

# ‘Walking the tightrope’

## **Pregnant Women & Malnutrition in Aotearoa**

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# Hunger and malnutrition:

## HIDDEN HUNGER

Enough food,  
poor quality



## OBVIOUS HUNGER

Not enough  
food, poor  
quality

**Most hungry people are not affected by mass famines striking a particular area at one time –a ‘silent famine’ is pervasive:**

**Over 925 million people world wide regularly go hungry**

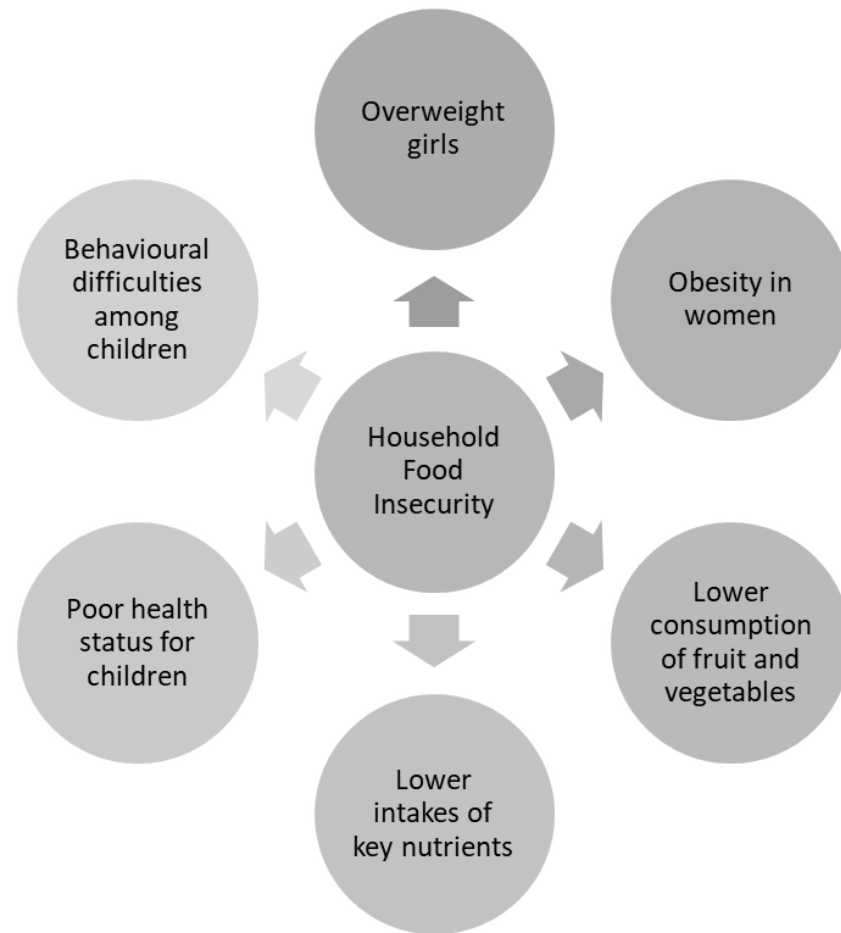
# Food security is...

Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global scales is achieved when **ALL** people, at **ALL times**, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996, p. 1).

A lack of food security leads to hunger (hidden or obvious) and famine (FAO, 1996).



# Household food insecurity:



(James & Rigby, 2012; Mourey & McMahon, 2012; Parnell, 2012)

# Food insecurity in Aotearoa?

- Failure to monitor pregnant women's nutritional wellbeing or food security status.
- Government's stance, "**New Zealand as a country is not food insecure**" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2008).
- 19% of women are food insecure compared to just 12% of men in Aotearoa (Carter, Lanumata, Kruse, & Gorton, 2010).



What are the opportunities to do things differently?

First we have to start by thinking about it differently!

# Our study

- What is the current discourse surrounding malnutrition of pregnant women in Aotearoa?
- Through the application of the Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 5 what challenges to this discourse become evident?



# SDG 2 & 5:

2 ZERO  
HUNGER



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

5 GENDER  
EQUALITY



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



	Power within:	Power to:	Power with:
Availability	Women recognize their right to sufficient quality and quantity of food.	Women can meet their food needs for sufficient quality & quantity of food.	Women can make change with others to improve the availability of food within their communities nationally and globally.
Access	Women understand how their wellbeing is connected to adequate access to food.	Women can negotiate adequate food access within their families and communities.	Women can make change with others to respond to factors which affect their access to food.
Utility	Women are confident and able to utilize food to meet their needs.	Women have resources to develop their knowledge around food utility.	Women can work with others to improve food utility in their communities.
Stability	Women possess self-confidence & self-esteem to recognize and voice concerns.	Women can meet threats to food security in the short, medium, and long term.	Women can work with others to respond the food stability threats in their community.

# Methods

This desk-based study used a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the discourse surrounding malnutrition in pregnancy in Aotearoa asking:

- *What is the central theme in positioning the text?*
- *What is the 'problem' framed' as?*
- *Who is the text directed to?*
- *Who is assigned responsibility for the 'problem'? (Janks, 1997).*

# 3 key findings

- Pregnant women are singularly responsible for ensuring adequate nutrition.
- A healthy pregnancy requires women to be educated to adhere to complex food guidelines.
- The use of fear and monitoring of women to motivate adherence.



# Walking the tightrope

This grand theme brings together the three themes found in the texts and reveals **the power structures which position pregnant women in a vulnerable space of both being the target of an impossible expectation as well as not having a role or voice in responding to this situation.**



# What does this mean for women & midwives?

- Midwives as social and political actors in social justice
- SDGs as a platform for change in Aotearoa
- The role of diverse consumers engaging with health promotional material
- Importance of monitoring food security/nutritional status nationally for pregnant women in New Zealand

