



IFHE
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
FOR HOME ECONOMICS

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE LIVING FOR ALL: A HOME ECONOMICS PERSPECTIVE

THE 2030 AGENDA for Sustainable Development provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations is inextricably linked with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth while tackling climate change and working to preserve our nature.

HOME ECONOMICS brings the focus of households as building blocks of sustainable societies. Addressing complex interrelated human and environmental problems, it aims at achieving optimal and sustainable living conditions for individuals, families and their communities while acknowledging their global interdependence.

Home Economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences. It is also known as Family & Consumer Sciences or Human Ecology. It follows an integrated approach and draws from a disciplinary diversity which might include, among others: food, nutrition, health, textiles and clothing,

shelter and housing, consumer science, household management, design and technology, food science and hospitality, human development and family studies, education and community services. Home Economists address the interrelationship of sustainability and human/civil rights and share a concern for vulnerable audiences.

Home Economists worldwide work as scientists and practitioners. They foster new knowledge through research and empower families and their communities to develop the capacity for agency. Home Economists promote positive systemic actions that improve the quality of life and represent the integrated, multi-level approach that is core to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

CONTRIBUTION TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Home Economics is considered as the original field of research focusing on economic, social and ecological aspects of everyday living, which includes responsible use of resources. Home Economics also addresses the impact of food, health, economic, environmental, and human/political systems on the status of individuals, families, and communities. Its capacity to draw from a disciplinary diversity allows for the development of specific interpretations of important UN Sustainable Development Goals:



No Poverty: End Poverty in all its Forms everywhere



Poverty is more than the lack of income and resources. A household's economic and social status is also determined by the relation between its members and free access to all social-economic opportunities.

Home Economists act as advisors to governments and communities because they are experts in what is needed to improve the quality of life for households and families. On a practical level, Home Economics aims to best satisfy the needs of household members with the available resources. Education in Home Economics competencies offers an important contribution to reducing poverty and alleviating poverty related circumstances of life. This especially refers to women who are usually heads of households and other vulnerable groups.

Home Economics Education often focuses on sustainable **food production**. Heads of households are trained in healthy **nutrition** and efficient cooking to improve their situation but also learn about hygienic behaviour, maternal and family **health**. Education in everyday life management also includes aspects that help to overcome poverty such as the importance of **education** for girls and boys and alternative ways of **income generation**.

Home Economics education often aims at **financial literacy**. As debt counsellors and family advisers, Home Economics professionals show ways out of indebtedness, support families

to sustainably manage their financial resources and thus address the important aspect of social exclusion. This includes low-priced, healthy nutrition; sustainable, cost-reducing consumption of water and energy or new ways of sustainable consumption ("sharing economy"). Improving the access of families and households to sustainable livelihoods, entrepreneurial opportunities and production resources, especially for women, will help to eradicate poverty.

Zero Hunger



The aim of ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition is closely related to a micro-level household perspective. Food production and food consumption are closely interlinked and households are basic entities of societies and economies, where members take decisions regarding their consumption choices and behaviour and livelihood strategies.

Women are still mainly responsible for the household tasks of procuring and preparing food, and for the related tasks of fetching water and wood or other fuels for preparing food. Their limited decision-making power and the unequal allocation of resources and division of workloads negatively impact on the food and nutrition situation of all household members in many parts of the world. Addressing structural conditions of hunger and food and nutrition insecurity such as unequal access to land and other resources directly benefits the food and nutrition situation of households, as women produce more food than men for household consumption.

Home Economics Education addresses the interlinkages between food production and food consumption by promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns for more sustainable diets – the key content of Sustainable Development Goal 12. This includes addressing the double burden of malnutrition, as evident in the alarming prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adults; resulting in huge public health costs. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to teach pre-school and school children and adolescents, as well as their parents and other care givers, about food preparation and healthy eating patterns, recognising that lifestyles are changing and that this information and advice need to be based on the everyday realities of people.

Home Economists are conducting research and projects around the world to reduce and prevent hunger and malnutrition. Home Economics professionals are educating especially women in sustainable food production and alternative ways of income generation which benefits household food and nutrition security. Training is provided on healthy nutrition, efficient cooking and the need to send children to school. Home Economist professionals are further working on research and education programmes for financial literacy to avoid that families become indebted. They also provide counselling for families to find ways out of poverty and actively support those families that face social exclusion.

At a policy level, Home Economics recommends to integrate the subject in curricula and making this education available to both sexes, to recognise and value unpaid work; to procure locally sourced and sustainably produced food, both in the private and institutional household.

Home Economics as a profession aims at overcoming gender stereotypes with regard to household-related tasks, encouraging all members to equally engage in food procurement and food preparation – promoting these as modern, positive, productive tasks that enhance everyone's well-being.

Global Health and Well-being: Ensure healthy Lives and promote Well-being for All at all Ages



Health problems pose a huge challenge for households whose members are affected, deprive households of economic and social resources and impede development. Significant strides have been made in increasing life expectancy, reducing some of the common killers associated with child and maternal mortality and eradicating diseases. But especially vulnerable groups such as rural women face multi-faceted health issues. They often lack health education, sanitation and hygiene facilities and are exposed to ambient pollution (air pollutants in households and farming).

Home Economics aims to improve well-being and increase the quality of life for members of private and institutional households. Health related Home Economics research contributes to achieving good health from many angles. Health related research on **Food Security and Nutrition** sets the focus on the relation between health and malnutrition, food allergies, the influence of healthy nutrition to longevity or healthy diets.

Household Technology research contributes to the development of secure household devices and clean cook stoves; helping to reduce sickness and death through toxic smoke. Research in **Hygiene** supports private and institutional households (e.g. hospitals, care homes) to avoid infections and improve cleaning processes and food processing with specific attention to vulnerable groups like children, elder people or hospitalised persons. Research in **Textiles** and household technology includes textiles used in kitchens, bathrooms, toilets and for medical treatments and develops special textiles and washing processes, aiming to reduce infections through contaminated textiles. Finally, research in Home Economics **Education** helps to improve methods for capacity building and to better educate household members and impart knowledge on hygiene behaviour.

Practical **Home Economics Education** plays an important role in improving health and avoiding infectious diseases. Trained in basic Home Economics, heads of household can avoid health risks by respecting basic hygienic behaviour (hand washing, food processing, cleaning) and by learning about safe alternatives to hazardous pesticides or unhealthy cooking stoves.

In institutional households, Home Economics professionals ensure health and well-being of people, who are not able to take care for themselves. Home Economists follow a balanced approach to increase well-being for all household members, not only taking into account health related aspects but also the psychological and social aspects.

Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls



Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls start at home. Gender equality in education or employment can only be achieved, if behaviour and values are nurtured and shared among household members and then confidently pursued beyond.

From a Home Economics perspective, the relationship between household members, the division of work, allocation of resources, decision-making and roles attributed to women are essential factors to reach gender equality. This also means including men and their changing identities into research and action. The vast majority of our field's addressees are women, Home Economists therefore advocate for gender equality in different areas:

Unpaid and Domestic Work – Relieve Workload of Women.

Home Economics research on household management shows that globally, the major part of unpaid work at home is done by women and includes care for other household members. If women participate in paid work, they are overrepresented in low paid work and receive less than men. To relieve women from household and care work, Home Economists demand a rethink of gender roles including more active involvement of men and other household members, and government support structures to enable this.

Equal Rights for Men and Women – Access to Resources, Land and Leadership. Women who bear the main household workload, care for other household members or generate household income need equal rights. They need full access to and control over land, economic and natural resources, financial services or inheritance. Home Economics extension programs include education on land or water management.

No Violence against Women and Girls at Home. Violence often starts at home, in families and communities and is affected by culture and traditions. Home Economists understand the household as a place where its members basic needs are met and therefore advocate for protection and security for women and girls and the establishment of protection services for women in rural areas.

Home Economics Education to advance Gender Education. Women must have access to high-quality education at all levels. At household level, Home Economics knowledge enables both men and women to improve the situation for themselves and their family members. This includes the need for food security and health but also spans the important aspects as financial literacy and the use of information and communication technology to ensure participation in the information society.

Clean Water and Sanitation: Ensure Availability and sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All



Water, food and energy topics are inextricably linked. Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families across the world.

Home Economics is a multi-disciplinary field and follows an integrated approach: Water may be perceived as a local good, but our field also considers the global implications local household activities and consumption have. Water related behaviour and hygiene standards are core element of Home Economics knowledge for private and institutional households.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. A central Home Economics subject is the impact of hygienic behaviour on health, thus ensuring access to safe drinking water and breaking the vicious circle of disease and malnutrition. We also advocate for adequate sanitation including handwashing facilities and toilets that guarantee privacy especially for women and girls.

Water Quality. Home Economics research provides new knowledge in sustainable waste management at community level or in extension services. Adequate education how to handle human waste avoids water pollution. On the consumer side, Home Economics can influence individual consumption behaviour, offering alternatives to the harmful use of plastic bags, dumping of medicine or use of personal care products with micro particles.

Water Use Efficiency. Household Technology experts advise on the production or use of water efficient appliances and Home Economics Education fosters locally appropriate sustainable water consumption (e.g. rain water harvesting). With food waste being one reason for water waste, Home Economists advocate for regulations allowing to sell “misshaped” fruits and vegetables, advise cities and local governments to recycle food waste and inform consumers how to prevent food waste.

Integrated Water Resource Management. Home Economics Education uses the concept of virtual water (water embedded in consumer products and production processes) to foster reflection on the individual water footprint and change consumption behaviour. It also fosters local community participation, including private households as water consumers into the municipal planning processes of water and wastewater management

Water-related Ecosystems. Household Technology research and Home Economics Education and training contribute to decreasing the use of wood and to establishing renewable energy sources for household cooking. Training in sustainable farming methods helps protecting rivers and groundwater from pollution.

Responsible Production and Consumption: Ensure sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns



Individual consumption affects the economy of a household and its members and has direct impact on the wider social, economic and ecological living environment. Home Economics is concerned with how individual behaviour, priorities and choices shapes future living at household level, in local communities and on a globally interdependent planet. It considers consumers as decision makers whose interactions have an impact and who hold their share of responsibility for a sustainable lifestyle.

Home Economists endorse the concept that people should not only change their personal lifestyles, but also come to practice activities in their communities, and thus promote and support transformation towards sustainability at a global scale.

Home Economics **research** aims to create new knowledge and innovative approaches to improve sustainable consumption. Prominent areas of scientific interest are e.g. food waste, the sustainable production of textiles or energy efficient cooking.

To improve framework conditions for sustainable consumption, Home Economists **advocate** for the inclusion of household needs in all planning processes. They also promote the integration of Home Economics Education on all education levels to increase knowledge about the global impact of individual consumer behaviour.

Institutional households such as universities or hospitals are encouraged to implement sustainable consumption and production ethics within their area of responsibility and among their staff.

Home Economics practice focuses on **consumer education**. To perceive everyone as a consumer does not mean people know how to consume in a sustainable way. Therefore, Home Economics consumer education includes practical advice and exercises how to behave and act in a sustainable way. This could refer to reduction of household waste or the sustainable management of household resources (e.g. water, energy, cooking fuel). Changing consumer behaviour also includes conscious decisions on the buying of textiles (thus influencing sustainable production and working conditions in the sector) or information on new models of consumption such as car sharing, urban gardening or eco-sensitive housing.

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HOME ECONOMICS (IFHE) is an International NGO that unites Home Economists worldwide who share a global, professional commitment to achieve a sustainable living for individuals, households and communities.

The federation was founded in 1908 and attracts individuals and organisations from 60 countries, each working at their local and national level. Since over 110 years, it thrives on the commitment of its predominantly female members and is led by an internationally balanced leadership team. The IFHE provides networking opportunities, publishes a refereed E-journal and organises World Congresses with over 1,000 participants, among others.

In 1981, the federation was given consultative status with the UN and later with FAO and UNESCO. It actively supports the UN initiatives Zero Hunger Challenge and Clean Cooking Alliance and is member of an NGO network advising WHO. On its own and with partners, the International Federation for Home Economics advocates for Home Economics to contribute to a sustainable future for all.

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