



## Growth is not enough

In 2022, more than [735 million people](#) in the world were hungry. That's 1 in 11 people worldwide. Relative improvements after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic are masking rapidly growing inequality. There are 84.2 million more women and girls than men and boys facing food insecurity. The [gender food gap](#) grew in many regions, including most of Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East North Africa, and Europe.

CARE's [analysis of data across 113 countries](#) suggests that improving GDP is not enough. The most recent data shows that in situations **with high inequality, economic growth can lead to higher food insecurity**, especially since COVID-19. **In 57 countries, GDP is growing AND food insecurity is rising. As gender and income inequality rise, so does hunger.**

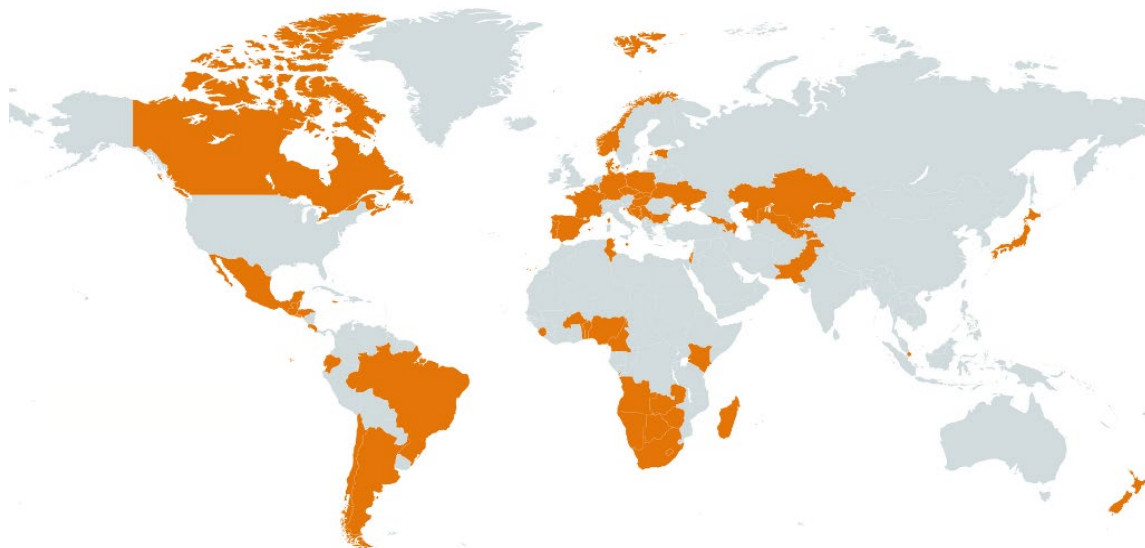


This challenges every assumption about how to solve the hunger crisis. Growth alone is not the solution.

## Why is this true?

- **When gender inequality rises, so does food insecurity.** Across 113 countries, the more gender inequality there is, the more people there are who do not have enough to eat.
- **Gender equality is even more important during crisis.** The connections between food insecurity and gender inequality got even stronger after COVID-19 than they were before the pandemic.
- **Inflation is hitting women especially hard.** Women are facing both the growth of inequality—and the loss of more than a [generation of progress towards equality](#)—and an increase in food insecurity. When less food is available, women often go hungry first.
- **Income inequality is also critical.** Gender is only one dimension of inequality. Income inequality is even more strongly connected to rising food insecurity than economic growth is. In many cases, GDP growth is concentrating wealth for the richest people.
- **Food production alone is not enough.** Domestic production of major food crops like wheat or corn does not predict more food secure countries. Neither does the supply of arable land.
- **Food systems pushed women out first in COVID-19.** [22% of women lost jobs in agriculture](#) and food systems in COVID-19, compared to only 2% of men.
- **Women get less access to coping mechanisms.** Women have [less access to loans, financial support](#), and safety nets, especially during shocks.
- **Climate change poses grave risks for food security and for gender equality.** Climate change not only impacting the [world's food supply](#)—especially in Africa and Asia, but it is also a [major threat to gender equality](#), and even to women's safety.

## Countries where the economy is growing and food insecurity is rising



### How can we solve it?

This is a problem we can solve. We must solve this problem if we hope to stem the global hunger crisis.

#### In policies:

- **Set goals for equitable economic growth.** Global strategies, national policies, and funding plans must include a target for equality in economic growth—not just for GDP growth or income improvements.
- **Incorporate Women’s Voice and Leadership in Nexus Programming:** [Programming approaches](#) for both humanitarian emergencies and long term development plans must incorporate [women’s voice and leadership in emergencies](#) to ensure that crisis response efforts also work to increase gender equality.
- **Think more broadly about change—both policies and social norms.** Policy change must be complemented by social norms change to address long term, deeply rooted causes of inequality.

#### In execution:

- **Take women seriously as farmers and economic actors.**
  - Agriculture development and extension plans must use [proven tools and approaches](#) to narrow gaps between women and men in the agriculture and food systems.
  - Private sector actors must promote [decent, equitable work in across food systems](#) and to reduce the growing [gender gap in the future of work](#).
- **Strengthen farmer resilience to climate change by setting women up for equality.** Ensure that Climate Smart Agriculture practices and technologies are also designed with women farmers and for women farmers so that CSA is not widening gender divides.
- **Address the Gender Digital Divide.** Policies and programs must rapidly act to close the gender digital divide.

#### In financing:

- **Invest in women leaders and women-led organizations.** Pay to support Women’s Rights Organizations and fund their time and expertise to design inclusive plans for promoting growth and reducing food insecurity.
- **Couple Financial Services with Digital Support Services that reach the most marginalized people.** Empowerment needs to look beyond access to finance and increased income to other areas that support growth.
- **Reevaluate your investment portfolios.** Look for investment opportunities that promote equitable, climate-smart, sustainable growth.