



Women and WFP

Helping Women Help
Themselves



World Food Programme





In the Hands of a Woman

Experience has shown that in the hands of women, food is most likely to reach the mouths of **children in need**.

The majority of WFP's beneficiaries are women and children. In many parts of the world, such as Asia and South America, more women than men are **chronically hungry**.

But women are also the **secret weapon to beat hunger**. In some countries there are more women farmers than men. And they are most often the ones who prepare food for the whole family.

Women are the key to improving household food security and nutritional wellbeing.



Providing the Right Food at the Right Time

WFP puts women – mothers, girls and adolescents – at the front and centre of efforts to fight malnutrition, especially in the critical first 1,000 days.

We now know that malnutrition in the first two years of life, starting in the mother's womb, can lead to irreversible damage to children's minds and bodies. WFP nourishes children and adults through the whole life cycle. It's an investment in the next generation.

Malnourished mothers are more likely to die in childbirth. And mothers who were undernourished as girls are 40 percent more likely to give birth to children who do not survive to age five. This is called inter-generational undernutrition.

Undernourished children are more likely to get sick, have trouble concentrating in school, and when they grow up, they often earn less money. So WFP targets its food interventions to reach pregnant women and mothers of small children to make sure they get the right food at the right time.

Using Special Products

We have scaled up the use of special products specially designed to boost nutrition in the under-tuos. We use vitamin-packed peanut pastes, for example, and *Wawa Mum*, a locally-produced chickpea product developed by WFP, to fight and prevent malnutrition.

1,000 days *plus* The Power of School Meals

An extra year of primary school boosts girls' eventual wages by 10 to 20 percent. An extra year of secondary school: 15 to 25 percent.

WFP's school meals and take-home rations provide an incentive to families to send their girls to school and to nourish them while there. A hungry girl finds it difficult to concentrate, is unable to learn or may not even be able to go to school because she has to stay at home to do housework. She may have to work to help her family eat.

School meals and take-home rations help keep girls in schools, and lower dropout rates. Keeping adolescent girls in schools gives them a better education and contributes to raising the age at which they marry or have children.



Fatuma's Story



NAIROBI — Fatuma could have been married at fifteen. She could have been like most Somali girls, who never get a secondary education. She could have stayed in the refugee camp where she grew up, helping her mother fetch water and firewood.

But Fatuma Omar is no ordinary girl. She grew up in a one-room shack and went to school in Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp. But she came top in exams and won a scholarship to Kenya Girls' High School in Nairobi.

"When I complete my secondary education, I want to go to university, and in university I want to do medicine. I want to be a doctor," she says.

Fatuma remembers the WFP school meals she ate at break-time. "We used to drink porridge in class, and it helped us. You find yourself hungry, and you are in class, and you have lessons to revise and do all that stuff. In Dadaab you depend on that food," she says.

Fatuma's mother, Jama Salat, encouraged her daughter to go to boarding school rather than marry.

"It was me taking care that she should not marry," she says. "If she studies something, she can first help herself and then help her mother. Because ignorance means darkness."



WFP Helps Women Farmers



WFP/Susannah Nichol/Afghanistan

Women are responsible for almost half of the world's food production and in some developing countries they make up 60 percent of the agricultural labour force.

Yet women receive only a fraction of the credit made available to the agricultural sector. They get fewer tools and less training.

Adding Value

Working with partners, WFP supports women farmers by providing seeds, fertilizer, access to finance, markets and support for processing – which gives products added value.

WFP encourages women to cultivate kitchen gardens to increase the range of foods their families eat, or vegetable gardens to increase their income and grow food for use in school meals programmes.

A mother works in a vegetable garden in Chuquisaca, Bolivia, as her child looks on. In rural areas, almost 80 percent of Bolivians live below the poverty line and 90 percent suffer from micronutrient deficiencies.

WFP supports women to help diversify diets and improve nutrition for the whole family.



WFP/Boris Heger/Bolivia

Purchase for Progress (P4P)



Purchase for Progress is an innovative initiative that supports smallholder farmers – particularly women – by helping them become competitive players in the market place.

Under P4P, WFP buys agricultural produce from farmers at a fair price and encourages smallholders to increase and improve the quality of production.

As the largest humanitarian agency in the world, WFP purchases food for distribution in its assistance

programmes and increasingly it is buying from small farmers. The P4P pilot in 21 countries seeks to turn WFP's local food procurement into a tool for working on long-term solutions to hunger and poverty.

WFP programmes and initiatives, like P4P, are designed with women in mind, to make sure they are involved and have a voice.

Juana's story

WFP/Tobias Bauer



"We are no longer subsistence farmers – we are now simply farmers! Now, we do business," says Juana de los Angeles de Cabrera, a smallholder farmer from El Salvador.

Juana, 38, grows maize and beans for a living on a plot of 1.4 hectares. The mother of three is a member of the AGRISAL farmers' association, which was selected to be part of the Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative in 2009.

Almost half the smallholders in the area are women, as many men have migrated to the city, looking for work.

Through P4P, Juana received training at a Farmers' Field School. She got credit and bought fertilisers to increase the yield on her maize crop. She and her association were able to sell grain to WFP for use in school meals and food distribution programmes.

"With P4P, we saw the benefits of selling a cleaned and graded grain. We learned how to dry, clean and fumigate it to improve its quality, and we obtained a higher price," she says.

"I was able to buy more food for my family and also save money for the inputs required for the next agricultural season."

WFP's Gender Policy

An evaluation of WFP's Gender Policy found that: "Unlike many United Nations and donor agencies, WFP [has gone] beyond rhetoric to require specific, strategic actions at the operational level. This resulted in increased visibility and inclusion of women, and laid strong foundations for gender mainstreaming."

Gender equality is not merely socially desirable: it is critical to the reduction of poverty and hunger and it is linked to the achievement of WFP's strategic objectives. WFP seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Gender Policy commits WFP to:

- Continue providing food assistance for pregnant women, nursing mothers, children under five and adolescent girls
- Continue making women the food entitlement holders
- Continue facilitating the participation of women in food distribution committees
- Continue improving access to education and reducing the gender gap in schools.



WFP/Micah Albert/Yemen

WFP believes its mission can only be achieved if women, men, girls and boys are equal in terms of opportunities, access to resources and services, and participation in decisions.

When Disaster Strikes

During sudden food crises, women, children and babies can become quickly malnourished.

Research has shown that more women die than men as the direct and indirect result of natural disasters. One study found that during a disaster, women and children were 14 times more likely than men to die.



Photo: AFP Photo/Arif Ali

Empowering Women

WFP is dedicated to lifting women out of food insecurity. Beyond emergency food assistance, where WFP is saving the lives of women every day, there are many programmes, worldwide, that empower and protect women and girls.



Food for Work and Food for Training

In Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, women work at sewing machines as part of a food-for-training programme for displaced people. Food for Work and Food for Training provide food rations to women in exchange for work that benefits their communities.

Investing in women is an investment that will pay dividends for generations to come.

SAFE Stoves

Many women cook food in smoky environments where indoor air pollution harms their health. They spend hours collecting firewood away from home, exposed to the risk of sex attacks or other hazards.

Fuel-efficient stoves are being used in places like Haiti, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda as a powerful way of ensuring women are protected and able to cook nutritious meals at home. The initiative is known as SAFE (Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings).



Cash and Vouchers

WFP uses innovative ways to deliver assistance, such as cash transfers for food or electronic "e-vouchers" delivered by mobile phone.

In Syria, Iraqi refugees receive a text message on their phone which acts as an electronic food voucher. They can exchange all or part of it in selected shops for a range of food items, including fresh foods such as cheese and eggs.

Women and Hunger: 10 Facts

1 Women make up a little over half the world's population but in many parts of the world, especially in Asia and South America, they are **more likely to go hungry** than men.

2 Following natural disasters, **women and girls suffer more** from shortages of food.

3 Research confirms that putting more income **in the hands of women** yields beneficial results for health, education and child nutrition.

4 Closing the gender gap in agriculture by **giving women farmers more resources** could bring the number of hungry people in the world down by 100 – 150 million people.

5 Surveys in a wide range of countries have shown that women provide 85 – 90 percent of the time spent on **household food preparation**.

6 Women in Africa work an average of **50 percent longer** each day than men.

7 Worldwide, for every 100 boys out of school there are 122 girls. But in some countries the **gender gap** is much wider. For every 100 boys out of school in Benin there are 257 girls, in Yemen 270 girls, in Iraq 316 girls, and in India 426 girls.

8 **Educated mothers** have healthier families. Their children are better nourished, are less likely to die in infancy and more likely to attend school.

9 Around half of all pregnant women in developing countries are anaemic. Iron deficiency causes around 110,000 **deaths during childbirth** each year.

10 Malnourished mothers often give birth to **underweight babies** who are 20 percent more likely to die before the age of five. Up to 17 million children are born underweight every year.



WFP/Rein Skulerud/Pakistan



WFP/James Mollison/Kenya

Our Fight Against Hunger

WFP's increasing focus on women has led to new initiatives such as Women4Women and the Women's Empowerment Fund. These aim to harness the natural link between the women WFP helps overcome hunger and the women who can raise money and awareness through fundraising, online activities and networking.



WFP/Veejay Villaranca/Philippines

“People often ask me, what can be done to defeat hunger? If you had all the resources in the world to end hunger, what would you do? My answer is simple: empower women, because women are the secret weapon to fight hunger.”

Josette Sheeran, WFP Executive Director



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