



Have you read section A ?

# GENDER AND FOOD SECURITY, FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND NUTRITION IN EMERGENCIES

**F**ood security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Household food security means applying this concept to individuals within the household. Activities aimed at improving national-level food security may be quite different from those directed towards improving household food security. Both national and household food security have gender implications.

Food security is multidimensional and multi-sectoral and involves many issues from food production, distribution and marketing, preparation, processing and storage to population and health, education, employment and income, nutrition, trade, services and infrastructure. It consists of four main dimensions: availability, access, utilization and stability/vulnerability. Women, girls, boys and men each have a special role in ensuring food security.

**Acute food insecurity** in emergency situations differs from chronic food insecurity. Most emergencies happen in situations of chronic food insecurity. For this reason, it is important to recognize the kind of emergency, for example sudden natural emergencies, chronic emergencies, complex emergencies and slow-onset emergencies, as responses may differ significantly. Chronic and transitory food insecurity, which is associated with the inability of households to maintain their consumption levels in the face of fluctuations, may have differential effects on women, girls, boys and men, both at the community and household levels.

### What are the gender implications of food security?

Women and men have different and complementary roles and responsibilities in securing nutritional well-being for

all members of the household and the community. Age is another important element to be considered. Women often play a greater role in ensuring nutrition, food safety and quality, and are also often responsible for processing and preparing food for their households. Women tend to spend a considerable part of their cash income on household food requirements. After a crisis, livelihood strategies of women and men may change and you should assess the new division of tasks to ensure food security and nutritional well-being for the household to design effective rehabilitation programmes. It is important for you to establish how many women and men can be helped and for how long support is needed. You should also teach women, girls, boys and men about the nutritional value of foods and how to cook them so as to support them in the new context, when they need to take up new roles.

Recognizing women's and men's distinct roles in family nutrition is key to improving food security at the household level. Underlying causes of malnutrition that must be addressed include work load, dietary intake and diversity, health and disease and maternal and child care.

This chapter looks at the three aspects: *food security*, *food distribution* and *nutrition*. We've also developed specific sub-chapters on each aspect, which detail information and actions you should take when planning and implementing gender-sensitive emergency and rehabilitation programmes and projects.

Overall food security issues, due to their multi-faceted aspects, have a number of key players involved, principal among them FAO and WFP. In the ongoing humanitarian reform, nutrition is a cluster led by UNICEF. Food distribution remains an important component of the food sector and is led by WFP.