



THE
HUNGER
PROJECT

Women Transforming the World

Our Women Leaders' Initiative is a movement that is transforming our world – quietly yet powerfully and for generations to come.

Women like Saleha, who you will meet in the following pages, are initiating far-reaching change in their communities, transforming attitudes towards women and girls. And, they can now do things, such as give birth, without fear for their own lives or those of their babies.

This report focuses on two key areas of our work to empower women. The first is our work to end violence against women, and the second is our strategic priority on maternal health and childhood nutrition. The recent brutal gang rapes in South Asia have created a watershed moment for addressing violence against women as a vast assault on human dignity. In February, The Hunger Project was proud to be part of “One Billion Rising,” an initiative taking place in more than 200 countries on Valentine’s Day to strike, dance and rise in protest of violence against women and girls.

Thank you for reading on to learn more about our women partners. Your interest in their stories and your engagement at whatever level you choose supports their courage and intrinsic talents. These women are leading the way to a whole new future.

Ending Violence Against Women



Domestic violence including rape, incest and murder is endemic in many cultures. Women's faces are burned with acid if they spurn romantic advances; honor killings occur if they fall in love with someone not chosen for them. Women fear reporting abuse as they may be attacked again or imprisoned.

Today women are starting to step out from the shadows and collectively demand justice. Acid victims are pulling back their veils and drawing public attention to the abuse. The momentum for gender justice is growing. The Hunger Project is proud to support women in upholding their rights and taking control of their lives. We work to sensitize women—and men – to women's rights.

- In India, we support the **political participation of women through capacity building workshops**. We also record instances of violence to sensitize officials, media and police to the fact that reserving council seats for women is not enough without a safe environment.
- In Bangladesh, our trained village leaders, called animators, run **campaigns against dowry, early marriage and violence against women**.

Result: 1,300 early marriages stopped and 2,500 incidences of stopping dowry recorded in the second half of last year.

- In Africa, our **Women's Empowerment Program (WEP)** is a series of workshops focusing on legal, civic and reproductive health rights as well as leadership skills.

Result: During the second half of last year, 600 women and men were trained as WEP animators. They, in turn, held over 640 workshops in which more than 27,000 women and men participated.

- In Latin America, workshops on gender equality and self-esteem support indigenous women as they **break through their traditionally male-dominated culture and stand up for their rights**.

Standing Up for Women Manowara Afroz Saleha was a loved child growing up in a Bangladeshi village. When she was seven, her father passed away, leaving her and her mother at the mercy of a distant relative. Saleha was able to study and complete high school. However she was forced into marriage with an abusive husband who later abandoned her. **Saleha's experience made her determined to do something about the condition of women in her society.** In 2005, she established a women's self-help group. A year later she completed THP's animator training. **Saleha is now working to stop child marriage.** She is also seeking to be elected to her local government body and has plans to establish an organization to rehabilitate and mobilize the older women in the community.



Did You Know?

- In a World Health Organization multi-country study, **up to 71% of women aged 15-49 years were reported to suffer physical and/or sexual violence** at the hands of an intimate partner at some point in their lives.
- The Government of India reports that 3 million girl children went missing in the decade between 2001 and 2011. **There are now 48 fewer girls per 1,000 boys than in 1981.**
- According to UNICEF, over **60 million girls world-wide are child brides**, married before the age of 18. Violence and abuse characterize married life for many of these girls.

Prioritizing Maternal and Childhood Malnutrition

Malnutrition contributes to more than one-third of the global child deaths each year. Considering that many cases of infant malnourishment can be solved by simply ensuring exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life, this number is unacceptable.

Often, the reason for malnutrition is the mother's own youth and lack of knowledge. In developing countries, girls traditionally eat last and least. The prevalence of childhood marriage for young girls leads them to giving birth earlier in life. A young, malnourished woman gives birth to a low birth weight baby who, in turn, becomes a young, malnourished woman married too young – starting the **cycle of malnutrition** all over again.

Children born into this cycle have a higher incidence of diabetes and heart disease and tend to have cognitive disabilities and a lower IQ, affecting their performance in school and their job opportunities as adults – forever diminishing their future opportunities.



An expert panel of Nobel laureate economists known as the Copenhagen Consensus met in May 2012 to set priorities for solving the world's greatest challenges.

Their conclusion: the single best investment the world could make to advance health and prosperity would be to fight malnutrition in young children.

Tackling malnutrition is not only the right thing to do, it also makes economic sense. **Research shows that for every \$1 invested in nutrition, as much as \$138 in better health and increased productivity is generated.**

This consensus comes at a time when new scientific data has revealed the vital importance of good nutrition during the first 1,000 days—from the first day of a woman's pregnancy to the child's second birthday—as a crucial window for developing a child's cognitive capacity and physical growth. Evidence shows that the right nutrition during the 1,000 day-window can achieve **lasting progress in global health and development**: saving more than one million lives each year; reducing the human and economic burden of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS; improving an individual's education achievement and earning potential; and increasing a country's GDP by at least 2-3 percent annually.

In response, The Hunger Project has integrated action for nutrition in the 1,000-day window as a top strategic priority in our programs.

- We are working to ensure that our village partners have **access to health centers** that provide prenatal services, safe deliveries, education on breastfeeding and maternal and child nutrition, and child health monitoring.

Result: more than 9,800 mothers accessed prenatal care and over 50,000 children's health was monitored during the second half of last year.

- **All THP education and food security programs now incorporate 1,000-day nutrition awareness and training.** For example, in Malawi we conduct awareness campaigns on safe motherhood, carry out vaccination campaigns targeting children under five years old, and train mother-to-mother (M2M) support groups.
- Around the world, THP Country Directors and Global Leadership **play active roles in the 1,000 Days global initiative, the United Nations Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative** and other global and national nutrition advocacy forums.

About The Hunger Project

The Hunger Project is a global, non-profit, strategic organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. We work in 12 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America to develop effective, bottom-up strategies to end hunger and poverty.

One of our core principles is that it is absolutely essential to create gender equality in order to end hunger and poverty. Women and girls are the most affected by hunger and poverty. Traditionally women bear the primary responsibilities in food production, nutrition, family planning, primary health and education. Yet most development inputs continue to go to men. A central component of effective strategies must be the empowerment of women in ways that enable them to achieve improvements in all key areas that affect their lives and those of their families.

We are pleased to note that on January 30, 2013, President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum to strengthen and expand U.S. government capacity and coordination across all agencies to better promote gender equality and empower women and girls. In the Memorandum, President Obama reaffirmed that *“promoting gender equality and advancing the status of all women and girls around the world remains one of the greatest unmet challenges of our time, and one that is vital to achieving our overall foreign policy objectives.”*

The Hunger Project is truly a global family. The equal commitment of our village partners and our investors makes a profound difference in the lives of thousands of women. Those women, in turn, are making a difference beyond their own lives, in their families, their communities and our world.



One Billion Rising Human Chain organized by The Hunger Project on Asad Avenue in Dhaka, Bangladesh

To learn more about The Hunger Project or our work with women, please visit www.thp.org or contact Betsy Deisroth, Vice President for Advancement at betsy.deisroth@thp.org or 212-251-9135.

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