



GENDER AND NUTRITION META-ANALYSIS: AN ADVOCACY BRIEF

ADVANCING GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE NUTRITION PROGRAMMING

**A JOINT PROJECT WITH ACTION AGAINST HUNGER CANADA AND THE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

2021 - 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As part of the GENRP I Portfolio, in partnership with the Government of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, and in collaboration with a meta-analysis team at the University of Toronto (UofT), Action Against Hunger Canada led a multi-year meta-analysis project to explore gender in nutrition within emergencies. This work could not have been done without the expertise of the University of Toronto's dedicated team and the multiple key Action Against Hunger Canada technical staff who supported this effort.



BACKGROUND

Action Against Hunger Canada is committed to reducing gender inequality across our programs using evidence-based approaches. In collaboration with the University of Toronto (UofT), Action Against Hunger Canada led a 3-year gender and nutrition meta-analysis that explored the gendered nature of malnutrition. Through the efforts of UofT's meta-analysis team, this project uncovered critical insights into gaps and areas for 1) continued development to better address nutritional needs in global humanitarian contexts, and 2) improved technical capacity for consistent and reliable data collection related to gender in nutrition.

KEY FINDINGS

This meta-analysis examined nutrition program data from seven countries' humanitarian programming contexts for comparison against SMART survey data. Key gaps in sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) and inconsistencies across gender indicators within current nutrition monitoring frameworks were identified, specifically: 1) the limited availability of data to support the use of a robust analytical framework for gender in nutrition (e.g., GTFN); 2) a lack of standardization for gender indicators, creating inconsistency in types of metrics that are available for comparison; and 3) inconsistency in the methodologies used across countries for gender data collection, collation, and information sharing for nutrition programs. These gaps present a significant challenge in effectively identifying and addressing gender-specific nutritional needs across different country contexts – without consistency in the types of indicators used and availability of SADD program data, comparisons cannot be made.

To help identify gender-related program indicators and the availability of this monitoring data to be compared against SMART survey data, a mapping exercise was conducted to review Humanitarian Needs Overviews, Humanitarian Response Plans, and nutrition dashboards. Findings from this exercise revealed the limited availability of SADD within these global data sources. SADD

for program indicators were unreliable due to varying availability. This underscored a key global issue: a lack of consistently collected and standardized metrics for gender data, which, in turn, creates a considerable barrier to identifying needs that can be addressed through gender transformative programming.

The qualitative component of the study further sheds light on how gender roles, norms, and inequalities directly impact nutritional outcomes. Key informant interviews were conducted to delve into the possible reasons behind these discrepancies. Respondents posited a variety of context-specific drivers, including boys having increased exposure to infection, differential care practices for girls and boys, and gendered societal norms.

IMPLICATIONS

This collaboration revealed a notable absence of standardized gender indicators and a need for more robust data collection, aggregation, and interpretation to better capture the complex interplay of gender and nutrition.

CALL TO ACTION

We call on governments, NGOs, donors, and other sectoral actors to prioritize the development, standardization, and integration of gender-transformative data for nutrition programming to support the advancement of evidence-based efforts needed to achieve gender transformative programming goals and objectives. Moreover, the processes that are required to standardize key indicators for metrics and SADD protocols need to be determined.

Stakeholders need to consider what valid metrics already exist, if any relevant metrics are already being collected by MEAL systems across partner organizations, and what resources are available or are needed to identify and collect gender data in the case that existing tools and systems are insufficient. Once a program context has been reviewed and priority metrics have been identified, we recommend pilot testing the collection of gender metrics before widely integrating them into existing MEAL systems. Once field tested, data sharing is needed to support a global repository of country- and regional-level gender metrics.

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER'S ROLE

As a leader in the field of reliable nutrition data collection and analysis, Action Against Hunger is well-positioned to spearhead efforts to improve the availability and quality of gender-disaggregated data. This presents a strategic opportunity to lead the global conversation on gender and nutrition, raise awareness about the critical need for reliable gender data, and advocate for increased resources dedicated to filling these gaps. Findings from this body of work align with Action Against Hunger Canada's advocacy objectives for continued leadership and excellence in nutrition data to bolster evidence-based decision-making and meaningful efforts and collaborations to connect nutrition and gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To actively address these gaps and continue to strategically invest in Action Against Hunger's advocacy goals for continued advancement and quality in nutrition data and programming, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Develop Standardized Gender Indicators:** Action Against Hunger, alongside key partners, should champion the development of standardized gender indicators that can be incorporated into existing nutrition data collection tools. These indicators should be designed to capture the nuanced relationship between gender and nutrition outcomes.
2. **Strengthen Capacity for Gender Data Collection:** Governments and NGOs must invest in building the capacity of field staff to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data. This includes providing training on gender-responsive data collection methods, at a minimum, and ensuring that all surveys and assessments include relevant gender metrics.
3. **Advocate for Increased Funding:** Donors should be encouraged to increase investments in nutrition data including gender-disaggregated data. This funding would support the expansion of SADD and ensure that nutrition programs are better equipped to address gender inequalities.
4. **Raise Awareness of the Importance of Gender Data:** Action Against Hunger, and other key actors in the nutrition sector, should lead awareness-raising activities to highlight the importance of gender-disaggregated data. These efforts should target policymakers, donors, and practitioners, emphasizing the critical role of gender data in achieving equitable nutritional outcomes.
5. **Leverage Canada's Leadership:** Action Against Hunger Canada, along with Canadian partners such as CANWACH, has a unique opportunity to take a lead role in advocating for improved gender data within global nutrition. By building on its leadership in SMART survey methodologies, Action Against Hunger Canada can drive innovation in gender data collection and promote the adoption of standardized gender indicators globally.

CONCLUSION

To ensure that nutrition programs are truly equitable, it is essential to address the gendered nature of nutritional needs. By prioritizing the collection and analysis of gender and sex-disaggregated data, the global humanitarian community can take a significant step toward achieving gender equality in nutrition programming. Action Against Hunger is committed to leading these efforts and calls on governments, NGOs, and donors to join in this vital initiative.