



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Fact Sheet on Gender responsive EAS

Why is Gender Equity Important in Extension and Advisory Services?

Audiences

Extension Agents, Organization Leaders, and Policymakers



A Bangladeshi woman and child attend a group learning event © A Bohn 2012



Extension agents train women on fish pond care in Bangladesh © C Eisenmann 2015

Introduction

Addressing gender inequity in extension and advisory services (EAS) is critical for the effectiveness of service aimed at improving food security and reducing poverty. There is a development and a business case to be made for overcoming gender constraints in EAS.

The Development Case

Improve food security and poverty reduction outcomes

The agricultural sector is considered an engine of economic growth, and improving productivity through better inputs and practices increases food availability and incomes for farming households. Ensuring availability of EAS to women farmers increases opportunities to adopt new technologies, inputs or practices in pursuit of improving yields and increasing household income. Approaches that engage both men and women, such as “farming for the family business” are designed to benefit the whole household.

Improve household nutrition, health, and education

Women’s agricultural contributions are significant to household food security and nutrition, both through direct consumption and through the sale of plant- and animal-based products when women are allowed to at least partially control how that income is used. There is a strong correlation between women’s control over income and greater investments in children’s health and education.

Remove discriminatory beliefs and practices

Women and men both have a right to live free from discrimination, yet gender inequities limit women’ access to education and employment opportunities. Inequalities in women’s (or men’s) participation in agricultural activities and benefits for agriculture are often caused by discriminatory beliefs and practices. Biases against pursuing agricultural careers or discrimination during recruitment and retention of extension officers negate commitments to equal opportunity and create inefficiencies in human capital and productivity.



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Ugandan workshop participants exchange ideas © K Moore 2015



Workshop participants collaborate during a workshop in Nepal © J Henderson 2016

The Business Case

Improve the efficiency of business

Women are not always perceived as farmers, and may have less access to technical assistance and extension services than men. As a result of not receiving appropriate EAS, opportunities for positive impacts on the quantity and quality of agricultural produce are forgone. Adopting practices which improve flow of service delivery, such as hiring women extension agents and targeting both men and women with EAS, increases the effectiveness of services and overall impact.

Ensure the flow of quality goods

Women's contributions account for a significant portion of agricultural production, processing, and marketing. In low paying or unpaid positions, or when it is men who predominantly reap economic benefits of agricultural activities, women lack incentives to participate. When women are not incentivized to invest their time or labor, they withdraw, endangering a reliable supply of product. Creating or improving incentives for women's participation improves value chain reliability and reduces risk.

Creating new business opportunities

As buyers and suppliers of agricultural products, women are often unnoticed or underserved. Women may be sidelined as value chains formalize or are prevented from participating in developed value chains controlled by men. EAS facilitates women's participation in value chains as suppliers of inputs or services, producers of new products, or processors.

Conclusion

Understanding the development and business case for addressing gender inequity is important to create gender inclusive EAS approaches that improve the efficiency of service delivery and positively impact farmers.

References

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