

Women and girl's empowerment in SUN Countries

Women play a decisive role in the food security, health and nutrition of their families and this should be taken into account in the design and targeting of all food security and nutrition actions. While the determinants of good nutrition and health are complex, there are several areas where changes to policy, legislation and planning can play a critical role in empowering women to act as key agents of change for improved nutrition. These include:

- protecting girl children from early marriage and pregnancy
- safeguarding and increasing women's access to, and control over, incomes and other resources
- exploring innovative approaches to reducing women's time constraints
- enhancing women's understanding of good nutrition
- increasing women's involvement in decision making at all levels.

The importance of eliminating child marriage and adolescent pregnancy is key to ensuring every girl and woman can reach her full potential. Being a child mother slows and stunts the growth of a girl. It reduces education potential and future life opportunities – such as employment. Evidence shows that child mothers and their newborn children have increased risks of complications and mortality.¹

The role of women as small holder farmers and food producers is also critical. Women make important contributions to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the world – with women comprising at least 50% of the labour force in Asia and Africa². Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities can include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. When women have more control over household resources, families are healthier, better educated, and have more access to more nutritious foods.



Empower women as key agents of change for nutrition with better policies and legislation

Protection from child marriage and pregnancy, Increasing access and control of income and resources, Reducing time constraints, Enhancing knowledge about good nutrition, Increasing involvement with decision making at all levels.



What's needed

1. Sustained political commitment at all levels of government to addressing the structural problems that prevent women and girls' human rights from being realised. Recognition of both the fundamental rights and the key role that women play in unlocking progress in nutrition and development requires more concrete action.



BEING A CHILD MOTHER...

Affects:

- Body weight
- Height growth
- Stocks of Iron
- Stocks of fat

Affects:

- Education achievement
- Work status and income
- Fertility choices
- Autonomy

Increases risks of poorer birth outcomes and higher risks of complications and mortality in mothers and children

2. A translation of this commitment into legal and policy frameworks that uphold the rights of all women and girls. This includes protection from early and forced marriage as well as access to universal education, access to drinking water, the right to non-discrimination and the right to a life free from violence. While these exist internationally their application nationally is vitally important.

3. Strong funding frameworks and accountability mechanisms are required to bring services mandated by national legislation and policy to scale. Ambitious financing commitments need to translate money into action that can be monitored. Disaggregating data by gender and age will ensure girls are accounted for. Out of the 30 SUN countries that have undertaken the 2015 budget analysis exercise, 22 SUN Countries have identified nutrition sensitive budget lines focusing on the empowerment of women.

If girls and women fall through the gaps in policy and practice, results will be severely diminished. 21 SUN Civil Society Alliances reported that they are working on women's empowerment issues. But much more must be done Movement-wide.

Women's Empowerment in SUN Countries at a Glance



Data source: 2014 UN Women Data companion

¹ 2014 World Health Statistics

² FAO. 2010a. Roles of women in agriculture. Prepared by the SOFA team and Cheryl Doss. Rome