



2019 Josh Estey/CARE

## Right to Food, Water and Nutrition

An estimated 690 million people around the world do not have enough food to eat. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically increased the most severe cases, and is projected to have nearly doubled the number of acutely malnourished people to 265 million as of the end of 2020. Emergency response and food aid are critical in many circumstances, but our ultimate goal must be to lessen the frequency, severity, and impact of devastating emergencies. We must support increased resilience in the face of a changing climate, and enable each country to sustainably meet food and nutrition needs. That's why CARE focuses on long-term global food and nutrition security programs that support the ability of farmers and families to sustainably grow, buy, and access nutritious and adequate food.

### The Problem

Addressing global hunger is a complex problem requiring a comprehensive approach that sustainably addresses all aspects of hunger and malnutrition, from immediate emergencies to long-term food and nutrition security needs. This includes making sustainable improvements in global food systems.

Inequality shapes who has access to food and the resources to grow and buy it. It determines who is resilient to hunger shocks and who is vulnerable. This reality is especially true for women and girls, who make up half the world's population and receive far less than their fair share of the world's resources, and who often eat last and least. Poor nutrition early in a child's life permanently impairs physical and cognitive development, often creating an intergenerational cycle of poverty.

**Women and girls comprise 60 percent of the world's chronically hungry people, and often carry the burden of food production and preparation.** Small-scale farms make up nearly 85 percent of the world's farms, and the majority of small-scale producers are women. Yet they frequently lack equal access to markets and resources, such as land, credit, and training.

Small-scale farmers – particularly women – are especially vulnerable to changing weather patterns, such as flooding, high temperatures, and drought. They grapple with poor quality soil, small plots, depleted fish stocks, water scarcity, lack of diverse foods in markets, or low incomes. Nearly 70 percent of the planet's land is degraded and 90 percent of the world's fisheries are fully- or over-fished.

CARE's decades of work in food and nutrition security have shown us that we must focus on women and small-scale farmers while protecting the planet's resources.

## The Solution

We have the solutions to address the needs of today's global food- and nutrition-security challenges. We need to tackle these problems with the right tools in both emergency and long-term food security contexts, setting families and communities on a path toward sustainability, success, and independence.

Equality for women food producers while addressing women's nutritional needs must be at the center of any strategy to adequately address global hunger.

**In fact, if we achieved gender equality for women farmers, we could reduce the number of hungry people globally by up to 150 million.**

When we empower women with the right tools and education, women farmers are better able to respond to and prepare for times of uncertainty and achieve long-term food and nutrition security for themselves and their families. Eradicating hunger and malnutrition also requires enabling hungry people to grow or buy adequate nutritious food themselves.

The Global Food Security Act (GFSA) was signed into law in 2016 and reauthorized in 2018. This historic bill resulted in the first comprehensive U.S. government global food-security strategy, which included a focus on the important role of women small-scale farmers to address global hunger. But, as this law is implemented, more work needs to be done to ensure that programs are transparent and include a focus on women, nutrition, sustainability, and resilience. When this legislation is reauthorized in 2023, it should include expanded focus on gender, support for women smallholder farmers, and a multisectoral food-systems approach to combatting malnutrition.

CARE advocates for transparent programs that empower small-scale farmers and women to increase their resilience, gain access to nutritious food, and sustainably produce food now and in the future. Continuing – and strengthening – these programs is critical to reducing hunger and poverty.

## Next Steps

CARE advocates to protect and improve comprehensive U.S. food- and nutrition-security programs that empower the world's poorest women and their families to realize their right to nutritious food, while promoting equality and sustainability.

### CARE urges the U.S. Government to:

- Ensure that President's Budget Request and FY22 regular and supplemental appropriations include robust funding for emergency and long-term global food-and-nutrition-security programs, including \$300 million for the nutrition subaccount while preventing any cuts to these critical programs.
- Strengthen USG global food- and nutrition-security programs and sustainably eliminate hunger through greater focus on supporting women and comprehensively addressing malnutrition.
- In 2023, Congress should pass and President Biden should sign into law a new version of the Global Food Security Act (GFSA) which includes a strong focus on gender, support for women smallholder farmers, and a multisectoral approach to addressing malnutrition.
- In 2023, Congress should pass and President Biden should sign into law a new Farm Bill which supports international food-aid programming, particularly ensuring continued flexibility to allow NGOs and implementers to provide cash, vouchers, in-kind food aid, or whatever modality of aid works best to help as many hungry people as possible in any context.
- In 2021, both the Nutrition for Growth and UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) will provide opportunities for the world to come together to address global hunger and malnutrition. The US should play a leadership role in both of these summits and provide strong funding and policy pledges, such as emphasizing a multisectoral approach to fighting hunger, better integrating gender into food security and nutrition programming and increasing support for women smallholder farmers, in order to mobilize ongoing global efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition.