

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

4 of 8

Creating a Supportive Community

Purpose

This series of Tip Sheets is geared at extension and advisory service providers (managers, field staff; public or private sector, NGOs).

It sets out simple suggestions for making sure **women** and **men** - including youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups:

- feel wanted and included in training events,
- are fully informed about technological, production, or process options,
- learn effectively, and
- have the confidence to implement what they have learned.

Over time, both women and men should be able to build on the training to innovate by themselves in response to changes in the wider environment and their specific resources and needs.

Good training events need more than great content. **How you train is vitally important.**

It is essential that both women and men are able to speak their minds and have opportunities to shape the training event for their own requirements.

As future farmers, the needs of young women and men in farming households need special attention in order to encourage those interested to stay in the sector.

Including women effectively depends on creating an enabling environment. Research shows it is much harder for women to take risks and do things differently than for men. Men are often praised for taking a risk, even if they fail. Women who take risks may be laughed at, or marginalized, by other women as well as men.

Engage community members in exploring how existing community structures could be developed to overcome gender barriers and promote inclusion and safe learning spaces. Ensure that the process is participatory and involves all segments of the community - women, men, youth, socially marginalized people, as well as opinion formers and decision-makers, at different points. Actively include experts such as agricultural extension workers from the target communities.

Help people in your target community and your public/ private sector partners to identify the costs when women are not included. Get them on board to support women innovators.

Action Steps

Build community appreciation of the benefits to participation by women, youth & marginalized people

The training event will only work if people attend it voluntarily. To secure support for women's participation sensitize the community in advance of the training event.

- Talk about women's participation with community leaders and opinion-formers, male household heads, and relatives in extended families (if appropriate, such as parents-in-law).
- Agree right from the start whether women will be trained together with men, or separately. Separate training runs the risk of creating a 'them and us' feeling, but in some situations women need their own spaces to learn effectively.
- Identify and work with local gender/women's organisations to help secure participation and tackle problems that may arise.
- Go farm to farm to secure the engagement of women, and be ready to address questions or concerns raised by any household member.
- Reach women via various social networks - religious, school-related, sports, savings groups, etc.
- Identify mobility, time and other constraints that might limit women's participation in training activities. Discuss with community members and husbands, as well as with women, how these may be overcome.

Build on existing gender norms

- Develop training activities to foster reflection and action around gendered attitudes and practices that may limit a family's ability to adopt new practices, and build on local gender norms that highlight women's knowledge and roles relevant to the technology or practices you are training them in.
- Use games that will make everybody laugh and then draw some learning related to the gender norms expressed in those games, and build from there.
- Work with young women on their participation and leadership skills and potential. Help them to construct new images of themselves as people with rights, aspirations, and dreams.

Support men and boys

Gender-responsive training events can challenge the perceptions of men and boys around who does what, who is responsible, and who benefits. Depending on the type of project it may be useful to consider ways to support men as they begin to confront and question the cultures at home, in the community, at work and the media which shape their identities.

- Strengthen men's personal commitment to gender equality and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to put that commitment into practice in their own lives.
- In some situations where long-range gender-transformative training interventions are planned, it may be useful to create men-only groups to help men support each other in changing their behavior and challenge concepts and practices related to traditional ways of being a man.
- Relate messaging to men with regards to gender roles and norms.
- Work with young men through organising peer training events.

The information contained herein is adapted from the GENNOVATE resource "Enhancing the gender-responsiveness of your project's technical farmer training events." The original author is Cathy Rozel Farnworth. This derivative and expanded information was developed by CIMMYT staff and partners for the public good. For more information, visit <http://maize.org/gender-strategy> or www.cimmyt.org/project-profile/gennovate.