

Tajikistan Updates Feb. 2017



Photo: Open Market in Dushanbe, Tajikistan © A. Kowalewska 2016

INGENAES stands for Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services. We aim to assist partners in Feed the Future countries to build more gender-responsive and nutrition-sensitive extension approaches and tools to improve agricultural livelihoods for women and men and enhance household nutrition.

ingenaes.illinois.edu/about-us

In this issue

p.1 – Workshop on Gender & Nutrition

p.2 – Nutrition Needs Assessment – Oct 2016

p.3 – Regional Writeshop – Dec 2016

p. 4 & 5 – Collaborative Nutrition Research Projects – Feb 2017

p. 6 & 7 – Reflections on the INGENAES Global Symposium and Learning Exchange

Introductory Workshop on Gender and Nutrition

Last summer, thirty-six extension professionals and university instructors, administrators, and students attended a three-day training titled [Introductory Workshop on Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services](#). The training was held at the Feed the Future Tajikistan Agriculture and Water Activity office in Qurgonteppa and the Tajikistan Agrarian University in Dushanbe.

Participants thought the experience was refreshing and energizing, especially with the engaging facilitation throughout the training. As one participant stated, “Allowing everyone to participate through role plays, drawings, and group discussions helped to put theory into practice.” They enthusiastically created value chains for agricultural enterprises relevant to their country, like apricots, watermelon, and grapes, and examining who controls the assets, makes the final decisions, and performs the different tasks. This was a first step for many in understanding the gendered aspects and consequences of agricultural production.

Many participants remarked that they are now more aware about the important contribution women make in the household and on the farm, appreciating that this contribution often goes unnoticed, and they can more easily explain what goes into a nutritious meal. For those participants who work in the field with men and women farmers, the facilitation methods used in the workshop were cited as exciting ways to engage their audiences and allow the farmers to be directly involved in the learning process.

Nutrition Needs Assessment – October 2016

Two faculty members from the University of Florida, Elizabeth Wood* and Agata Kowalewska**, visited Tajikistan in October, 2016. This was a short but adventurous trip to a country and region that these faculty had never visited before, and it helped to set the stage for their future INGENAES activities in the country and to re-evaluate the needs of partners in Tajikistan. *(continued on next page)*

Nutrition Needs Assessment continued...

Qurghonteppa, a city 100 km south of Dushanbe, is located centrally in the area where Feed the Future is conducting most of their activities. While there, Wood and Kowalewska visited women's groups in Bokhtar and Balkhi Districts. Meetings with the communities were a rewarding part of the trip. Women in both villages were energetic and eager to learn. Despite challenges of everyday life in the villages filled with hard, physical labor; women were laughing, teasing, and describing these challenges as something that has to be done, not as potential barriers.

The two extension agents from the Feed the Future Tajikistan Agriculture and Water Activity (TAWA) who accompanied the trip were busy providing agricultural extension information to women groups because there is a high demand for knowledge and technology.

While visiting a village in Balkhi District, the faculty were treated to an *impromptu* herbal harvest. While discussing daily diets and ways of adding flavors to traditional dishes, some women decided that the best way to explain what herbs are commonly used was to bring handfuls of them to the meeting. The remaining part of the conversation was infused with smells of basil, thyme, colander, mint, dill, and other spices characteristic to Tajik culture and diets.

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INGENAES staff and Tajik farmers



Snacks in Qurghon-Teppa cantina

Regional Writeshop – Dec 2016

Eighteen professionals came from Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to participate in a four-day INGENAES-sponsored writeshop in December 2016 in Dushanbe. These Rural Advisory Services/Extension stakeholders from the Central Asia and the Caucasus Forum for Rural Advisory Services (CAC-FRAS) Network reviewed the “raw” INGENAES materials and converted them into formats (e.g., training outlines, activity sheets, Power Point presentations) that are more context-specific and readily useable “back home”.

They reviewed INGENAES resources on gender, nutrition and extension (for translated materials in Russian go to: <http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/tajikistan>) They also created products from INGENAES materials that can be used in the field with a variety of audiences (e.g., farmers, women's groups, students, extension providers) and identified ways to integrate INGENAES materials into trainings and extension efforts. Finally, the participants established a framework for ongoing collaboration on extension education and training throughout the region.



Writeshop activities © N. Ludgate 2016

Collaborative Nutrition Research Projects – February 2017

A group of University of Florida faculty and students are currently in Tajikistan conducting two studies regarding nutrition and diet. They first met with the collaborating partners in Dushanbe: representatives from the Feed the Future Tajikistan Agriculture and Water Activity (TAWA) and the Feed the Future Tajikistan Health and Nutrition Activity (THNA) projects.



The first research project is being conducted in partnership with TAWA and focuses primarily on collecting nutrition information through a survey. The target populations for this study are residents of the Khatlon Province, which is the southern part of the country and the Feed the Future zone of influence. Several students from the Tajikistan Agrarian University (TAU) and one UF Masters of Public Health (MPH) student were engaged during the data collection portion of this project.

The students are still in the field collecting survey responses from villagers in different rural districts. This project, headed by Agata Kowalewska, is being conducted in collaboration with TAWA's gender specialists and home extension economists who work in the areas under TAWA's targeted reach.

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Photo on left: Mothers-in-law discuss nutrition behaviors in a rural village within Khatlon Province © H. Rademacher 2017



University of Florida students Haley Rademacher and Arielle Konen sit in on a focus group in Bohktar District, Tajikistan © H. Rademacher 2017

Collaborative Nutrition Research Projects – February 2017 continued...

The second research project partnered with THNA to discover who makes household decisions about nutrition and why. Two UF MPH students conducted interviews with assistance from several TAU students. Additionally, TAWA field staff and facilitators who work within targeted communities assisted in data collection and participant recruitment. They interviewed community members in focus groups, specifically women with infant children, mothers-in-law, and their male counterparts, from rural households. Key informant interviews targeted government officials and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Khatlon and Dushanbe. This study, led by Elizabeth Wood, is using qualitative research methods to determine salient themes within the rural communities of Khatlon Province in order to better understand and inform THNA how to integrate better nutrition practices into agricultural and health outreach activities.

During field work, students from UF are training the TAU students in moderating focus groups, coding thematic data, implementing a survey, and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. The TAU students have been instrumental in providing information regarding cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. The UF students are also learning how to prepare a national Tajik dish, *plov*, from one of the TAWA extension agents.



Young women in the Shaartuz District complete a nutrition survey with TAWA extension agents. © H. Anderson 2017



Interviewing a woman Tajikistan Agrarian University student, Rauffjon Kuganov, while conducting survey in one of the villages of Khatlon Province. © A. Kowalewska 2017

Reflections on the INGENAES Global Symposium and Learning Exchange in Zambia

Written By Ms. Lola Gaparova, Senior Program Officer-Food Security and Household Budgeting USAID Feed the Future Tajikistan Health and Nutrition Activity (THNA). Email: lola.gaparova@gmail.com

The INGENAES Global Symposium and Learning Exchange was a very successful, first-of-its kind, high-level forum on gender and nutrition issues in extension. 160 participants from different countries were engaged with Feed the Future and INGENAES to share past experiences, human-centered design, and innovations in gender and nutrition issues in extension.

The Global Symposium assessed the challenges associated with nutrition within the extension services providing more equitable support to both men and women farmers. The focus was to enable the development of better tools and interventions to improve nutrition in vulnerable areas in developing countries. The event provided excellent networking opportunities for extension workers, nutrition specialists, government, non-governmental organizations and other actors addressing these issues. This high-level coalition of diverse professionals created a Community Network Map for future actions towards a global consensus on capacity and improvement approaches, which was moderated by coordinator Aldo de Moor.

All sessions of the Symposium contained useful information on nutrition and health, which I found helpful for my future work and want to share with you.

The first day of the Symposium was a Shift and Share Session, held in the Big Dome. The presentations introduced promising approaches and methods of integrating gender in nutrition activities in development countries such as: Malawi, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Bangladesh, India, and Afghanistan.

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Reflections continued...

I also had a chance to actively participate in a discussion session on Research for Gender Integration and Nutrition Integration conducted by Dr. Paul McNamara, INGENAES Principal Investigator and Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. McNamara highlighted research priorities related to the intersection of research, gender integration in extension and/or nutrition integration in extension. During the discussion, participants were able to share their experiences on conducted or planned research methods and approaches for organizations, for new projects or for academic purposes, in topics related gender, nutrition, and health. The participants also discussed how they use research results in solving challenges of integration gender and nutrition in extension.



Group discussion 2017 © L. Gaparova



Shift and Share Session 2017 © L. Gaparova

Another session which I found helpful for my future work was a Value Proposition, hosted by Andrea Bohn, Associate Director, UIUC. The session focused on changes that private sector entities and other value chain actors can make and how these are aligned with their value proposition.

Alex Pavlovic and Lydia Mbevi shared insights from the ZAMBIA PROFIT+ project, which promotes job creation through entrepreneurship with the private sector that commissioned the community agro-dealers (CAs) for providing services, such as demo training and farmer field schools, sell inputs, mechanization and spraying services, provide linkages for rural farmers to markets and create agro-businesses and savings groups in rural communities. There were fruitful discussions on what incentives we are doing now and how we can change them to have positive impacts.

On the second day of the Symposium, in Open Space Round I, I gave a presentation on Tajik Health and Nutrition Activity's (THNA) aim to help rural households to increase income for improving nutrition, and live better tomorrow. Through the promotion of income-generating activities (IGA), it is possible to facilitate economic access to food and therefore improve food security. IGA can improve the family food security when there is sufficient availability of food in local markets, but the impact will vary depending on the distribution of income within the household and the use of that income. After my presentation there was fruitful discussion on IGA, including questions and suggestions which are helping me to improve my activities in my future field work.

Aldo de Moor led a session on mapping. The purpose of mapping our actions was to develop charts and pathways towards improving nutrition and health of household in rural areas. The themes were: Gender integration - Supporting production - Market orientation - Addressing nutrition and health methods and approaches.

From the group discussion, it was clear that nutrition challenges could be reduced from each of the above themes following interventions that are defined as target intervention areas (TIA): Extension services, Markets, Technology, Policy, Education, and Training.



Lola Gaparova presenting during a Shift and Share Session

After arriving home from the Symposium I shared my experiences with my colleagues and partners. I also hope to contribute to THAN collaboration with FTF partners, MoA, MoH, NGOs, research centers and other actors to develop extension materials to deliver nutrition and health messages and services to increase productivity and family income. This will help to strengthen the promotion of extension services through campaigns, trainings, and demonstrations for both men and women in the 12 districts of the Khatlon province of Tajikistan

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