



# When Women Flourish... We Can End Hunger

## KEY MESSAGES IN THE 2015 HUNGER REPORT:

- Support the post-2015 sustainable development goals, including goals to end hunger, extreme poverty, and gender inequality.
- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by hunger and poverty because of discrimination.
- The public at large and the faith community in particular can play an important role in changing laws, policies, norms and behaviors that are harmful to women and girls.
- The U.S. government should:
  - Support the post-2015 goals for the world, including a goal and plan to end hunger in the United States.
  - Prioritize gender analysis in all U.S. global health and development programs to expose and address the inequalities that women and girls face.
  - Make the Ambassador for Global Women's Issues a permanent position and lead the development of a government-wide action plan to advance the status of women and girls.
  - Enforce existing anti-discrimination laws where the U.S. government has jurisdiction and promote the enforcement of laws wherever it has influence.
  - Eliminate the wage gap between men and women in the United States and support women's ability to work.

## Introduction

### *Women's Empowerment: A Moral Imperative*

Discrimination against women is a major cause of persistent hunger. Discrimination is reprehensible and also makes the effort to end global hunger so much more difficult. Women are the primary agents the world relies on to fight hunger. In developing countries, most women work in subsistence farming, the backbone of local food security. Discrimination is the reason women are paid less than men, have lower levels of education and fewer assets, and receive little support in raising children. Thus, development policies and programs that empower women contribute directly to ending hunger.

Women's rights are simply human rights. Two generations have passed since 1948, when the international community adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration states clearly that all people are equal and should be treated equally. Today, most national constitutions prohibit discrimination—yet a chasm exists between what nations say in documents and what policymakers do to eliminate the factors that allow gender discrimination to continue.

Powerful forces perpetuate gender discrimination—including norms, values, religious beliefs, and laws. It is past time to take a more comprehensive, holistic approach to women's empowerment. Change begins with each person, each community and all levels of government recognizing their role

in ending discrimination. It will take policy changes but also changes in social and cultural norms. Because of their reach deep into communities, faith institutions and development organizations can be an urgent voice for change.



If female farmers had the same access to productive resources as male farmers, agricultural output in developing countries would increase by **2.5 to 4 percent.**<sup>2</sup>

## Chapter 1

### *Bargaining Power: The Basics of Empowerment*

Neither women nor men living in poverty have much economic bargaining power—that is, an ability to negotiate favorable economic outcomes for themselves—especially in developing countries, as the vast majority of people do low-paying, low-productivity work. Even within the constraints of poverty, however, working conditions for men and women are far from equal: women suffer many more forms of discrimination, which worsen the effects of poverty on their lives. Discrimination that establishes and reinforces women’s lower status in society starts within the family and extends through community customs and national laws.

Chapter 1 focuses mainly on rural women who are engaged in subsistence farming as either smallholders or landless laborers. Greater control of their income and assets would increase their bargaining power in both the household and the market economy. We explain why and how agricultural development assistance should promote the establishment of more producer groups led by women. When women organize to work within groups, they are better able to overcome the gender discrimination they experience as individuals. Because farming is something both husbands and wives do, mixed-gender producer groups also present an excellent opportunity to lessen gender-based imbalances in power.

In addition to the inequalities resulting from a lack of economic bargaining power, women and girls face other forms of discrimination that lead to systematic underinvestment in their well-being from the very beginning of their lives to the end. This chapter also examines national social systems—such as health care and education—that can help redress these inequities and strengthen women’s bargaining power, as well as how U.S. development assistance can contribute to building the capacity of these and other national institutions vital to ending discrimination against women.



Crystalline Randazzo for Bread for the World

Each year, there are more than  
**14 million new child brides**—  
**39,000 PER DAY.**<sup>3</sup>

The United States is  
**one of only seven nations**  
not to ratify the Convention on  
the Elimination of All Forms of  
Discrimination Against Women.<sup>4</sup>



## Chapter 2

### *The Care Gap: Reducing Gender Inequality in the Realm of Unpaid Work*

Caregiving is vital to the social and economic development of all societies. The development of a nation’s human capital—the productivity and creativity of its workforce—is a direct result of the care that children receive. Yet caregiving is taken for granted because it is seen as women’s work. Chapter 2 argues for collecting more data about women’s care responsibilities, a better accounting of the value of caregiving, and for “care-sensitive” policies that

remove barriers to women’s empowerment.

Care responsibilities drain many national economies of their female workforce. Market-based activities account for only one-third of women’s work in developing countries, compared to three-quarters of men’s. The gap is widest for workers between the ages of 25 and 49, when childcare responsibilities make it difficult for women to continue their paid work.

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draw to a close in December 2015, advocates are organizing to ensure that the issue of unpaid care work remains front and center in the post-2015, post-MDG development framework that is now emerging in global negotiations. “Recognize, reduce, and redistribute” is a veritable mantra of top advocacy priorities. Care is a public good in the same way that education, clean water, clean air, and a safe food supply are all public goods. Every country should measure and thus recognize the amount of time women and men spend on unpaid care work. Public services can reduce the amount of unpaid care work women do by taking on a greater share of the responsibility for providing it.

But improvements in public services are not enough—caregiving duties must be divided up so that no one has to do more than her or his fair share. Unfortunately, women’s willingness to share men’s breadwinning responsibilities has not been matched by men’s willingness to share unpaid caregiving responsibilities. Redressing the inequality will require public initiatives that lead both men and women to examine and challenge their perceptions of what an equitable division of labor looks like. Equally important, public policies should not, consciously or unconsciously, reinforce and strengthen stereotypes that force men into breadwinner roles and women into caregiver roles. Men stand to gain from closer family ties as well as from women’s increased earning power.



## Chapter 3

### *Collective Voice: Reaching Critical Mass for Women's Empowerment*

Social norms determine who has a voice in society. When the norm is for women to be excluded from decision making, then they will have little say over policy formation that is in the best interest of everyone. Chapter 3 considers how women's collective voice in politics and civil society can promote gender equality, remove barriers to women's empowerment, and bring an end to hunger and extreme poverty.

Women are grossly underrepresented in government decision-making bodies nearly everywhere in the world. They are half the global population but hold an average of just 22 percent of seats in national parliaments. The MDGs set a target of 30 percent representation by the end of 2015, but the world is clearly nowhere close to reaching it. Progress has been slow for a number of reasons: discriminatory laws, underinvestment in women's human capital, traditional beliefs and social norms that cast doubt on women's capacity as decision makers, and a highly inequitable burden of unpaid care work.

Post-conflict periods are typically where we see women's share of political power increases suddenly. Post-conflict reconstruction, an unsettled but peaceful time, is an opportunity to redress previous gender inequalities. The collaborative leadership style and conflict resolution skills of many women are assets that countries are belatedly beginning to recognize. Chapter 3 looks at post-genocide Rwanda, the only country where women hold a majority of seats in parliament.

More than 80 countries—including Rwanda—reserve a share of seats in parliament for women. India's Gram Panchayats (village governing councils) use these set-asides to ensure that women are represented in local government. In a country the size of India, a nationwide institution that brings more women into government deserves attention. Do women govern differently from men? While this question is clearly too broad to have one definitive answer, researchers have found, for example, that women on India's village councils place greater emphasis than men on some social services—particularly education and also clean water and sanitation. The Gram Panchayats are discussed in this chapter.

Beyond government, we also look at how women are acting in civil society to overcome discrimination. In Chapter 1, we considered how producer groups can give women the “strength in numbers” they need to increase their economic power. In Chapter 3, we consider how women can lift their voices collectively in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to influence policy. In Cambodia, women garment workers have organized to protest low wages and unsafe working conditions, sometimes working together with men and sometimes—when they find that men marginalize their female coworkers—without them. In Malawi, young men and women, better educated than their parents' generation and more open to working together, struggle to make their voices heard and their priorities for their country known. Chapter 3 includes case studies from each of these countries.



ILO/Livingston Armytage



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

## Chapter 4

### *The Feminization of Hunger and Poverty in the United States*

Gender discrimination is a major cause of hunger and poverty in the United States. In order to reduce hunger and poverty in our country, we must identify and adopt policies that help eliminate entrenched and interconnected sexism and racism.

In our 2014 Hunger Report, *Ending Hunger in America*, Bread for the World Institute offered a comprehensive plan to end hunger here at home by 2030. That plan is the backdrop to this report. While this chapter assumes and incorporates all of the elements in the plan, here we zero in on gender discrimination and institutions that can work against it.

This chapter focuses on how some of the same issues discussed earlier—lack of bargaining power, unpaid care work, insufficient political representation—apply to the United States. As in all other countries, women in the United States are paid less than men. They struggle to balance work and caring for their children with too little help from their partners and their government. Policymakers undervalue their experiences and

their opinions on policy matters, at least partly because they are proportionately underrepresented in government.

As in the rest of the report, the focus is on low-income women, those most vulnerable to hunger and poverty. Unfortunately, this is not a small group. One in every *three* people in the United States spent part of the Great Recession in poverty. For most it was a short-lived experience, others cycled in and out, and still others were stuck there. It doesn't take long for hunger to harm body and soul, and it is completely unnecessary for this to happen to anyone in the United States.

## Conclusion

### *Let Women Flourish*

As a deadline for the MDGs approaches at the end of 2015, from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, to “people on the street” in Baku, Bogota, Bamako, and Bangkok, there are calls for the post-2015 development framework to be more ambitious—to set out to *end* extreme poverty, *end* hunger and malnutrition, and *end* preventable child deaths. Women and girls are essential to achieving this vision.

As the international community prepares to launch a new set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) to succeed the MDGs, this is a critical moment to set a transformational agenda to finally achieve equality for women and girls. Early in 2015, negotiations on the SDGs begin in earnest. The next set of goals must include stand-alone goals to end extreme poverty and hunger. They must also include a stand-alone goal to end gender inequality and empower women.



UN Women/Ashutosh Negi

We will not end hunger and poverty by 2030 without ending the discrimination that women and girls face day in and day out. Civil society organizations, churches, and faith-based organizations in every country are well placed to make the connections between ending hunger and poverty and women's empowerment. They can help change social and cultural norms and practices that are harmful to women and girls. They can speak out against gender-based violence. They can pave the way for the SDGs to be embraced and supported by everyone. Now is a unique moment in history to stand up for women and girls. It is not only the just and right thing to do—it is essential to ending hunger and malnutrition.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS BY ISSUE

### Economic empowerment:

- Target the agricultural sector to reach the greatest number of poor and marginalized women and girls.
- Certify women's rights to own and control property regardless of marital status.
- Provide all women and girls adequate health care and ensure that births and pre- and postnatal care are attended by skilled health providers.
- Engage men on the value and benefits of women's empowerment and girls' education.
- Strengthen and enforce laws against child marriage and gender-based violence.

### Unpaid work:

- Challenge male and female stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequalities and discrimination.
- Recognize the economic and social value of unpaid care by counting it as work that contributes to economic output.
- Share care responsibilities more equitably between men and women in a household and between the state and families.
- Reduce the burden of unpaid care by investing in labor-saving technology and infrastructure; social protection and cash transfers; and child care and early education.

### Voice and participation:

- Make it easier for women to run for public office at all levels of government.
- Increase the proportion of women peace negotiators.
- Create more space for women-led civil society groups to participate in public policy debates.
- Build a generation of women leaders in government and civil society, especially young women.

### Women's empowerment in the United States:

- Set a goal and develop a plan to end hunger in the United States as part of the post-2015 global development goals.
- Eliminate the wage gap by sex and race, enforce anti-discrimination laws.
- Support women's ability to work by raising the federal minimum wage to a livable standard, protecting collective bargaining rights, mandating paid sick leave and family leave, and providing high-quality, affordable child care with sufficient public and private funding.
- Eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing and support reintegration of returning citizens.
- Reduce poor maternal and child health outcomes by making affordable health care available to all.
- Promote practices and norms that share care responsibilities more equitably between men and women.
- Increase women's representation in public office and other decision-making bodies critical to building a more just and equitable society.

# THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF U.S. ASSISTANCE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AROUND THE WORLD

*Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX 12th District) and Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY 17th District)*

Women deserve the tools to achieve a better life in every society. While this is a singularly worthy cause, empowering women also enables healthier, more stable populations and economies. When women and girls receive a quality education, their health outcomes improve and they acquire skills to work and strengthen their communities. When women participate more fully in their economy, their children go to school, their



Rep. Kay Granger

families thrive, and they gain a meaningful voice in civic decisions. When women assume governmental posts, they champion free institutions and equal opportunity.

There is no greater force multiplier than empowered women. In developed and developing countries alike, from conflict zones to refugee shelters, when we make women's rights and opportunity top priorities, we stand a much better chance of defeating intolerance, poverty, disease, and even extremism. That is why as the Chair and Ranking Member of the U.S. House of Representatives' Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, we have worked hard to help women from all walks of life, in all regions of the world.

We have seen the positive impacts first hand. We have met girls in Pakistan, whose thirst for knowledge was instinctive. They understood that schooling was the key to a better life, and that they could do more, and be more. Women in Mexico who survived unspeakable abuse at home found safe shelter and a fresh start, and overcame the violent forces surrounding them to build a better future for themselves and their daughters.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, the first female African head of state, is one of the most inspiring women we have met. President Johnson Sirleaf received a liberal arts education here in the United States and upon returning to a land that had been horribly ravaged by war and corruption, committed herself to restoring stability and hope for future generations.

We have mandated that the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International

**“U.S. assistance supports partners who strengthen protections for women’s political status, expand women’s participation in the democratic process, and increase women’s leadership opportunities.”**

Development integrate gender considerations in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of many foreign aid, health, and development programs. U.S. assistance supports partners who strengthen protections for women's political status, expand women's participation in the democratic process, and increase women's leadership opportunities in the public and private sectors and at the local, provincial, and national levels.



Rep. Nita Lowey

These initiatives have resulted in progress on gender issues in our ongoing work in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as programs to empower women and women-led organizations both economically and politically around the world.

Funding for international education is an essential priority because it is virtually impossible for a country to achieve long-term economic development without a literate populace. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram understand this reality and are fixated on preventing access to education, particularly for girls. Educated and productive young adults better protect themselves from poverty, disease, and hunger, and are much more likely to turn away from

extremism, making basic education, especially for girls, a national security priority—in addition to a moral imperative.

Empowering women is essential to help address many of the greatest challenges we face today—from the outbreak of Ebola and other diseases, to instability and poverty in various regions. With the responsibility for the implementation and oversight of U.S. foreign assistance programs, we remain committed to smart U.S. investments that give women throughout the world opportunities to improve their own lives and those of their children as well as their communities and societies as a whole. We will continue striving to make a difference for women so that, together, we can build the world we want for ourselves, for our daughters, and for future generations.

*Rep. Granger is the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, and Rep. Lowey is the subcommittee's Ranking Member.*