

Primer on Gender-Responsive Parliamentary Work on Food Security

A People-Centred Approach that Leaves No One Behind





This publication was made possible in part by the generous support of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

Published in November 2023.



TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION	4
THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SDG 5 AND SDG 2	7
Gender inequality and food insecurity.....	7
How work to end hunger contributes to advancing gender equality	8
PARLIAMENTARY ACTIONS TO CONTRIBUTE TO INCLUSIVE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY.....	9
Understanding the gender and food security gaps in your country.....	9
Building broad support and raising public awareness	11
Bringing inclusive approaches to food security to the fore in parliamentary and political spaces	12
Developing proposals to respond to gaps in legal and policy frameworks	12
Providing oversight to government action on hunger to ensure it is effective and inclusive	14
SOURCES	15



INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and sustainable development are interdependent goals and cannot be achieved in isolation. Each of the priorities in the [United Nations 2030 Agenda](#) - represented by Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - are benefitted by gender equality, and work on each of the SDGs also contributes to advancing gender equality (which is also a standalone SDG: **SDG 5**). This relationship can be clearly seen with **ending hunger (SDG 2)** and **achieving gender equality (SDG 5)**: gender inequalities must be addressed and women and girls must be guaranteed equal access to resources, opportunities, and rights in order to create sustainable, inclusive, equitable, and resilient agri-food systems that contribute to realizing the right to food for all people.

Parliamentarians can play a crucial role in achieving these objectives by adopting gender-responsive approaches to their legislative work on food security and nutrition. This can be done by:

- 🌽 advancing new legislation or legislative reforms to resolve specific national challenges on these themes;
- 🌽 mainstreaming gender and food security perspectives in legislative work on themes connected to these issues;
- 🌽 raising awareness of issues and solutions related to food insecurity and malnutrition through public platforms;
- 🌽 providing oversight on international commitments and policies adopted by the government related to food security and nutrition, ensuring that these have gender equality considerations and reflect recognized good practices; and
- 🌽 monitoring resource allocations and raising the importance of adequate funding for inclusive food security programming in budget debates.

The actions taken in parliament can play a decisive role in removing the barriers to food and nutrition security for all when these are designed to respond to the differentiated needs and realities of diverse members of the population. Drawing on good practices, making use of disaggregated data, and facilitating active citizen participation in decision making, including by women and historically marginalized groups, are critical steps to reaching this objective. It is also essential to provide monitoring and oversight to ensure the effective implementation of adopted measures.



SDG 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The targets for this goal are:

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

SDG 2 is aimed at creating [a world free of hunger](#) by 2030. The targets for this goal are:



2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality

2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed

2.A Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries

2.B Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round

2.C Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility



THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SDG 5 AND SDG 2

Gender inequality and food insecurity

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s report on "[The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems](#)," agri-food systems are a significant source of employment for women around the world and this is also the case in Latin America and the Caribbean, where women constitute 36% of all agri-food system workers. Women are food producers and processors, natural resource managers, income generators, and are more likely than men to be responsible for food and nutrition security in their households through paid and unpaid work ([FAO](#); [USAID](#)).

These extensive contributions to producing, processing, and increasing others' access to food are being realized despite significant barriers to women's own food security - some of which are outlined below:

Poverty and food insecurity: Food security affects women more than men in all regions of the world, including in Latin America and the Caribbean ([FAO](#), 2023). **Poverty plays a fundamental role in the perpetuation of food and nutrition insecurity and malnutrition**, since people living in poverty are forced to allocate a significant part of their income to cover their basic food needs, and to reduce costs they limit their purchase of adequate and nutritious food on a consistent basis. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in "[Social Panorama of Latin America](#)" (2019), identifies the following as groups within the region that face higher incidence of poverty and extreme poverty, and therefore should also receive focused attention in programs to address inequality: people living in rural areas, children, women, Indigenous people, and the Afro-descendant population. While in their report ECLAC notes that poverty is measured at the household level, both poverty and extreme poverty are more prevalent among women than among men (in the case of people aged 20–59). For example, [ECLAC's femininity index of poor households](#) illustrates that in the absence of other household income, the risk of poverty increases for women, especially in households with a greater number of children.

Unequal access to income, employment, and productive resources: In Latin America and the Caribbean, as is the case in most of the world, **traditional gender roles result in the association of women with the domestic sphere and care work, while men are associated with income-earning formal work**. These persistent, harmful norms continue to shape the opportunities individuals of all genders may be able to access and how their work is viewed with the agrifood system. While women are active participants in agricultural work in the region, they are more likely to be informal workers than men, which weakens their access to labour protections and resources ([UN Women](#), 2019; [FAO](#), 2023). Gaps also exist in formal employment, however: data included in FAO's "[The Status of Women in Agri-food Systems](#)" shows that, within the agricultural sector, women receive a salary equivalent to 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. The lack of recognition and valuing of women's farm work also makes it more difficult for women farmworkers in rural areas to participate in value chains, as they have less access to resources, credit, markets, and technical assistance.

Land tenure: Although women farmers in developing countries are responsible for 60 to 80% of food production, **legal and customary laws and practices hinder their access, and that of other marginalized people, to control land and natural resources** (FAO, 2021). A significant gender gap in land tenure exists in Latin America and the Caribbean, with women accounting for 8-30% of agricultural landholders in countries across the region (OECD, 2017). Further, women-headed farms tend to be smaller and on lower-quality land (UN Women; FAO). Research indicates that this is due to the following factors: the preference towards men in inheritance; men's privileges in marriage; a tendency to favour men in the land distribution programs at both community and State levels; and gender biases in the land market (Deere and León, 2005).

How work to end hunger contributes to advancing gender equality

To achieve fair and sustainable food systems, and ensure that food security is a reality for all, the kinds of gender-based inequalities mentioned above must be eliminated, with women guaranteed equitable access to resources, opportunities, and rights. This is not only a matter of social justice and one that will benefit the lives of women, but an economic one; gender inequalities in agriculture, for example, limit the overall performance of that sector.


Work to address hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity can contribute to advancing gender equality and broader societal benefits in various ways, including the following:

Economic empowerment: Programs that contribute to achieving SDG 2 by **promoting sustainable agricultural systems and supporting family and local agriculture** (SDG Target 2.3) can strengthen women's capacity to produce food, access markets and productive resources (such as land, seeds, and agricultural technology), and earn a fair income for their work. This income generation will benefit the impacted women and their families directly, but also their communities and the broader national economy given that some of these resources would then be spent on other goods and services.

 Further, the FAO, in their "[Status of Women in Agrifood Systems](#)" publication (2023), estimates significant positive economic effects from investments in women producers:

- ✔ "Closing the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agrifood-system employment would increase global gross domestic product by 1 percent (or nearly USD 1 trillion). This would reduce global food insecurity by about 2 percentage points, reducing the number of food-insecure people by 45 million."
- ✔ "If half of small-scale producers benefited from development interventions that focused on empowering women, it would significantly raise the incomes of an additional 58 million people and increase the resilience of an additional 235 million people."

Supporting health outcomes: Women are more likely than men to report food insecurity in nearly two-thirds of countries globally according to the [UN World Food Program](#). [World Hunger](#) also reports that female bodies are biologically more likely to be malnourished, especially if they are menstruating, pregnant, or lactating, which can further create risks during childbirth and increase the likelihood of babies being born with poor health. Closing gaps in hunger and malnutrition therefore promotes individual and family wellbeing.

 Investing in women farmers also creates health benefits for society more broadly. The International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) calculates that, "If women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, 100–150 million people would be lifted out of hunger, which would also make them more resilient to the climate crisis."

Reducing disproportionate workloads carried by women: By improving sustainable agricultural practices and contributing to improvements in productivity and income, SDG 2 can contribute to reducing the disproportionate workloads and low paying and/or unpaid labour women perform. By employing more efficient practices in their agricultural work, workers will have more time that can be dedicated to a variety of, or different, pursuits. Greater access to income could also enable the allocation of resources to additional care supports, similarly freeing up women's time. This increases their capacity to live more empowered and autonomous lives, which is central to gender equality.



PARLIAMENTARY ACTIONS TO CONTRIBUTE TO INCLUSIVE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Applying a gender lens in parliamentary work to address food insecurity is a critical component of addressing the linkages between gender inequality and hunger, realizing the positive carry-over effects of taking gender-responsive action on food security, and contributing to the achievement of SDGs 2 and 5. Strategies parliamentarians can apply to strengthen their own efforts and help to advance these objectives in a variety of ways are outlined below.

Understanding the gender and food security gaps in your country

Review existing statistical and qualitative evidence on experiences with hunger and malnutrition specific to your country to understand gaps and assess underlying causes, as well as to be able to demonstrate the urgency of parliamentary action. This information should consider gender, geographic location, and other social and economic factors to present a more fulsome picture of food insecurity and the ways in which it is experienced by different groups.

 Helpful sources for your analysis can include relevant publications from government bodies, national surveys, official statistics and studies with information disaggregated by gender, FAO regional reports,

the reports and databases of other international organizations, reports and information generated by civil society organizations, and other public and private entities with expertise in these themes.

- 🔍 Organize public consultations that engage civil society and women's organizations, local leaders, young farmers, workers in the agri-food sector of all genders, unions, youth, activists, communities, international organizations, observatories, universities, research centres, etc. to learn about diverse experiences with food insecurity across your country and foster dialogue on holistic solutions. This is a valuable exercise to generate participatory information from key stakeholders, especially to understand their needs and priorities throughout the value chain, and can be particularly useful if your country lacks official disaggregated data on hunger.
- 📝 It is important that public consultations be organized and hosted in an inclusive way to ensure full and meaningful participation by diverse groups that include urban and rural dwellers, Indigenous populations, parents, etc. This requires consideration of the location, time, language, and physical accessibility of the consultation spaces.

Databases and resources on food security

- 📎 [Regional data bank for statistical follow-up to the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean.](#)
- 📎 [The Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard](#), a platform of the Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS).
- 📎 [Agricultural Market Information System](#), inter-agency platform to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security.
- 📎 [The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems](#), FAO, 2023.
- 📎 [Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey – May 2023](#), WFP, 2023.
- 📎 [Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean 2022](#), FAO, IFAD, PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, 2023.
- 📎 [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023](#), FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2023.
- 📎 [2022 Global Hunger Index: Food Systems Transformation and Local Governance](#), Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe, 2022.
- 📎 [2023 Global Food Policy Report: Rethinking Food Crisis Responses](#), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2023.

Initiate or advocate for a review of current legislation and policies on issues related to food security - such as poverty, water, climate change, agriculture and other relevant economic sectors, among others - to understand what provisions are currently in place to address hunger and malnutrition, how these interact, and their consequences for different individuals' experiences with food insecurity and participating in agrifood systems.

Consider how to leverage existing institutional structure(s) and tools within your parliament to support work on gender equality and food security related to SDGs 2 and 5. Examples of these could include:

- 📖 guides for gender mainstreaming in parliamentary work, which could either share learning you could incorporate into your work or present an opportunity to propose examples be included within this that are related to addressing hunger and food insecurity;
- 📖 internal bodies like committees working on relevant themes or a women's or green caucus may be able to initiate new research, undertake a legislative review like the one discussed above, or could effectively champion gender-responsive initiatives related to food security; or
- 📖 parliamentary staff with expertise on food security and/or gender equality, such as within technical units for gender equality or sustainable development (if these exist), may be able to share institutional knowledge on past initiatives that have been brought forward in your parliament or provide technical support to your work.

Building broad support and raising public awareness

Build a network of allies in different spheres, including your political party, parliamentary colleagues, the government, civil society, the media, and universities, who share an interest in promoting SDG 2 and SDG 5. These individuals can support in further socializing the importance of gender equality and food security in their respective spheres and gathering information, identifying appropriate solutions, and advocating to adopt such changes when proposals are put forward.

Make use of your public platform and existing channels of communication to share information on food insecurity and gender inequality and any solutions being advanced through parliament to further build the network of individuals knowledgeable about and supportive of the issue. This could include social media, traditional media, public appearances, and constituency and stakeholder meetings, among others. Your existing network of allies can also be helpful in further disseminating these messages in their own respective spheres of influence.

Work within your constituency and those of parliamentary colleagues and allies to understand and be able to promote local initiatives, especially those driven by women or historically marginalized groups that are contributing to food security in an inclusive and sustainable way.

Bringing inclusive approaches to food security to the fore in parliamentary and political spaces

Organize and participate in local and international thematic sessions on gender and food security to exchange experiences with experts and/or other parliamentarians on gender and food security, identify good legislative practices that can be adapted to your context, and learn about the strategies successfully employed by other legislators to put those solutions forward.

Use your interventions in committees, caucuses, parliamentary sittings, and public appearances to draw attention to issues related to food security and gender equality, elevating the stories and perspectives learned from people in your country and drawing on data to demonstrate the importance of inclusive work to end hunger.

Involve local women and youth leaders from diverse backgrounds who are engaged in agricultural work and other efforts to address food insecurity in parliamentary work to ensure that their experiences and perspectives inform the outputs of legislative decision making. This could include inviting contributions in formal spaces for political dialogue and consultation, such as committee hearings or other [citizen participation mechanisms](#), and/or actively encouraging participation in voluntary mechanisms like public consultations or feedback processes on legislative initiatives, among others.

Encourage fellow parliamentarians' participation in international and regional initiatives and intergovernmental meetings related to SDGs 2 and 5, supporting declarations and commitments that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, and in spaces like your parliament's chapter of the [Parliamentary Front Against Hunger](#) if one exists.

Developing proposals to respond to gaps in legal and policy frameworks

Develop a bill (or bills) to reform existing laws or implement new ones to respond to specific gaps identified through a legislative review. The content of the bill(s) may focus specifically on addressing gender gaps – such as laws that specifically provide support to rural women and the gaps they experience in accessing resources, like the law that created the [National Program for Solidarity Credit for Rural Women \(Credimujer\)](#) program in Honduras – or may be sectoral laws that mainstream gender equality and human rights considerations to be sure the law addresses existing inequalities while achieving other objectives as well - such as the [Law on Rural Development](#) in Costa Rica.

Whichever type of bill (or bills) is identified as necessary, these should be prepared through participatory processes, respond to the needs identified by the public and evidenced through disaggregated data on food and nutrition insecurity, and encompass the diversity of gender identities and experiences in content.

Considerations for the impacts of climate change on gender equality and food security


Women and girls, especially in rural communities, continue to face the brunt of the climate crisis that exacerbates pre-existing inequalities, jeopardizing their food security. Actions aimed at supporting the achievement of SDG 2 and SDG 5 have to take into account the realities of the changing climate and projected climate impacts. These can include but are not limited to:

- ✿ Using climate information and projections as foundational sources to ensure climate-smart action plans.
- ✿ Mainstreaming climate-smart agriculture and nature-based solutions into land-use policymaking.
- ✿ Ensuring the direct involvement of climate/meteorological/agronomic experts, researchers, institutions, as well as local stakeholders – citizens, farmers, value chain actors, civil society organizations – in the decision making process.
- ✿ Integrating climate risk management into the national budgeting process.
- ✿ Incentivizing accreditation procedures: sustainable and ecological labels, certifications, and standards that reward producers.
- ✿ Establishing participatory monitoring through the direct involvement of farmers and citizens to generate a larger volume of data in a cost-effective way.
- ✿ Investing in climate resilient practices across the food value chain including early warning systems, climate proof infrastructure, rainwater collection systems, and information and communications technologies (ICTs) to enhance communication and information sharing between actors along the value chain.
- ✿ Promoting short market circuits from producers to consumers to connect regional and local, and urban and rural communities to foster food security and climate change resilience at a smaller scale.

Advocate for the creation of new policies or programs by the government, or changes to existing policies or programs when these are the most effective approaches to meet the needs of members of the public. These could be programs that address specific needs related to inequalities for workers in agrifood systems, such as providing training for individuals of all genders in sectors in which they are not normally employed or enhancing women's access to technical assistance and resources or that respond to specific food insecurity needs, such as school feeding programs.

Providing oversight to government action on hunger to ensure it is effective and inclusive

Examine new laws and policies put forward by the government or other parliamentary colleagues on themes relevant to hunger and food security to assess if these align with commitments in adopted international frameworks on the right to food and if they demonstrate recognition for the varied experiences of individuals of all genders, ages, locations, and other intersecting identities.

 When laws or policies do not meet international standards, or do not respond to differentiated needs of the public, advocate for proposed amendments, sharing data and testimonies that evidence the importance of such changes.

Monitor the implementation of public policies and programs related to gender equality, food security, and the right to adequate food within the framework of SDGs 2 and 5. This may also require advocating for the collection of data disaggregated by gender and other social and geographic indicators to assess the impact of such laws or policies.

 Engage with diverse members of the public, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders on an ongoing basis to understand the firsthand impact of legislation, policies, and programs to inform your oversight work and questions you may bring forward in parliamentary and political spaces.

Exercise budget oversight with consideration for how allocations will contribute to addressing hunger and malnutrition in an inclusive way. Ensure adequate funding is designated to the implementation of policies and programs related to poverty reduction and food security, and monitor expenditures on these over time.

International agreements that enshrine the right to food

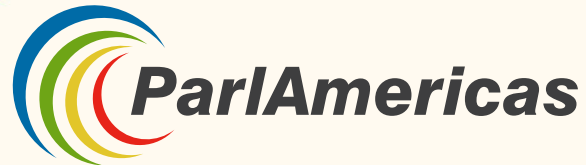
-  [Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition](#)
-  [Rome Declaration on World Food Security](#)
-  [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
-  [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#)
-  [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)



SOURCES

- ✍ Budlender, D. and Iyehen, I. (2019) Status of Women and Men Report: Productive Employment and Decent Work for All, UN Women Caribbean. <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2019/10/status-of-women-and-men-report-productive-employment-and-decent-work-for-all>
- ✍ Deere, C. and León, M. (2005) The Gender Gap in Land Ownership in Latin America. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239929803_La_brecha_de_genero_en_la_propiedad_de_la_tierra_en_America_Latina
- ✍ ECLAC (2015) Decree No. 110-2015. Law for the National Solidarity Credit Program for Rural Women in Honduras. <https://igualdad.cepal.org/es/repository-of-policies-and-strategies/decreto-no-110-2015-ley-para-el-programa-nacional-de-credito>
- ✍ FAO (2017) “Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Face Greater Poverty and Obesity Compared to Men.” <https://www.fao.org/americas/noticias/ver/en/c/473028/>
- ✍ FAO (2020) Protecting Land and Natural Resources Tenure Rights in the Era of COVID-19 by Heeding the Lessons from the Past. <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1321261/>
- ✍ FAO (2023) The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5343en>
- ✍ FAO (2023) “Gender and Work in Agrifood Systems.” <https://www.fao.org/3/cc5343en/online/status-women-agrifood-systems-2023/gender-work-agrifood-systems.html>
- ✍ FAO (2023) “2.1 Food Security Indicators – Latest Updates and Progress towards Ending Hunger and Ensuring Food Security.” <https://www.fao.org/3/cc3017en/online/state-food-security-and-nutrition-2023/food-security-nutrition-indicators.html>
- ✍ FAO, Gender and Food Security and Nutrition. <https://www.fao.org/gender/learning-center/thematic-areas/gender-and-food-security-and-nutrition/4/>
- ✍ International Fund for Agricultural Development (2022) “These Numbers Prove that Rural Women are Crucial for a Better Future. But They’re Not Getting What They Need to Succeed.” <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/-/these-numbers-prove-that-rural-women-are-crucial-for-a-better-future>

- 📎 OECD (2017) Latin America and the Caribbean: SIGI Regional Report. https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/Brochure_SIGI_LAC_web.pdf
- 📎 ParlAmericas (2018), Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process. https://parlAmericas.org/uploads/documents/Toolkit_Citizen-Participation-in-the-Legislative-Process.pdf
- 📎 UN Women, Increasing Women's Access to Land and Property in LAC. https://lac.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Americas/Documentos/Publicaciones/UN_women_infograph_access_to_land_print.pdf
- 📎 USAID, Food Security and Gender, Fact Sheet. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/46460857.pdf>
- 📎 World Food Program USA (2023) "Gender Inequality." <https://www.wfpusa.org/drivers-of-hunger/gender-inequality/>
- 📎 World Hunger (2019) "Women and Hunger Facts," World Hunger Education, World Hunger News. <https://www.worldhunger.org/women-and-hunger-facts/>



ParlAmericas International Secretariat
703 - 155 Queen St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6L1 Canada
Telephone: + 1 (613) 947-8999
www.parlamericas.org | info@parlamericas.org

