



# INTRODUCTION

The world today is wealthier than ever before and produces enough food to feed everyone. Yet hundreds of millions of people continue to struggle against poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. The crisis is nowhere more urgent than in sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV/AIDS is exacerbating this alarming situation. In this region, all nutritional indicators are moving in the wrong direction, and, except in a few countries, more and more people do not have good health and access to the food they need to lead full and productive lives (Standing Committee on Nutrition 2004).

The consequences of malnutrition are enormous. Being underweight was estimated to cause 3.7 million deaths in 2000, accounting for about one in 15 deaths globally (World Health Organization 2002). The costs are even higher for children: 56 percent of childhood deaths are the result of malnutrition (Pelletier et al. 1995). Malnutrition also impairs children’s physical, cognitive, and psychological growth, which over time diminishes their ability to learn and be productive.

The world has set a goal to cut hunger in half by 2015 as part of the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but to achieve this goal and reduce malnutrition, current efforts must be expanded greatly. Fortunately, significant progress toward

reducing hunger and malnutrition is possible. Program experience and research show that when interventions address the multiple causes of malnutrition, harmonize the way institutions provide services and work with communities, and attend to the resource needs of both men and women, nutritional well-being improves in a timely and sustainable manner.

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* project drew on this evidence in devising a strategy to promote greater use of practices that link agriculture and nutrition while also considering gender.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the project was anchored by teams of leaders in five African countries – Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda – and one U.S.-based team (the International Center for Research on Women and the International Food Policy Research Institute) who could advocate for such a linked approach. The project was implemented over three years, from 2001 to 2004, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In subsequent sections, this report describes the leadership strategy and its results: (1) creating an effective leadership network; (2) advocating for policy changes; (3) operationalizing a linked, gender-informed approach; and (4) mainstreaming the approach to promote sustainable change. Finally, conclusions are drawn, followed by recommendations for future steps.

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<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of this report, the term “linked approach” is used to refer to practices that link agriculture and nutrition; “gender-informed” refers to the use of gender analysis and its findings to design policies and programs; and the term “gender-informed, linked approach” or “the project’s approach” is used to refer to such practices that link agriculture and nutrition and address gender-related factors.