

Gender Equality: The absence of discrimination on the basis of one's sex in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in access to services.

Gender Equity: Fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. Women-focused interventions and programs are often necessary to end the existing inequalities.

Gender Mainstreaming: The incorporation of the concept of gender into programs and activities as a major social factor to achieve gender equality and equity in all social aspects. **Gender Sensitivity:** A mind-set where people recognize or are aware of gender-based discrimination which hinders enjoyment of human rights (equality/equity)

Gender analysis: Examines the differences in women's and men's lives, including those which lead to social and economic inequity for women, and applies this understanding to policy development and service delivery

THE LINK BETWEEN FOOD AND CULTURE

Culture in its broad sense is the way of life of a particular society. It refers to the roles, uses, position, and symbolism of individuals, ideas and objects such as food, in all aspects of a society; including beliefs, values, norms, taboos, institutions, language, rituals and art. Some cultural practices can directly or indirectly influence the food security of a given society as culture prescribes the interactions between people, between people and land, and between people and food.

FOOD (IN) SECURITY AND GENDER

- i. Access to land Ugandan society is predominantly one of the two patriarchal. Thus while women grow most of the food, they do not own the land and in some cases they have to obtain permission to access land for food production. At times women do not even have full rights to the food they produce. Cultural issues also influence nutrition since the

distribution of food and food taboos are culturally determined along age and gender lines. The household unit is usually an extended family with men having full authority in the home. Women have the primary responsibility to childcare and food production thus contributing to cash crop agriculture. Girls, mothers and boys provide the labour in the household and on the farm. Meals are prepared by women and girls, while men and boys of over twelve years are culturally precluded from entering in the kitchen. Land ownership, access to land, access to other productive resources and the organization of agricultural production are influenced by cultural practices and traditions. For example, in many ethnic groups in Uganda, rules of land inheritance and access to land are culturally determined through lineage or gender. This has an impact on food production. Communally, household and individually-owned land, all determine what is produced and how it is distributed

- ii. **Access to certain foods** In most ethnic groups, fruit is regarded as a food for children. It is also taboo for girls, women and adult men to climb fruit trees. The prohibition on girls climbing trees has its origin in the belief a girl's chance of marriage would be ruined by a fall from a tree. If a girl accidentally fell from a tree, she might get injuries or fractures that could leave life-long scars or deformation; and no groom would be willing to take a deformed or scarred bride. Thus boys climb trees and harvest the fruit, which they share with their sisters. Although this is a good cultural practice from the children's perspective, as they are able to get the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in the fruit, the practice deprives the adults of the same nutrients. In most Ugandan societies women are traditionally not allowed to eat chicken or eggs. The particular mythical belief behind this taboo varies across ethnic groups. In some groups, it is reckoned

that a woman who eats chicken or eggs will become a thief. According to others, a woman who eats chicken or eggs will never settle in her marriage but go on scratching and pecking like a chicken does all day. The explanations behind these myths, whether apparently logical or mythical, are often not well understood, even as such practices are beginning to fade with exposure to modern education.

- iii. **Sharing food gifts** Even with a wide cultural diversity there are a lot of commonalities among the different ethnicities. Eating alone is for example universally regarded as bad. For this reason, when you serve food to someone, you may have to eat with them or at least sit with them until they have finished. Also among the different ethnic groups in Uganda it is good to be hospitable and to share food. A visitor or long lost friend is usually welcomed by slaughtering an animal, in most cases a chicken. Ideally, the whole chicken is served to the visitor who then shares it with the hosts. Among the Baganda and Banyoro a visitor would first be served with coffee beans; the pastoral communities would serve the visitor milk first; while among the Bakiga a visitor is first served with obushera. Additionally, gifts of food to friends and family, especially around harvest season, are an integral part of many cultures in Uganda. Such gifts of food help balance out the distribution of food within a community, thereby improving food security.

How gender based violence affects nutrition

Women and or/ men who endure domestic abuse and sexual coercion" are more likely to be malnourished and more likely to have malnourished children

How do gender issues affect nutritional status?

- i. In crisis situations where food is in short supply, women and girls are more likely to reduce their food intake as a coping strategy in favour of other household members. This can contribute to under-nutrition among women and girls.
- ii. Because of social traditions men and boys may be favoured and fed better than women and girls.
- iii. Women may face constraints in accessing humanitarian services, including food, as a result of insecurity, cultural discrimination and limited mobility.
- iv. Women, especially those who are pregnant or lactating, may be disproportionately affected by under-nutrition due to their increased physiological requirements. Teenage pregnancy can lead to poor health and nutritional status for both the baby and the mother.
- v. While remaining the main caretakers of children and other dependents within a household, women take on additional activities to support household food security especially in situations where male heads of households are absent. This often leads to disruption in infant and young child feeding practices and reduced caring capacities.
- vi. Men who are single heads of households may be removed from their normal support structures during emergencies. If they do not know how to cook or care for young children, this will result in greater risk for under-nutrition for those children.
- vii. Single men and boys separated from their families can be at risk of under-nutrition if they do not know how to cook or access food distribution.

Women's Role in Food and Nutritional Security

- i. Agricultural interventions are most likely to affect nutrition outcomes when they involve diverse and complementary processes and strategies that redirect the focus beyond agriculture for food production and toward broader consideration of livelihoods, women's empowerment, and optimal intra-household.
- ii. Women are crucial in the translation of the products of a vibrant agriculture sector into food and nutritional security their households. They are often the farmers who cultivate food crops and produce commercial crops alongside the men in their households as a source of income. When women have an income, substantial evidence indicates that the income is more likely to be spent on food and children's needs.
- iii. Women are generally responsible for food selection and preparation and for the care and feeding of children. In rural areas the availability and use of time by women also a key factor in the availability of water for good hygiene, firewood collection, and frequent feeding of small children. In sub-Saharan Africa transportation of supplies.
- iv. In rural areas the availability and use of time by women is also a key factor in the availability of water for good hygiene, firewood collection, and frequent feeding of small children. In sub-Saharan Africa transportation of supplies for domestic use—fetching fuel wood and water—is largely done by women and girls on foot. Women expend most of their energy on load-carrying activities involving transport of fuel wood, water, and grain for grinding. Fields dedicated to food crops are often farther from home than those related to cash crops. Because women must also perform domestic tasks, they must spend a considerable amount of time travelling between their home and the fields.

Gender Roles

Division of labour by Gender.

Traditionally, women's roles were subordinate to those of men despite the substantial economic and social responsibilities of women in traditional Ugandan societies. Women were taught to accede to the wishes of their fathers, brothers, husbands, and other men and to demonstrate their subordination to men in public life. Into the 1990s, women in rural areas of Buganda were expected to kneel when speaking to a man. However, women had the primary responsibility for child care and subsistence agriculture while contributing to cash crop agriculture. Dependence on men deprives women of influence in family and community matters, and ties them to male relationships for sustenance and the survival of their children.

Male involvement in nutrition

Gender mainstreaming is "a process of assessing the implications for men and women, of any planned activities including legislation, policies and programs, in all areas as well as all levels" (UN, 1997). It involves deliberate actions to ensure that the experiences, expectations, needs and concerns of men and women are integrated in decision making; planning, programming and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs. Men, women, boys and girls have distinct roles in agriculture and livelihood production, income generation or household activities. They also face specific constraints. Understanding and taking into account these different roles helps to ensure that projects do not reinforce or exacerbate gender inequality or power imbalances. If constraints are not identified, strategies cannot be developed to overcome.

DEFINITION OF GENDER AND CULTURE

- **Gender:** Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expectations, and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for individuals based on their perceived or assigned sex. It encompasses the concepts of masculinity and femininity and how they influence the way people live, interact, and relate to one another.
- **Culture:** Culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, customs, traditions, practices, and behaviors that are characteristic of a particular group or society. It shapes the way people perceive and interpret the world around them and plays a significant role in their daily lives, including their dietary habits and nutrition.

GENDER & CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECT NUTRITION

- Food Roles and Responsibilities:** In many cultures, women are primarily responsible for food preparation and family nutrition. This gendered division of labor can affect the quality and variety of meals.
- Dietary Preferences:** Cultural norms and values often influence what foods are considered acceptable or taboo. These norms can restrict food choices and impact overall nutrition.
- Access to Resources:** Gender inequalities may limit women's access to resources like education and employment, affecting their ability to provide nutritious meals for their families.
- Household Decision-Making:** In some cultures, men have more decision-making power within households, which can impact food choices and allocation of resources.

- v. **Time and Labor Constraints:** Women's traditional roles in caregiving and domestic work can limit their time and energy for preparing balanced meals.
- vi. **Social Norms:** Cultural norms may affect portion sizes, eating patterns, and food sharing practices, which can influence nutritional intake.
- vii. **Religious and Ritual Practices:** Specific dietary restrictions associated with religious or cultural ceremonies can affect regular dietary habits and nutrient intake.
- viii. **Perceptions of Body Image:** Cultural ideals of beauty and body image can impact eating habits and contribute to issues like eating disorders.

MALE INVOLVEMENT IN FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES, FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION

- i. **Joint Decision-Making:** Encouraging men to participate in health and nutrition decisions promotes joint decision-making, leading to better family nutrition.
- ii. **Income and Resources:** When men are actively involved, they can contribute to family income and resources, enabling better access to nutritious foods.
- iii. **Nutrition Education:** Men's participation in nutrition education programs helps ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to support healthy family diets.
- iv. **Childcare and Support:** Male involvement can relieve women of some caregiving responsibilities, allowing them more time to focus on meal preparation and nutrition.

- v. **Role Modeling:** Men who actively engage in healthy eating and lifestyle choices serve as positive role models for the family.
- vi. **Community Mobilization:** Men can play key roles in community initiatives to improve food security and nutrition, such as farming or food distribution programs.
- vii. **Food Production:** Encouraging male involvement in food production, including farming or gardening, contributes to better food security.
- viii. **Advocacy and Policy:** Men's involvement in advocating for policies that promote nutrition and family health can lead to systemic improvements.

INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE WORKLOAD ON PREGNANT & LACTATING MOTHERS

- i. **Maternity Leave Policies:** Implementing policies that ensure pregnant and lactating mothers have access to maternity leave can reduce their workload.
- ii. **Supportive Partners:** Encouraging partners and family members to assist with household chores and caregiving can lessen the burden on mothers.
- iii. **Community-Based Support:** Community initiatives can provide childcare services, allowing mothers time for rest and self-care.
- iv. **Access to Healthcare:** Improved access to healthcare services can reduce the physical strain on pregnant and lactating mothers.
- v. **Educational Programs:** Educational programs can teach mothers efficient time management and self-care strategies.
- vi. **Workplace Support:** Encouraging workplaces to offer flexible hours or telecommuting options can help pregnant and lactating mothers balance work and home responsibilities.

- vii. **Nutrition Assistance:** Providing nutritious meals or food support programs can alleviate the stress of meal preparation for mothers.
- viii. **Mental Health Services:** Offering mental health support and counseling can reduce the emotional workload on mothers.

FOOD TABOOS AND NORMS THAT IMPAIR NUTRITION IN WOMEN, CHILDREN & INFANTS

- i. **Dietary Restrictions during Pregnancy:** Some cultures have strict food taboos during pregnancy, leading to nutrient deficiencies.
- ii. **Breastfeeding Taboos:** Taboos around breastfeeding in public or at specific times may discourage mothers from breastfeeding, affecting infant nutrition.
- iii. **Food Fasting and Rituals:** Rituals that involve fasting or restricting food intake can affect the nutritional status of women and children.
- iv. **Food Allergies and Sensitivities:** Some cultural beliefs may result in avoiding certain foods due to perceived allergies, impacting nutritional diversity.
- v. **Preference for Male Children:** In some cultures, male children are given preference when it comes to food allocation, potentially leading to gender-based disparities in nutrition.
- vi. **Traditional Feeding Practices:** Cultural norms regarding the introduction of solid foods to infants may not align with modern nutritional recommendations.
- vii. **Food as a Symbol of Status:** Consuming specific foods to demonstrate social status can lead to unhealthy dietary choices.
- viii. **Stigmatization of Certain Foods:** Stigmatization of certain foods can result in avoidance of those foods, leading to imbalanced nutrition.s