



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

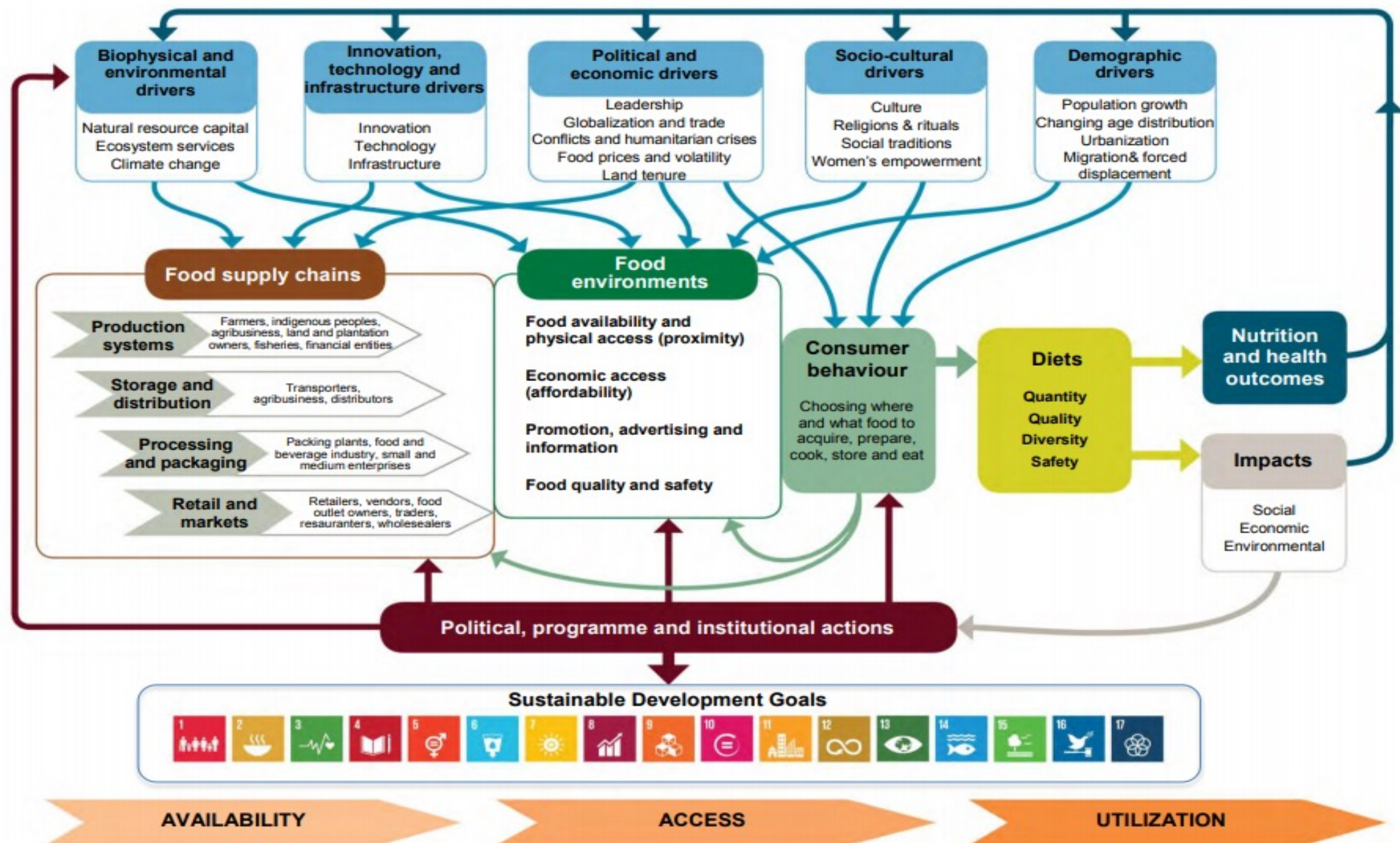


‘Improving access to nutrition-related services amongst rural women’

WHO Webinar on rural women and addressing inequities in health service coverage

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Key Facts – Gender in Agriculture and Food Systems

Women comprise **over 37% of the world's rural agricultural workforce**, a ratio that rises to **48% for low-income countries**.

Women represent close to **50% of the world's 600 million small-scale** livestock managers and fisher folk.

Rural women often have a **wealth of knowledge**.

Rural women and girls still face major **constraints**

- at a disadvantage compared with their male counterparts in their **access to essential assets, resources, services** and **opportunities**.

- Women still account for **less than 15% of agricultural landholders** in the world.
- Women in low- and middle-income countries are **10% less likely** than men to own a mobile phone and **23% less likely** to use mobile internet.
- Rural women are more likely than men to **hold low-wage, part-time, seasonal employment**.



Gender-Nutrition Nexus for Food Security and Nutrition

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- women's ownership and **control over productive assets** can increase their productivity and self esteem.
- nutrition deficiencies begin in utero.
- **immediate causes of child malnutrition** related to maternal health and nutrition status.
- **women's education and knowledge** levels on health, sanitation and dietary quality have an impact on household nutrition security, both inter- and intra- generationally.

HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

- women's **roles in food preparation, distribution, storage and childcare** can affect household food safety, quality, security and nutrition.
- **lower incomes**, especially among female-headed households, can place them at greater risk of nutritional insecurity.
- **household level access to food, intra-household food distribution patterns** are important for rural women's food security and nutrition status.

SOCIETAL LEVEL

- **lack of access to resources and services** seriously hampers women's agricultural productivity and, in turn, household food security.



Pathways towards improved maternal and household nutrition

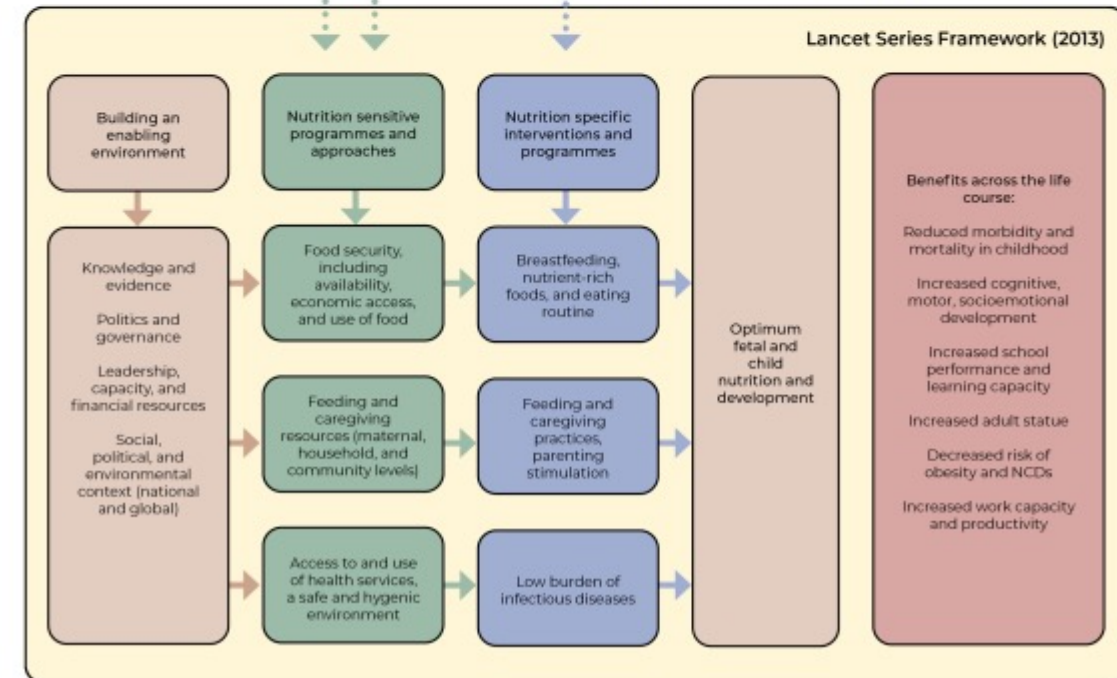
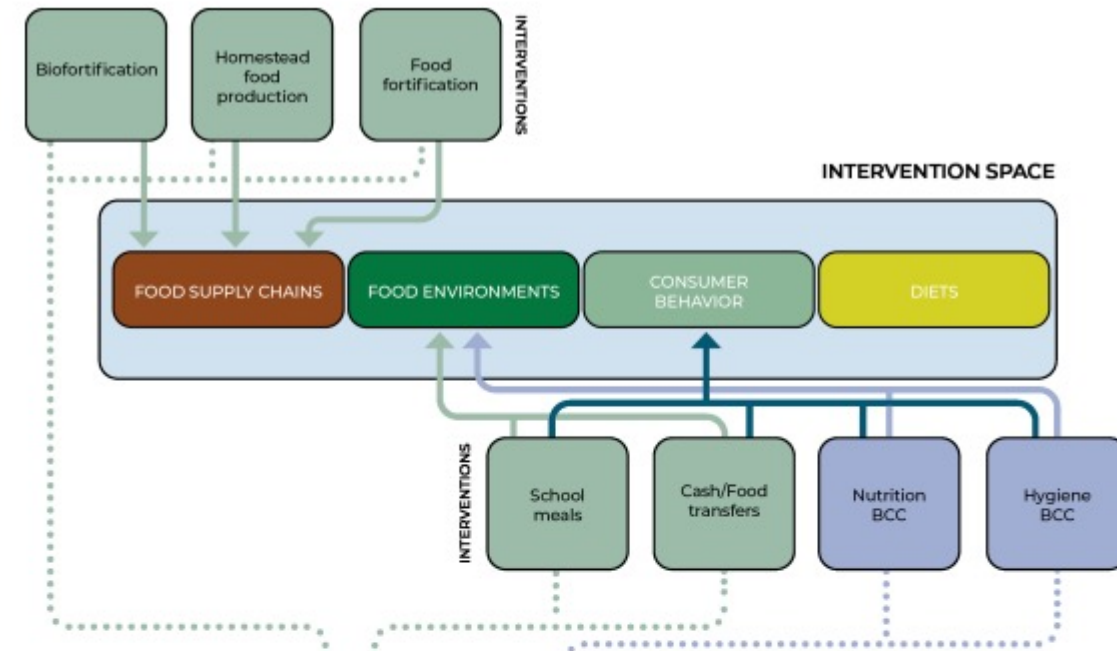
Overarching Objective: **Close the gender gap in services, knowledge, assets and collective action** faced by rural women to ensure optimal food security and nutrition at the individual, household and societal levels.

- Make **social transfers nutrition-sensitive** and **conditional** on the up-take of critical health and nutrition services (e.g. antenatal check-ups, provision of supplements)
- **Knowledge** on nutrition, diets and feeding practices.
- Rural **women's economic empowerment** through access to agriculture assets, infrastructure and technology.
- **Collective action**, such as being part of farmer producer organizations.

Nutrition Sensitive Social Programmes

- Use of specific behavioural features, such as soft conditionalities, messaging or educational nudges, to induce positive changes in women's care practices.
- Household improvements to water and sanitation facilities may result in reduced labour burdens for pregnant and lactating women.
- Places where discriminatory gender norms remain pervasive, giving benefits directly to women does not necessarily increase their ability to control the use of resources, particularly for their personal needs for food, health care and education.

Entry points for interventions using food system framework





Case study: Improving Knowledge & Skills in LAO PDR

- **Context:**
 - **chronic malnutrition** in the country stood at 40 per cent (2010).
 - women in Lao PDR were at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing assets.
- **Project Components:**
 - targeting of food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups through a **participatory situational analysis**.
 - training of women and smallholder farmers on **integrated kitchen gardens** targeted both men and women.
 - **provision of inputs** such as seeds and small animals were provided by the project.
 - introduction of **simple food-processing techniques, nutrient-rich recipes, and affordable labour-saving cooking equipment**.
- **Impact:**
 - women and men who participated in the capacity development activities **continued applying the knowledge** gained and skills acquired.
 - home-based vegetable gardening and animal-rearing programme was intended for the family's own food consumption and not for commercial purposes. However, with the **increased yield**, women started selling the surplus produce and **generating additional income**.



Case study: Territorial Markets Development from Bolivia

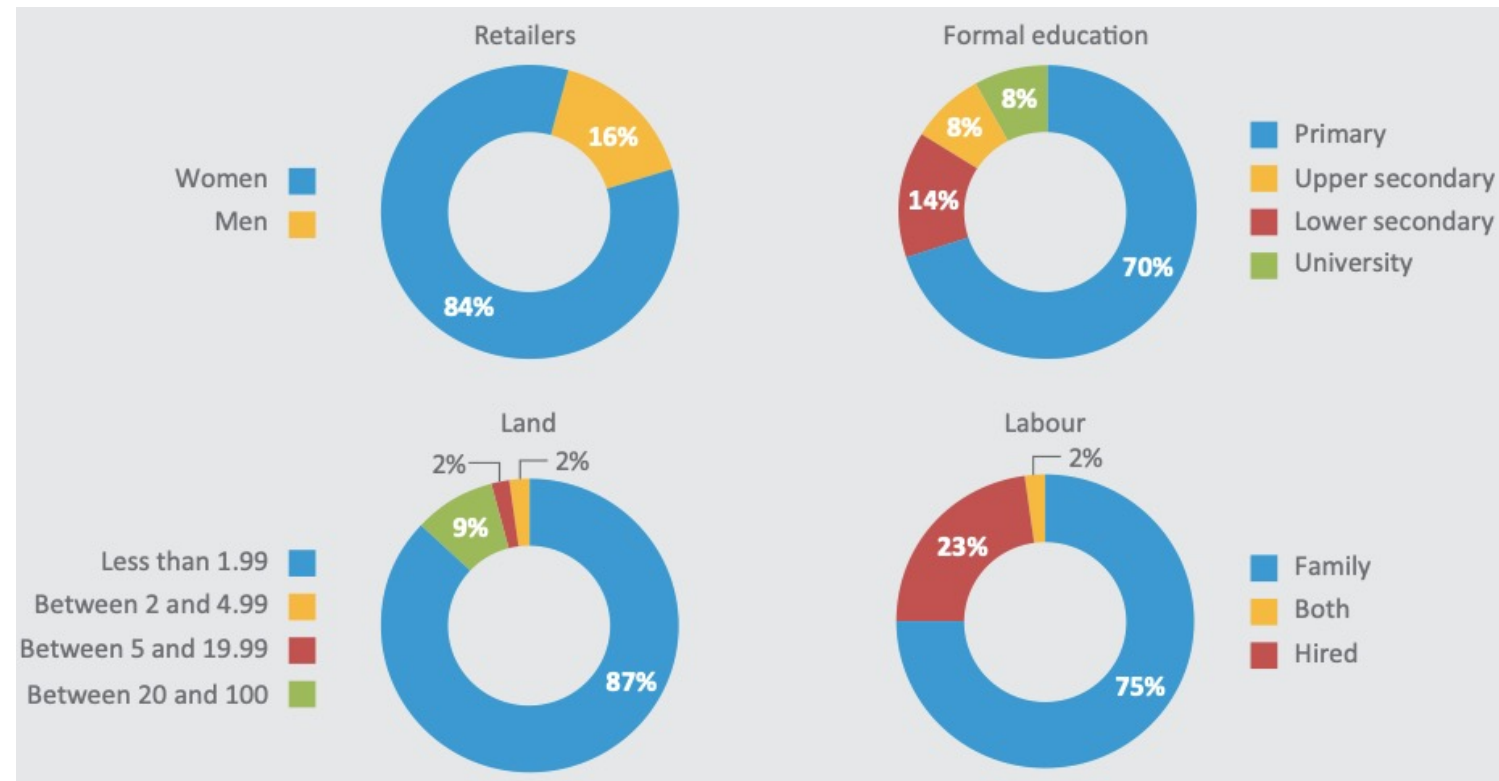
▪ Rationale:

- smallholder farmers are responsible for most of the food consumed in the world and most of the investments made in agriculture.
- vast majority of **food transactions** occur in domestic markets.

▪ Role in ensuring food security and nutrition:

- not all markets embedded in a territory are **inclusive** to all.
- **imbalances in power relations** and **access to productive resources** can exist and hinder market inclusion, especially for the most vulnerable farmers.
- **existence of well-organised producers' organisations and networks** is as vital as the existence of the market infrastructure.
- being a member of an organised group or network, such as a cooperative or a producers' organisation, enables smallholder farmers greater **opportunities for bargaining and advocacy**.

▪ Characteristics of producers operating in four organic farmers markets in Bolivia.



- **What are they:**

- informal groups of rural women and men who decide to join together on a voluntary basis to identify their common problems and solve them using local resources.

- **Countries with implementation experience:**

- West and Central Africa: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal
 - 2008 – ongoing

- **Key entry points for applying the methodology:**

- main entry point is the rural community or village.
 - rural radios stations are involved as key partners from the outset. They are used to broadcast club information and debates, and promote the sharing of experiences and networking.



Knowledge gaps

- More research is needed to measure changes across all domains of women's nutrition and generate data at the individual level.
- Despite explicit targeting of women in many agricultural programmes, few studies have measured specific aspects of women's empowerment as a pathway to improved nutrition, and results are mixed.
- Evidence is limited on how cash transfer programmes affect women's care practices during pregnancy and lactation, and their relationship with maternal nutrition outcomes.



Key Messages

- Gender equality and women's empowerment is central to achieving food security and nutrition goals and objectives.
- Women's greater vulnerability to malnutrition and food security has implications not only for themselves, but for all household members, given the key role that women assume in household access and utilization.
- Design of programmes and investments must promote coordination and coherence of activities related to gender and nutrition, community engagement, uptake and leverage the power of technology, formation of cooperatives and overall take a nutrition-sensitive approach.

THANK YOU!

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