

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

7 out of 8

Getting Great Facilitators

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.

Facilitators need experience in facilitating participatory, bottom-up development processes. They need to be enthusiastic and believe in the ability of people to change. They should be committed to open dialogue and learning based on respect and understanding for members of the community. Male facilitators must be able to 'walk the talk' and reject the benefits conferred upon them by virtue of their gender. Female facilitators must be able to listen to and to challenge men constructively as well.

Training and field staff need to understand more than basic gender terminology; they need to be able to diagnose gender-related issues, facilitate women's participation in training activities, and help to ensure that women are able to implement technologies and to innovate.

Ideally, trainers should have plenty of gender fieldwork experience - where possible in the targeted production systems, and a good understanding of gender equality concepts. If a team of trainers is being deployed, one should be a gender specialist.

- In some cultural settings women, or men, trainers may be more effective. Otherwise, aim for a gender balance in trainers. Male-female teams help segregated communities overcome some of their fears and taboos about women and men working together.
- Work with NGOs, women's groups and men's groups working for gender transformation where possible to develop empowering training methodologies.
- Ensure diverse representation of social groups as peer trainers, mobilizers and facilitators.

Action Steps

Get great facilitators

- Develop a cohort of excellent women and men facilitators to help women to participate actively. Aim towards at least 50% women trainers. If this is not possible then consider ways to build up the number of women in your training team.
- Pair less experienced facilitators with more seasoned facilitators with a good understanding of gender issues to share experiences and techniques.
- Train facilitators in techniques to help women speak. Encourage men to respect women's views and give them space to talk.

Women can do technology, too

- Pair women-men staff to lead community introductions and training events.
- Recruit women technical staff to teach on traditionally male dominated topics such as pesticide applications, pruning, etc. Set a benchmark (e.g. 30% moving towards at least 50% for women field staff in key roles).

Go local

- Develop the skills of women in the community to conduct training. At the beginning they can shadow experienced trainers in training events, and be given responsibility for specific tasks.

Develop women facilitators

- Women participants may feel more open with a women trainer, be more willing to ask and answer questions, and admit to knowledge gaps. Men may prefer their wives to have a female trainer. In such cases, it is important to ensure that women-only groups are trained by women facilitators.

Support women facilitators

- Women facilitators may need specific support in the field and their work more broadly, including onsite childcare if they have young children.
- Ensure accommodation is safe with adequate sanitation.
- Encourage and support women to discuss their training experiences, any problems they may face which hamper their ability to work well.

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.