FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, HEALTH AND GENDER EQUALITY:
Partnerships for climate-resilient sustainable development
Food and nutrition security, health, gender equality, climate change and environmental degradation, including loss of biodiversity are closely interlinked. Climate change and environmental degradation undermine the ability of people to move out of poverty and compromise their full enjoyment of human rights. This has a direct impact on the health and food and nutrition security of millions of people - particularly women and their children.

There are 925 million hungry people in the world and three quarters of all hungry people in the world - some 700 million - live in rural areas. Half of them are farming families, who survive of marginal lands or holdings too small to support their needs, while the other half are landless families dependent on farming, herding, fishing or forest resources, as well as the urban poor. Food and nutrition insecurity and ill health are associated with poverty and gender inequality: 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls. Furthermore, globally and with few exceptions, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men for every indicator for which data are available.

CRITICAL FACTORS TO COUNTERING THESE CHALLENGES:

- Women's empowerment, engagement and transformational leadership play a critical role in the shift to sustainable and resilient development pathways that ensure global health, food and nutrition security and prosperity. Increasing women's access to and control over productive resources would enable them to increase yields on their farms, leading to increased incomes. Research indicates that an increase in women's incomes translates into improved child nutrition, health and education.

- A climate justice approach with an emphasis on protecting human rights, participation, transparency and accountability, together with investments in social safety nets and in sustainable livelihoods, can make development more inclusive and equitable.

- Integrated strategies are needed to address the interlinked issues of food and nutrition security, health, gender equality, climate change and environmental degradation.

Stakeholders in the different fields have identified successful strategies for addressing the challenges that climate change and environmental degradation pose to food and nutrition security and health. But there is a tendency to address these issues through siloed approaches, which reduces their effectiveness and impact. The future we want should ensure that these strategies are integrated and addressed from a gender and human rights perspective. This calls for effective, transparent and results-oriented partnerships working together to achieve equitable and climate-resilient sustainable development.
Ensuring health and food and nutrition security is essential for poverty eradication and climate-resilient sustainable development. This requires a gender-responsive and human rights approach. By ensuring that women have the same access to productive resources as men, women could increase yields on their farms by 20 percent to 30 percent; this could reduce the number of hungry people worldwide by 100 to 150 million. The integration of these key issues through strong partnerships is fundamental in the context of RIO+20 and the post-2015 MDG agenda. Responding to such an agenda cuts across sectors and demands multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society.

Eradicating hunger and ensuring food and nutrition security requires a focus on the rural and urban poor. The post-2015 MDG framework should address the needs of poor and food insecure people by ensuring their access to adequate food at all times through nutrition- and gender-sensitive safety nets; strengthening their access to land, water and other productive assets; building their capacities for sustainable agricultural intensification in the face of multiple natural resource challenges and climate change; enabling them to market their produce on more favorable terms; assisting them to reduce the amount of food they lose post-harvest; strengthening their ability to find economic opportunities off the farm; and supporting them to use the locally produced food they have to improve the nutritional status of all family members. They need to be protected from food price volatility and empowered to manage risks and shocks.

Health is a pre-condition as well as an outcome of all three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic). Human health is directly affected by environmental degradation and climate change, undermining the right to health. Promoting universal access to health care and healthy environments (including water and sanitation, clean air, etc.) can significantly minimize these impacts. The promotion of health co-benefits of greenhouse gas mitigation policies in sectors such as energy, transport, food and agriculture, water and housing will reduce the adverse effects of climate change on health. Health indicators can bolster accountability for the social impacts of development policies, contributing to governance for sustainable development. Food policies should also consider nutrition and health as an outcome, including communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Gender equality and equity are fundamental to achieving climate-resilient sustainable development. Addressing the gender dimensions of climate change and environmental degradation and their impacts on health and food and nutrition insecurity is fundamental to effective development strategies. This entails examining how socially constructed gender roles influence men’s and women’s power in making decisions as well as their access to the resources necessary for adapting to or mitigating climate change. In addition, supporting women’s empowerment can enable communities to manage the natural resource base more sustainably, to adapt to climate change and to achieve sustainable development. Fundamental to women’s empowerment is the improvement of their access to education, information, land, technologies, credit, social protection, and resilient health systems. Women’s participation and leadership in climate change decision-making at the local, national and international levels can contribute to the appropriateness and effectiveness of policies. It will result in ensuring that women’s needs are addressed in the policies and also that their knowledge is used to address the challenge of a changing climate.

Multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholders’ partnerships are critical to promoting synergies and reaching common goals on food and nutrition security, health and climate change in the context of RIO+20 and the post-2015 MDG framework. Key priorities must be to protect and build human and social capital, focusing on education, social protection and capacity building; to protect and uphold human rights and to adopt a climate justice approach to these linked challenges; to address gender inequalities and to socially and economically empower women; to support civil society organizations so that they can better interact with the public and private sectors and more effectively engage in policy dialogue with governments; and to build government capacity for joint planning across ministries and sectors. This also requires aligned donor support for cross-sectoral programming and implementation among UN agencies and other stakeholders.
About this policy brief

This policy brief is one of the main deliverables of the event on “Partnerships for the integration of food and nutrition security, health and gender equality to achieve climate-resilient sustainable development”, at the Partnerships Forum at the Rio+20 Conference. The brief provides key recommendations on the integration of food and nutrition security, health and gender equality with a view to RIO+20 and the post 2015 MDG agenda.

The policy brief has been developed by the Public Health Institute (PHI), World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice (MRFCJ), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN).

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