the project source.”
 Hokkaido, Japan G8 Summit	No mention of gender inequalities.
 EU Food Facility	Committed to a rights-based approach to support small-scale food producers, gender mainstreaming and ecological sustainability.
Feed the Future	The USAID Forward policy framework and the Feed the Future Guide, which support FTF operations, emphasize gender equality. The policy framework seeks to ensure women's engagement throughout the project cycle. The Guide makes gender a cross-cutting priority, and aims to recognize women's often unsung contributions in agriculture, rights to resources and needs as food producers.

 L'Aquila, Italy G8 Summit	Only one mention of women farmers as food security actors.
 Reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)	Makes “Gender, Food Security and Nutrition” a pillar of CFS work. The Committee urged member states to undertake policy reforms to ensure gender equality in achieving the right to adequate food and nutrition, and to include women in food security decision making at all levels. It also asked member states to produce gender-disaggregated data.
 GAFSP	Directly supports achievement of SDG 5, encouraging gender equality. Beyond increasing productivity and linking farmers to markets, GAFSP's sustainable agriculture interventions have an impact on gender equality issues, such as women's agricultural empowerment, job creation on and off the farm and the enhancement of women's and girls' nutritional status.
 Agricultural Action Plan	Mostly gender-blind, with a single “add women and stir” line in the action plan: “Focus on the ultimate client, especially women.”
 Agricultural Marketing Information System (AMIS)	Gender-blind: does not address gender issues, and evaluated by FAO as “neutral” on gender, with no specific gender component or strategy.
 Grow Africa	No mention of gender.
New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa	Weak on the recognition of women's rights and women's empowerment.



3. The Recipe

for addressing food insecurity
by overcoming gender inequalities



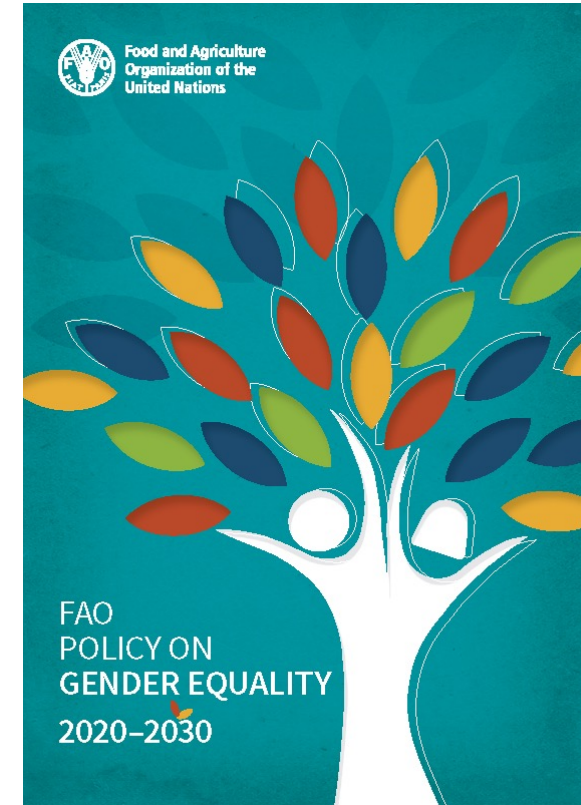
Where shall we set sights on

Policy goal:

Achieving equality between women and men in sustainable agriculture and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty

Approach:

- Applying a **twin-track strategy**: (i) gender mainstreaming to respond to the different needs, interests and capacities of women and men; and (ii) targeted programmes and projects for women's empowerment
- Adopting **transformative approaches** to address the root causes of inequality
- Recognizing **multiple social dimensions beyond gender** (age, ethnicity etc.) that can exacerbate inequality (intersectionality)
- Protecting women and girls against the risk of **different types of violence**





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Thank you!



**Inclusive Rural Transformation
& Gender Equality Division (ESP)**