

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Tip Sheet
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Assessing Food Patterns and Gender Roles

Dena Bunnell

Audience:

Extension providers
delivering nutrition
programming

Introduction

Nutrition is important in everyone's lives, but what good nutrition specifically means may mean different things to different members of a community or family. Women may be the ones who prepare food, but they often have less influence on household decisions including what foods they prepare. It is important to include men in discussions as they may be making production, marketing or purchasing decisions. When men understand the contribution they can make, they can take action to improve family nutrition.

Get to Know the Community

Engage the community in one or multiple activities, such as those listed below to better understand the gender roles in the community yourself (as a facilitator) and encourage the community to recognize and understand these different roles.

- **Conduct survey or focus group** with men and women separately to identify roles and perceptions relating to nutrition decisions and practices. Ask what role they think they have in their family's nutrition and what role they think their partner has. Ask about normal food consumption for different family members, who decides what food will be included in the meal, what food is purchased and what food is grown at home, how many meals each family member eats each day, and what foods are considered "healthy."
- **Conduct an activity** to get community members thinking about their role in nutrition and how that might differ among men and women.
 - Have them draw what they eat in a day to scale of the portion size or use pictures to identify the foods and portion sizes. Next, have them do this for other family members.
 - Divide into pairs or small groups to share the identified foods and portion sizes.
 - Come together as a whole group to share results. What surprised community members? (Are there differences in what/how much different people or different family members eat? Is there a pattern to the differences? E.g. do men usually eat more?)
- **Share the results** of your activities with the community and facilitate discussion about reactions to the results and what the results might mean for their community.



A Bangladeshi girl prepares food to sell
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Participants collaborate on a nutrition activity during a workshop in Nepal
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Next Steps

Understanding the community you are working in is important. Use what was discovered in this process when developing nutrition programming that will serve the community.

References

“Integrating Gender and Nutrition with Agricultural Extension Services” Facilitator’s Guide. USAID Integrating Gender and Nutrition into Agricultural Extension Systems (INGENAES), 2015. <http://dev.ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gender-and-Nutrition-Facilitators-Guide.pdf>

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