

Food Insecurity in Burkina Faso: A Gendered Crisis Demanding Action

Introduction to Global Food Insecurity

Food insecurity refers to the conditions in which an individual lacks access to food that is safe, adequate, and nutritious for standard growth and development. Despite gradual progress in specific areas, such as country-based federal programs (e.g., SNAP) aimed at combating hunger and food deficits, the number of people suffering from food insecurity continues to rise globally. [According to the FAO](#), 733 million people worldwide suffer from malnutrition; an increase of 152 million since 2019. Approximately one in eleven people worldwide struggles with hunger; however, regional trends vary. In 2023, 1 in 5 people in Africa were confronted with food insecurity, and numbers continue to rise, with the Global Nutrition Report indicating that the continent is severely off track to meeting the 2030 Zero Hunger goal. Correspondingly, over 582 million people are expected to be chronically malnourished by 2030, making it challenging and virtually impossible to reach the UN Sustainable Development goals of zero hunger by 2030.

Burkina Faso: A Critical Hunger Hotspot

Burkina Faso has emerged as one of the most alarming hunger hotspots, alongside countries like Haiti, Yemen, South Sudan, and Mali, due to the severity and complexity of its food insecurity crisis. [A recent report](#) by the World Food Programme (WFP) identifies Burkina Faso as a critical hunger hotspot, urgently needing action to safeguard the well-being of its civilian population. [According to the WFP](#), 2.3 million people in Burkina Faso suffer from acute hunger. This is due to various factors, including political instability, displacement, and climate Change. In addition to worsening hunger conditions, escalating conflict fuels societal instability, leaving women and girls especially vulnerable. This deepens their exposure to malnutrition, nutritional deficiencies, and the compounded effects of gender inequality. While these crises impact entire communities, inequities require a need for gender-based solutions.

The Gendered Impact of Food Insecurity

Generally, in areas impacted by food insecurity, women and girls are reported to eat the least, with an [overwhelming 60%](#) of all people who are currently food insecure being women. This inequality can be attributed to several elements, including discriminatory laws, underpaid labor,

and barring from owning property. Burkina Faso is no different; cultural norms require women to sacrifice their needs to benefit children and the elderly. While women often limit their food rations to provide for children, [girls are often inconvenienced](#) to benefit boys. Increasing challenges in Burkina Faso since 2019 have worsened living conditions for the civilian population and at-risk groups. [A COVID-19 era study](#) reported that food insecurity profoundly impacted women in Burkina Faso. Women who ran out of food in one month were 35% more likely to face food shortages the following month, while the figure for their male counterparts was only 26%, revealing a greater vulnerability. Crises that result from instability can have a detrimental impact due to the compounding effects on existing inequalities, allowing societal issues such as unfair pay to disrupt access to resources, further putting women in precarious positions.

Empowering Women as the Key to Food System Reform

Despite unjust treatment from systemic inequalities and various cultural norms, Women in Burkina Faso play an [integral role](#) in developing their food systems by serving as key agricultural producers, traders, household gatekeepers, and processors within their communities. Though the frequent lack of recognition for women contributions to food systems remains prevalent, gender equality and economic empowerment are essential for the development of inclusive food systems; therefore, solutions that prioritize gender empowerment are crucial for progress. This includes developing targeted food aid programs for women and girls, addressing legal and economic discrimination in rural communities, expanding support for female-headed households and displaced women, integrating gender equity goals into long-term hunger reduction efforts, and promoting community-led solutions that elevate women's leadership. Programs such as the [FAO AgrInvest-FS](#), which are active in Burkina Faso, have proven effective by leveraging technical training and public-private partnerships to increase the economic resilience of Burkinabé women by expanding their access to markets while heightening their roles in agricultural value chains.

We-Empower's Strategic Approach

At We-Empower, we support inclusive, community-driven solutions. We are committed to tailoring programs to address local and regional needs related to food insecurity, gender issues,

and women's and children's nutrition. Our global development experts work to empower disadvantaged communities through capacity building and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. We can address the most pressing food security issues of today through:

- Improving food safety, health, and nutrition
- Increasing access to markets for small businesses and farmers
- Strengthening business development and market linkages
- Supporting micro-finance initiatives and grant funding
- Enhancing education and skills training for women and youth
- Promoting sustainable livelihoods through capacity building
- Implementing effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems
- Creating public-private partnerships for long-term impact
- Supporting risk management strategies in vulnerable communities

Conclusion: Toward Inclusive Food Security

The route to food security in Burkina Faso, and throughout the world, is difficult but not unattainable. The country's current situation requires both short-term assistance and long-term structural transformation in order to relieve urgent hunger and create resilience to future food chain shocks. While humanitarian relief is necessary for immediate needs, long-term recovery requires inclusive change across all sectors, since narrowing the gender gap is critical to eradicating hunger. Recognizing this, it becomes critical to investigate practical solutions that not only recognize women's contributions, but also actively encourage and strengthen their engagement in food systems.