



CHANGE MAKERS



Tackling Machismo through New Perspectives

In many Latin American countries “machismo” customs and traditions convey a sense of supremacy of men over women, which leads to minimizing or downplaying the rights of women and girls. Machismo culture often limits the ability of women (and men) to participate in a more equitable social and family environment. Extension agents – the majority of whom in Honduras are male – experience the effects of machismo in their daily work, with fewer women attending agricultural trainings or able to make decisions regarding the use of income from agricultural sales. The INGENAES team and its partners are out to tackle this mindset to improve opportunities for both men and women.

Creating an environment of trust and openness is vital when trying to motivate behavior change around a longstanding and potentially sensitive topic. This requires understanding the context as well as the needs of the learners; in this case, the learners are field-based extension workers positioned in indigenous communities. To help participants relax, have fun, and be more willing to engage deeply in conversations that challenge long held belief systems, [INGENAES workshops](#) use interactive, sense-stimulating exercises that involve drawing, roleplaying, and creating songs.

In a typical household, gender roles are often quite fixed based on cultural norms. INGENAES has created an exercise that allows participants to experience what it is like to be the opposite sex, including their responsibilities, burdens and frustrations. This looks different in every cultural context, but usually men will indicate that they never realized their wives worked so hard, and how many competing responsibilities they juggle every day.

The INGENAES team in Honduras created a series of materials and workshops that engaged over 100 participants in [“Integrating Family Dynamics into Agricultural Activities.”](#) Each workshop welcomed very different types of participants, from universities to NGOs to government and private sector extension providers. All joined with other practitioners in a two-day workshop designed to provide practical, action-oriented tools and exercises that promote gender equity and nutrition sensitivity.

To assess their knowledge and skills in integrating gender into extension programming, all workshop participants received a pre and post evaluation. Three out of four workshops posted a 30% gain in knowledge and skills, with the second workshop posting a 16% gain. Workshop participants were asked to identify key insights or new learnings from having participated in the workshops.

In the sessions on integrating gender and nutrition, participants said they:

“Learned how to more effectively incorporate gender and nutrition within current agricultural programming”

“Understood the importance of shared labor and responsibilities within the rural household and the value of the role women play in the family”

“Realized the male dominance within the household and community and understood family dynamics as a pathway to understanding gender dynamics”

“Appreciated knowing about the limitations facing them as women with respect to life in a machista culture and eradicating the thought that women cannot do things well – the important thing is to involve women in every type of work – they can do it”

In the sessions related to sharing knowledge with farmers, participants said they:

“Learned how to engage farmer groups and extension agents in trainings on gender and nutrition through the use of participatory, dynamic, and interactive educational techniques”

“Learned how to use these exercises with producers so they can be bringers of change for themselves and their families”

“Learned ways of making the groups active during capacitation, you (the facilitator) learn a lot because you are also participating”



Role-play commences

As a follow up to the workshops, the INGENAES team in Honduras has been working with Zamorano, the Pan American Agricultural University, to integrate practical aspects of gender and nutrition into the existing agricultural curricula for students who will be working with small farmers in Latin America. An exciting development associated with the workshop that occurred at Zamorano, arose when stakeholders discussed ways of expanding the reach of these materials to even younger audiences who will be working directly with smallholder farmers at a “técnico” level (extension workers). The Government of Honduras, through the Office of Economic Development, is currently launching new curricula with Zamorano on practical extension approaches for agriculture, which they expect will strengthen the capacity of both young and more mature extensionists. The intention is to include materials generated by INGENAES on integrating gender and nutrition into this new curricula, which will help extend the reach of INGENAES beyond the project life.

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