

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Fact Sheet
October 2016

The Whole Household – Gender in Ag

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Audience:

Extension and advisory service providers

The roles of women, men and children should be considered when assessing needs.



Bangladesh. © Mark Bell, 2012

Gender and Why it Matters

Typically, all members of a household (men, women and children) engage in farming activities. Traditionally, men often do the heavy work such as ploughing or transporting, women often participate in all activities but particularly weed and harvest, and children help out when not in school. However, the role and activities of women (and children) while important is often not recognized or considered when proposing or implementing extension programs. As a result, women - though important in most activities - are often excluded from discussions and decision-making about new technologies, and may not have access to critical inputs to improve their activities. Such exclusion can negatively impact productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and overall economic progress for the household and ultimately for a country.

What can you do? The following simple steps can help you better meet the needs of all household members.

- **Audience.** Consider the entire household (men, women and children) as your extension client, not just an individual farmer.
- **Engage all.** Talk to both men and women when planning programs to get their potentially different perspectives in terms of goals, experiences and concerns, etc..
- **Understand roles and decision points.**
 - Know who (men, women and/or children) does what activity along the production and processing chain of the crop/livestock of interest, and
 - Identify who makes the decisions if a practice along that chain is to be changed. Obviously, the decision makers will likely have to agree if a practice is to be changed. Also consider who else (e.g., perhaps a village elder) might need to "buy-in" to the extension activity such that a recommendation can be tested and implemented correctly.

Knowing who does what and who makes decisions then helps you identify who needs to be involved and trained. For example, it might be best that all the relevant adult family members (especially husbands and wives) are included in an extension event.
- **Holding the extension event.** Finally, consider:
 - **Possible conflicts.** What factors might limit a woman (or a man) from participating in extension activities (e.g., cultural norms, social status or conflicting activities like child care, household or community responsibilities).
 - **Group make-up.** Local cultural norms and sensitivities in terms of men and women working in groups. For example, it might be more appropriate to have a woman trainer for women's groups, or you should have just single-sex groups for certain topics, or it might be best to have mixed groups to maximize inclusion and information flow.