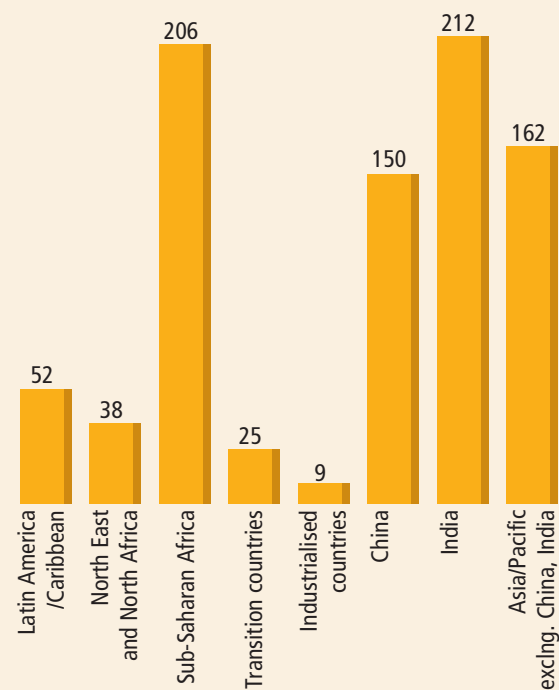


There are 854 million undernourished people in the world, out of whom 820 million live in the developing countries

UNDERNOURISHED 2001-03 (MILLIONS)

Note: (This graph shows that India has more number of undernourished people than even Sub-Saharan Africa)
Source: FAO



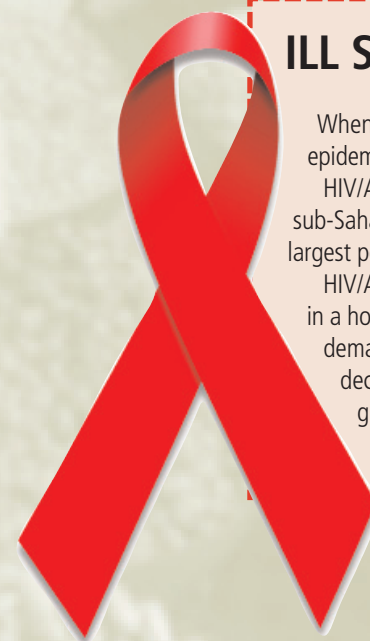
WOMEN AND FOOD SECURITY

Women are central to food security, and devote a greater share of their income to food and fuel as opposed to luxury items. Yet, their role in it has remained practically invisible to many policy-makers. This is because most of their productive activity is part of the informal economy and is thus, not represented in official statistics on food supply and distribution. In addition, legal and social restrictions prevent many women from owning or inheriting land, water rights and livestock, borrowing money, and making decisions regarding the use of family assets. So, let us go back to the three pillars of food security – food

FOOD AVAILABILITY	FOOD ACCESS	FOOD UTILISATION
Women are active food producers. They work on small farms and in urban gardens to produce crops.	Women ensure that each family member receives an adequate share of food.	Women are responsible for nutrition in the majority of homes. They decide what food to buy and how to prepare it.
Women play a crucial role in using and conserving resources like water and energy	Women are primarily responsible for purchasing food, to which they devote their time and their income.	In many cases, food preparation involves a substantial amount of time for collecting fuel and preparing ingredients.

availability, access and utilisation, and see how women are crucial to food security (See box).

Improving women's access to education, safe and effective contraception, and other family planning services, along with recognition of ownership rights are few of the most basic steps to empower the role of women in food security.



ILL SECURITY

When it comes to food utilisation, one of the major setbacks comes in the form of diseases and epidemics.

HIV/AIDS is one of the gravest threats to human health. Regionally, its magnitude is the greatest in sub-Saharan Africa where more than 24 million people are infected with the virus. But India has the largest population living with HIV with over four million people infected.

HIV/AIDS can have devastating effects on household food security and nutrition. When a member in a household falls ill, there is increased spending on health care, decreased productivity and higher demands for care. Food production and income drop dramatically. As a result, food consumption decreases. Also, women are more vulnerable in AIDS-affected households, and are biologically at greater risk of being infected. This again increases the food insecurity of the household. And what holds true for one household can happen to an entire nation.

FRAGMENTED SECURITY

Land fragmentation is where a single piece of land or farm has a number of parcels of land. This division primarily happens because of rise in the population of people dependent on agriculture. Moreover, the law of inheritance of paternal property 'divides' and gives shares of lands to each child. In other words, the land gets fragmented.

This reduces the agricultural productivity in many parts of the world, especially developing countries like India. Here is how...

Suppose, there is a 3 acres piece of land that belongs to Mr. X. He has 1 hired labourer who tills the land using a tractor. Every month he needs 5kgs of fertiliser to produce 75kgs of rice.

Now, he equally distributes this land between his 2 children – A and B. So, each gets a plot of 1.5 acres.

Each of them hires at least 1 labourer to till the land, which makes it 2 labourers to till the same land that earlier needed just 1 labourer. Thus, adding to the input cost. The same thing happens to fertiliser cost.

'A' needs 2kgs of fertiliser to produce 28kgs of rice, and 'B' needs 3kgs to produce 39kgs of rice. Though the same amount of fertiliser (5kgs) as before was used, the amount of fertiliser per kg of rice has increased. In addition, the production has dwindled because some part of the land lies wasted in the borders, and the tractor that was used earlier cannot be now used on their small plots.



- So,
- Fragmented land means its each sub-plot is smaller in size or area, and has different owners.
 - Thus, it requires more inputs (like labour and fertiliser) per unit of output, as compared to a single piece of land. Thus, adding to the input costs.
 - These inputs are, in turn, under-utilised. This further increases the costs.
 - Certain types of machinery like harvesters and tractors cannot be used because of the smaller size of the plots.
 - Monitoring of agricultural production cannot be done efficiently.
 - There would wastage of land or space along the borders.