

Embedding Equity into Delivering for Nutrition: The Road to ‘Leaving No One Behind’

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*“Equality,” I spoke the word
As if a wedding vow
Ah, but I was so much older then
I’m younger than that now*

--Bob Dylan, ‘My Back Pages’

This presentation

- ❖ Thinking about equity in food systems for nutrition: The High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) report, 2023
- <https://www.fao.org/3/cc6536en/cc6536en.pdf>
- ❖ Special focus on ‘*The Four I’s*’ in the context of South Asia
 - Intrahousehold
 - Intergenerational
 - Interterritorial
 - Intersectional
- ❖ Principles for action



HLPE 18: Bird's eye view

- ❖ Food Systems are profoundly unequal at every level
- ❖ These inequalities diminish food security and nutrition
- ❖ In turn, these inequalities have systemic/structural drivers

HLPE 18 addresses these *inequalities* & their FSN implications as well as the *inequitable* structural processes that drive them, culminating in a set of recommendations for incremental as well as transformative action.



Contextual Definitions

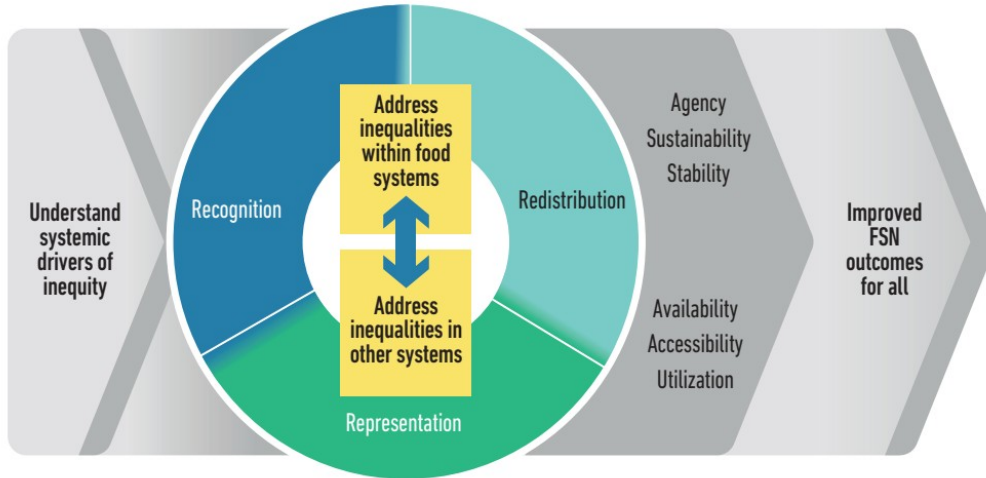
❖ **Inequalities:** observed differences in FSN outcomes or related food system factors (e.g. access to finance or technology) between individuals or groups, based on social, economic, and/or geographical position (e.g. size, income, gender, caste, indigeneity, remoteness).

❖ **Inequities:** socially, economically or politically driven reasons why systematic differences in food system opportunities or the distribution of FSN outcomes exist.



Conceptual Framework

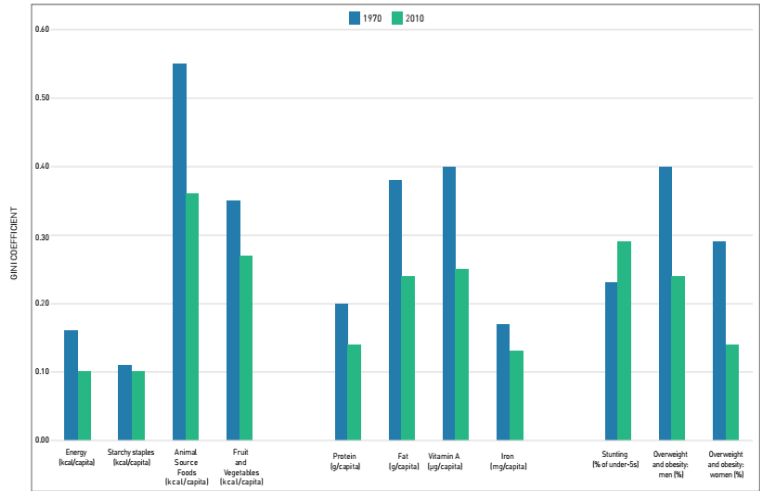
Consider intersectional, intergenerational, interterritorial inequity



Work towards human rights, inclusive knowledges, justice

High inequality, concentrated within countries

- ❖ There is ‘incredible inequality’ (UNFSS, 2022) in food systems and in nutrition outcomes.
- ❖ Over time, trade has helped reduce cross-country national-level availabilities of healthy as well as unhealthy foods and nutrients.
- ❖ Inequalities are concentrated *within* countries along various axes, and are often growing.



Bell *et al.* 2021

Many equity dimensions are understudied

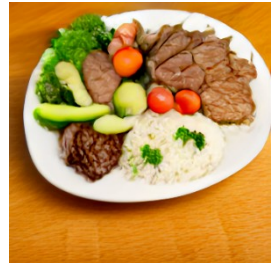
- ❖ Greatest advances in understanding size/economic status and gender.

Areas needing greater attention include:

- ❖ Caste: e.g. India 50 g/person/day gap in fruit & veg. intakes for scheduled castes & tribes compared to other castes.
- ❖ Disability: 2 to 3% of population in S Asian countries. Bi-directional links between disability and malnutrition
- ❖ Corporate power: As ultra-processed foods spread through the region, understanding how nutrition is impacted by powerful food company strategies is key.

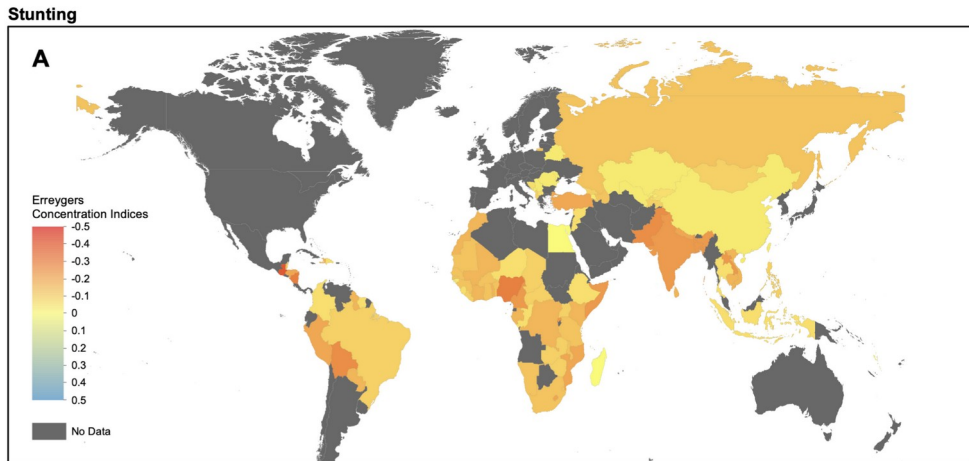
But the 'Four I's' require particular attention

- ❖ Intrahousehold
- ❖ Intergenerational
- ❖ Intersectional
- ❖ Interterritorial



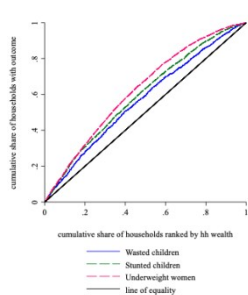
The importance of **Intrahousehold** inequalities

Undernutrition is concentrated in the poorest households globally and especially in South Asia...

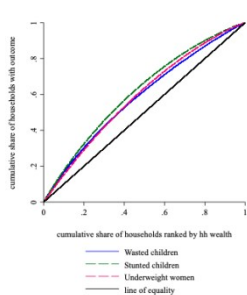


Alao et al (2020)

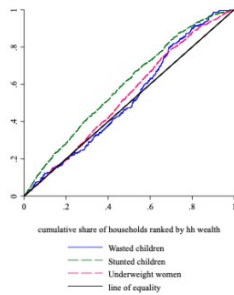
The importance of **intra**household inequalities



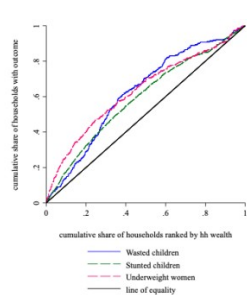
(a) Bangladesh



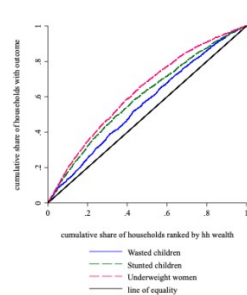
(b) India



(d) Nepal



(e) Pakistan



(f) Sri Lanka

Brown, et al. 2022

...but many undernourished do not live in poor households

The importance of **Intrahousehold** inequalities

Within-household inequality in nutrition is substantial

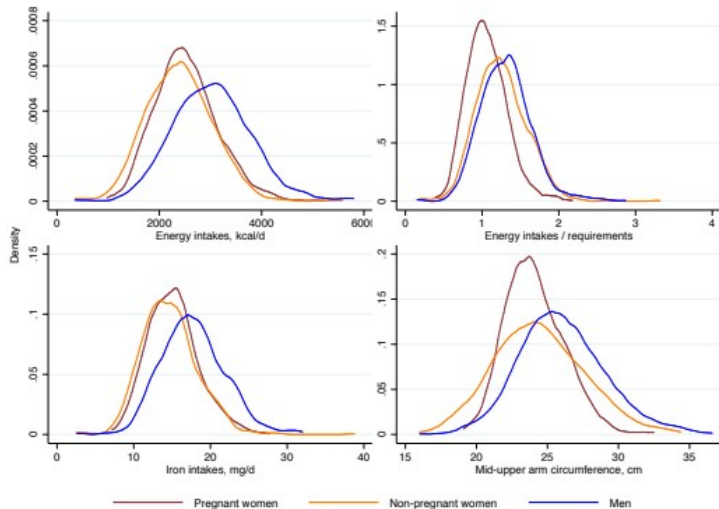
Bangladesh:	Calories	Protein	Vegetables
Extent of inequality (MLD)	0.056	0.088	0.21
Within household share	46%	38%	22%
Between household share	54%	62%	78%

Brown et al 2020

Harris-Fry and Cortina-Borja: Intrahousehold nutrient reallocation could improve micronutrient adequacy by 0.4-0.5 std. dev. in Bangladesh!

Intrahousehold: Further Dimensions

Pregnant women (Nepal)

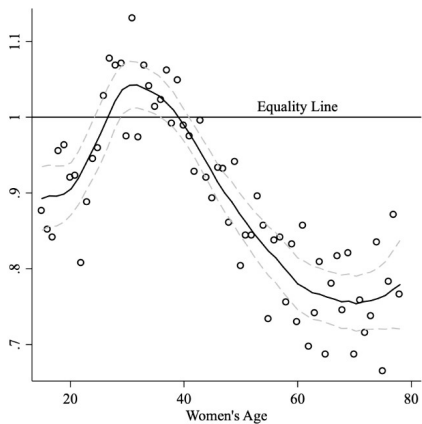


- Broadly, men >> mothers-in-law >> pregnant women
- Men are compensated for higher requirements but women don't receive this when needed (e.g. iron-rich foods when pregnant)

(Harris-Fry et al, 2018)

Intrahousehold: Further dimensions

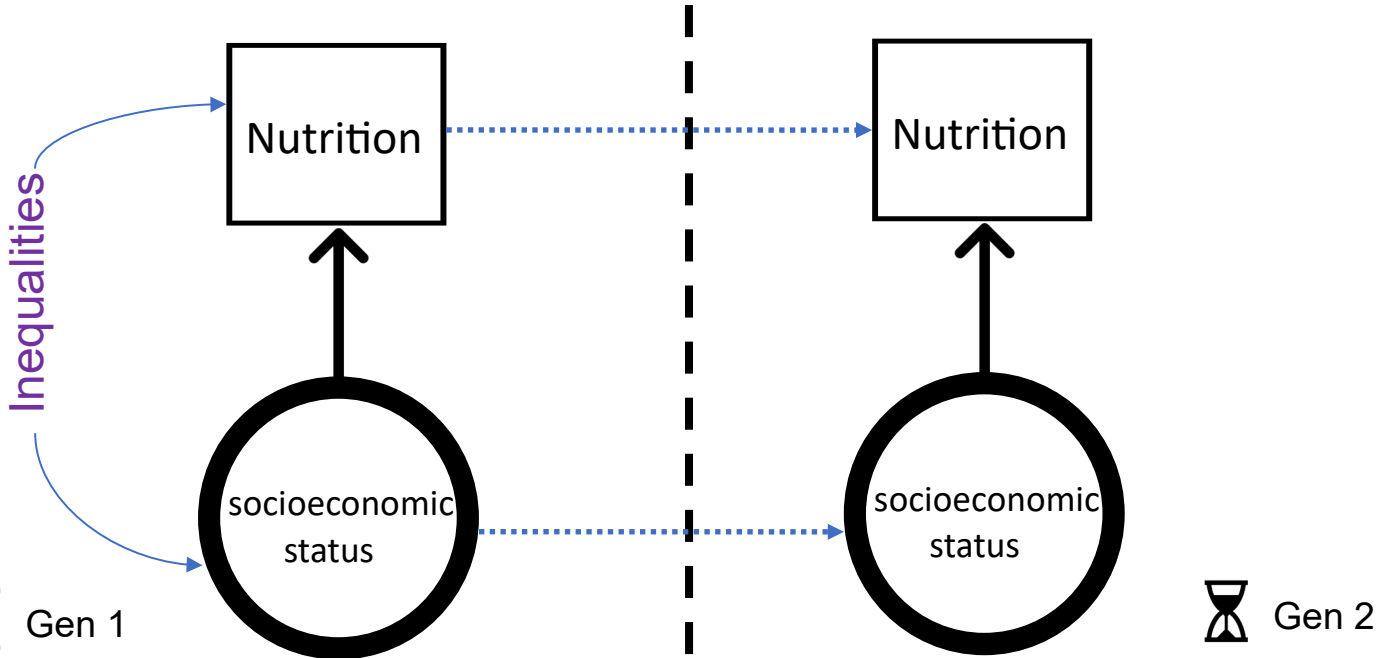
Women of post-reproductive age (India)



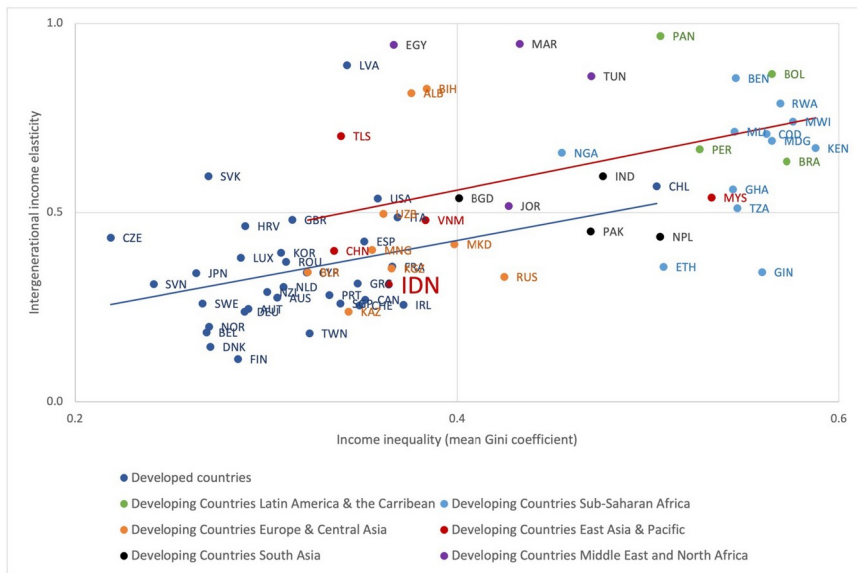
- Women's resource share relative to men declines sharply post-reproductive age
- Traditional gender norms (child-rearing)? Decline in external options compared to men with advancing age?

Calvi, 2020.

Intergenerational pathways



Intergenerational: The Great Gatsby Curve



High inequality & low mobility in South Asia: inequality perpetuates over time

Intergenerational: Mobility in India

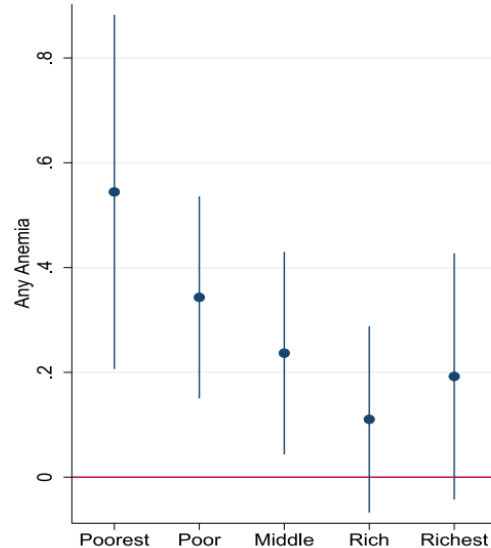
- India: Economic growth + rising inequality: mobility?

Reddy (2015):

- Intergenerational mobility in India has *declined* since 1980s.
- Farmers and agricultural workers among most immobile.
- Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe less mobile than Other caste + also greater decline in mobility.

Intergenerational: Anemia in India

- Children of anemic mothers in India more likely to be anemic, controlling for genetic & socioeconomic aspects.
- Intergenerational transmission much higher for lowest wealth groups → wealthier able to break intergenerational link.



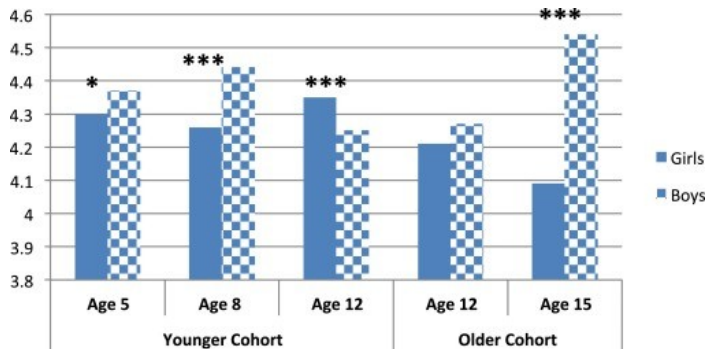
Kumar & Nahlen, 2023

Intersectional Inequalities

Intersectional analysis has a long history in critical development studies, particularly in South Asia, but “*there is a lack of understanding of how intersectional inequalities impact nutrition*” (HLPE 18, 2023)

Intersectional: Child gender in India

- ❖ Girls have worse dietary diversity than boys
- ❖ Intersectionality: is the gap moderated by maternal education, poverty or location? No.
- ❖ But parental aspirations for children do seem to matter.



Aurino, 2017

Intersectional implications of an ag-nut intervention

- ❖ Little work on how interventions impact intersectional groups.
- ❖ Fivian et al (2023) in Odisha: Educational differences in MDD-W from participation:

- *Among all women:*

No difference → Education inequalities in MDD-W **unaffected**

- *Within non-Scheduled Tribe groups:*

Greater improvements among lower educated women → Education inequalities in MDD-W **narrowed**.

- *Within Scheduled Tribe groups:*

Greater improvements among higher educated women → Education inequalities in MDD-W **widened**.

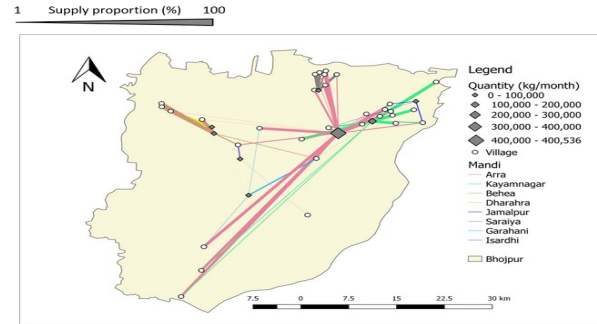
Interterritorial: Remoteness and nutrition

- ❖ ‘Economic remoteness’ (economic distance from markets) negatively impacts nutrition.
- ❖ Relative perishability of many nutrient-dense foods exacerbates this problem.
- ❖ Inadequate transport and market infrastructure in disadvantaged areas can result in islands of high prices.
- ❖ This can create unexpected problems, e.g. cash transfers bidding up local demand, resulting in higher prices for nutrient-dense foods in the absence of supply flowing in (Filmer, et al, 2023)

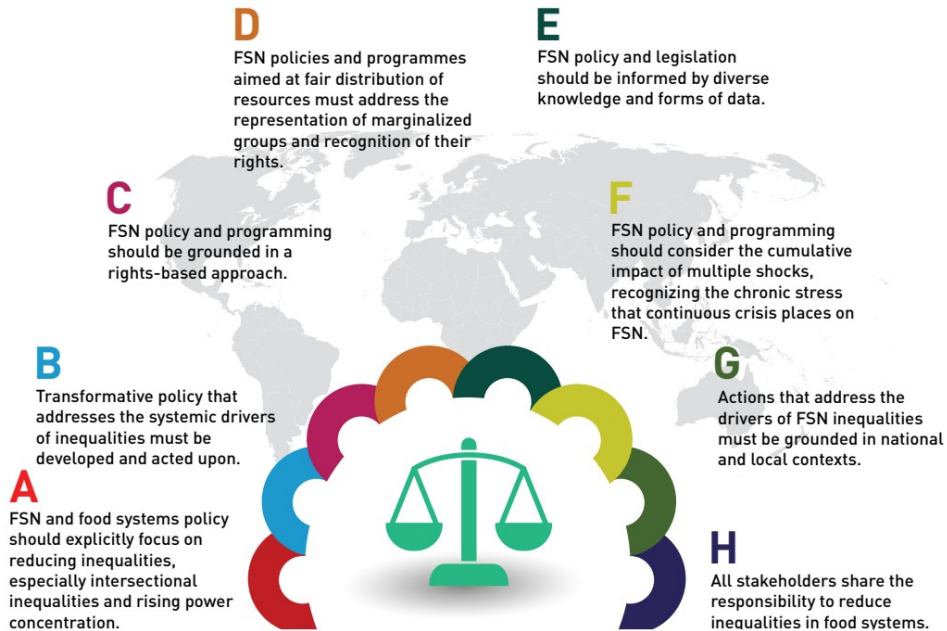


Interterritorial: rural markets and nutrition

- ❖ ‘Value chain upgrades’ in nutrient-dense foods are popular. But what do they imply for regional inequalities in nutrient-dense food availability?
- ❖ MINI project in Bihar: Aggregation of vegetables incentivises seeking out larger, more lucrative urban markets.
- ❖ What would attract produce to rural markets?
- ❖ Modelling suggests: local demand creation + market cold storage key



Principles for action



Concluding thoughts

- ❖ We've barely got started on the road to leaving no one behind
- ❖ Far more research and action is needed along many equity dimensions in food systems and nutrition, including:
 - The contextual nuances of intrahousehold inequalities
 - Understanding and breaking down intergenerational immobility
 - Grappling with intersectionality so that the farthest behind are identified and helped appropriately.
 - Accounting for interregionality in food systems actions.
- ❖ In action:
 - Being intentional about equity
 - pursuing transformational as well as incremental actions;
 - accounting for recognition and representation, in addition to redistribution.