



PROGRAM BRIEF

Achieving nutritional impact and food security



OVERVIEW An important prerequisite for improving the nutrition of women and children is food security. Households are food secure when they have year-round access to the amount and variety of safe foods their members need to lead active and healthy lives.¹ At the household level, food security refers to the ability of the household to secure, either from its own production or through purchases, adequate food for meeting the dietary needs of all members of the household.¹ Complex relationships between agriculture, food, gender norms, and livelihood impact food and nutrition security, particularly of women and children.^{2 3} That is why CARE's programming involves and empowers women in agricultural projects and prioritizes agricultural activities that both generate employment and increase the production of nutritious foods that are eaten by women and children and other vulnerable groups. Our decades of experience promoting equitable access to nutritious foods, providing knowledge of basic nutrition, and ensuring and advocating for adequate health including access to high-quality health care services and a healthy environment have helped us address this critical issue.

Malnutrition reduces developmental potential for about **200 million** children each year, leading to lower cognitive development, school performance, and lifetime earning; therefore perpetuating poverty.¹

Food security exacerbates the inter-generational cycle of stunted young women which leads to difficult deliveries, low birth weight infants, and poor maternal and fetal outcomes.



Micronutrient deficiencies are widespread throughout the developing world, where food insecurity due to extreme weather and conflict are rampant.

CARE's EXPERIENCE WITH FOOD SECURITY

Agricultural development and food security are central components of CARE's work – and CARE is a leader in a broader movement to improve responses to food insecurity. CARE offers long-standing, on-the-ground experience in promoting agricultural development and addressing food insecurity. The right to food is a critical livelihood security outcome, and is a necessary pre-condition for the achievement of other fundamental rights. CARE works to create an **enabling environment** to promote food security at the national level through political, economic, and civil society work to improve food and nutrition security for all. CARE understands that optimal health and well-being for current and future generations is dependent on improving food and nutrition security at regional and local levels.

Because social positions and gender influence people's ability to attain food, nutrition, and livelihood security, CARE works with communities to not only promote agricultural improvements, but also to remove the barriers to food and nutritional security for women, children, and marginalized groups. CARE's central focus is on helping poor and vulnerable people overcome food and nutritional insecurity and building a strong base for future generations to thrive in a sustainable way.

Addressing malnutrition and improving nutrition security is not only central to CARE's food security strategy, but also to our overall strategy to reduce poverty, promote economic and cognitive development of countries, and prevent untimely deaths.



References:

1. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.
2. Hodinott, J. (2011). *Agriculture ,health and nutrition: Toward conceptualizing linkages*. 2020 Conference Brief, IFPRI, Washington, DC.
3. Meinzen-Dick, R., Behrman, J., et al. (2011). *Gender: A key dimension linking agriculture programs to improved nutrition and health*. 2010 Conference Brief, IFPRI, Washington, DC.

CARE's approach to addressing nutrition and food insecurity

Meeting the urgent need for *coordinated* and *sustained* food security response by:

- 1) Supporting women in developing their skills in production, marketing, and feeding practices to achieve food security and optimal nutrition
- 2) Promoting local production (food security) and consumption of diverse and nutritious foods (nutrition security) through activities such as sustainable home gardens and nutritional counseling
- 3) Conducting community mobilization strategies to raise awareness and foment social behavior change around the importance of nutrition, particularly for pregnant and lactating women and infants through the first two years of life
- 4) Improving food storage and preservation to counter seasonal shortages of nutritionally adequate and diverse food stores
- 5) Advocating for support safety nets and social cash transfers to enable very poor and marginalized families to purchase nutritionally adequate foods
- 6) Advocating for and supporting the use of supplements and fortified foods
- 7) Improving access to safe water, promoting hygiene and sanitation, improving health services and access to them, and promoting timely care-seeking for childhood illness
- 8) Incorporating household food security and/or nutrition objectives into Food Security, Maternal Health, Early Childhood Development, Emergency Programming, and other CARE programs.