

WORLD BANK ANNUAL MEETINGS

"WHY WOMEN MATTER: AGRICULTURE SOURCEBOOK  
BRIEFING"

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

12:02 p.m.

Room HQ1 B-610

P R O C E E D I N G S\*

1  
2 MS. DOUGLAS: Good morning. Thank you  
3 very much for joining us. We are here to celebrate  
4 the launch of the Women in Agriculture Sourcebook.  
5 What we will do is to invite each of our guests  
6 here to make a short statement and then open the  
7 floor to questions.

8 So, just very briefly, the Sourcebook is  
9 the result of the joint work of Food and  
10 Agriculture Organization, the International Fund  
11 for Agricultural Development, and the World Bank.  
12 It's been a process of work over the last three  
13 years, and there have been over 100 researchers and  
14 development practitioners involved in the process.  
15 So we think it is an extremely valuable  
16 publication, and we hope that you do as well, and  
17 please feel free to ask questions about it after  
18 our speakers have spoken.

19 [Pause.]

20  
21 MS. DOUGLAS: Our first speaker will be  
22 Daniel Gustafson, who is the Director of the  
23 Liaison Office for North America for the Food and

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\* Some modifications have been incorporated in this transcript due to technological delays.

1 Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

2           Next we have Cheryl Morden, who is the  
3 Director of the North America Liaison Office for  
4 IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural  
5 Development.

6           Grahame Dixie, who is a senior  
7 agricultural specialist from the South Asia Region  
8 from the World Bank.

9           And Regina Birner, who is a senior  
10 research fellow from the International Food Policy  
11 Research Institute.

12           So each of our speakers will have just a  
13 very short statement to make, highlighting  
14 particular elements of the Sourcebook. Then  
15 hopefully we'll show the video, and then we'll open  
16 to questions.

17           So, Daniel, could we start with you?

18           MR. GUSTAFSON: Okay. Thanks very much.

19           The part that I would like to highlight  
20 relates to the world food crisis and the reason why  
21 it is made worse because of gender inequalities.  
22 The idea that women suffer more in the food crisis  
23 is, I think, more intuitive and easily accepted.  
24 But it's also interesting to note why the crisis is

1 actually worse because of the lack of attention and  
2 the lack of resources that women have access to.  
3 And there are two aspects to this that I would like  
4 to highlight.

5           In the first case, the crisis is worse  
6 because women, of course, are, as the Sourcebook  
7 points out, so critical to agricultural production.  
8 Usually in most developing countries, the vast  
9 majority of production actually comes from women  
10 and women have the least access to the kinds of  
11 things that are critical in responding to the  
12 crisis, like access to land and access to  
13 fertilizer and access to credit. So, clearly, the  
14 response to the crisis in terms of increasing  
15 production is severely limited by the handicaps  
16 that women face in spite of the fact that they are  
17 the major producers.

18           The other aspect to this is that the  
19 crisis is not, of course, only about food  
20 production but really about food security and  
21 nutrition security at the household level and also  
22 at the national level; and particularly at the  
23 household level, decisions by women and what assets  
24 they control and their decisionmaking power and the

1 way that they utilize resources and assets at their  
2 disposal to improve the well-being of the family  
3 is, of course, essential and, really, women play  
4 the critical role in household food security. And  
5 there, again, because of the limitations imposed by  
6 gender inequalities in the agricultural sector and  
7 in society at large, the response to the crisis and  
8 being able to deal with it is, in fact, made worse.

9 Thank you.

10 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you.

11 Cheryl?

12 MS. MORDEN: Thank you very much.

13 On the same question, has the food crisis  
14 been made worse by inequalities between men and  
15 women in the agricultural sectors, well, women feed  
16 the world. In poor countries most working women  
17 are involved in agriculture, and this is  
18 particularly true in the poorest countries that  
19 rely on very labor-intensive agriculture. In fact,  
20 women account for more than half of the labor  
21 that's required to produce the food eaten in  
22 developing countries. And in Africa, women provide  
23 some three-fourths of the labor for food  
24 production.

1           But there is a very deep gulf between the  
2 world's reliance on women's food production on the  
3 one hand and the things that they need to produce  
4 on the other, like land, tools, seeds, information,  
5 credit, and market access, what they need to grow  
6 and market that food.

7           So it seems that for a very long time, the  
8 world has counted on women's tremendous  
9 resourcefulness, their knowledge, their experience  
10 to grow more with less, given this gulf. But what  
11 we see is growing evidence, which is now very  
12 conveniently and compellingly compiled in the  
13 Sourcebook, that women do not grow more with less.  
14 They grow less with less. But the evidence also  
15 shows us that when women have access to more of the  
16 resources that men have, their productivity  
17 increases and their income grows. And the  
18 Sourcebook is full of examples, just to mention a  
19 few: the doubling of fertilizer use and profits of  
20 women farmers in Ghana; accelerated adoption of  
21 technologies in a whole host of countries when  
22 women were involved in the design and testing up  
23 front; or production increases in four African  
24 countries when the land, labor, and capital were

1 more equitably allocated between men and women.

2           So to revisit the question is the food  
3 crisis made worse because of gender inequalities in  
4 agriculture, we would have to answer yes,  
5 considering that one of the underlying causes of  
6 today's rising food insecurity is the failure of  
7 productivity to keep pace with growing demand,  
8 which arises from population growth, rising  
9 incomes, and urbanization.

10           The past 40 years have seen very steep  
11 declines in the productivity, for example, of  
12 maize, wheat, and rice, while demand for the  
13 cereals for food, feed, and fuel have increased  
14 quite substantially.

15           So, going forward, the comprehensive set  
16 of actions that's needed to increase productivity  
17 and improve food security has to include specific,  
18 concrete steps to recognize, understand, and  
19 address the barriers that are created by the gender  
20 roles, rights, and responsibilities within the  
21 agricultural sector. And unless our actions  
22 address these gender issues, they will not succeed  
23 in the way that's so urgently needed.

24           MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you.

1                   Grahame?

2                   MR. DIXIE: The question posed to me was,  
3 Is the market failing women farmers? Now, I can't  
4 answer that in two minutes, but I think the  
5 question I can come back with an unequivocal yes  
6 is, Are there ways through an understanding of  
7 market can we increase the income through the  
8 women's sector? And I'll give you some examples,  
9 practical examples, because that's what I am.

10                   In Uganda in the 1980s, the challenge was  
11 thrown out: What are the opportunities there for  
12 export crops? What was identified was an  
13 opportunity to reestablish the vanilla industry.  
14 That involved market identification, test marketing  
15 the product, transferring the curing processes, and  
16 building up women producers using clear extension  
17 messages and propagating the plant material. The  
18 end result: an industry doing about \$20 million of  
19 turnover, employing about 12 million people, mainly  
20 women farmers because women farmers are so much  
21 better at intensive care and the manual dexterity  
22 needed to pollinate the vanilla plant.

23                   The next story comes out of Nigeria.  
24 Strong demand for catfish. We looked at the

1 catfish farming sector, and though that's  
2 profitable, what we discovered is if you wanted to  
3 be pro-women, by increasing the production of  
4 catfish you created jobs for women, essentially  
5 30,000 tons of catfish being produced, farm gating  
6 \$75 million, but the consumer spend at \$180  
7 million. That \$100 million of value-added is all  
8 being channeled through women's businesses--the  
9 market queens, the market mamas, and particularly  
10 the buka restaurants which produce the catfish  
11 soup. So essentially what you've got there was  
12 that you produce another 10 tons of catfish, it  
13 creates 11 jobs, 10 of which are women's.

14 Or we can switch now to Bangladesh, where  
15 you have completely different circumstances: women  
16 who are insulated, who don't leave their villages,  
17 and yet the demand they had is how can we improve  
18 our income. And yet they only sold through  
19 visiting pikers or traders or through their family.  
20 It meant that they were essentially producing  
21 blind. They don't know what the market is, and the  
22 definition of marketing is finding out what your  
23 consumer wants and delivering at a profit.

24 So the design there was to do marketing

1 extension, a very practical, experimental training  
2 course to be able to be delivered by the local  
3 NGOs. Six steps. First step, brainstorm about  
4 what we produce, form a small task force. That  
5 task force that's in basic economics. But the  
6 seminal step was to get them to do their own market  
7 research. In other words, the NGO who was leading  
8 the training course would do a one-to-one interview  
9 with the trader, and then they would sit in, and  
10 then they would take over, and they would do their  
11 own interviewing. So at the end of that day, they  
12 had directly engaged with the market. The group  
13 filtered through the information and went back to  
14 their home community and said, "These are the  
15 opportunities. There's an opportunity for our rice  
16 cakes, but not for our bamboo"--or whatever.

17           What were the results? Well, a couple of  
18 ways of measuring them. One was how much  
19 additional knowledge did we have, and they have  
20 said, "We had two out of ten was our knowledge  
21 before the training course, six out of ten after  
22 the training course, and now we've been training,  
23 eight out of ten." Income impact. Increasing the  
24 income of the family by around about \$150 a year,

1 which is about an increase of 30 percent. And just  
2 an interesting takeaway was how when they talked  
3 about the impact of that was the reduction in--it  
4 reduced the conflict between them and their  
5 husbands by just having that additional money in  
6 their pocket. And what did they do? They  
7 discovered opportunities that you and I would never  
8 even believed existed, that they tended to  
9 aggregate their product into critical mass and  
10 bring in a bigger trader or take it up the value  
11 chain, and change what they produced because they  
12 now learned what the market wanted.

13 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you, Grahame.

14 And our final speaker, Regina Birner from  
15 IFPRI. Thank you.

16 MS. BIRNER: Thank you. I would like to  
17 talk about the question, Given the uncertain  
18 economic outlook, why should the global community  
19 invest in women in agriculture? And there are two  
20 major reasons why the global community should  
21 invest in women in agriculture.

22 The first reason is that the returns to  
23 investing in women in agriculture are very high,  
24 and we have already heard examples. And in a time

1 of economic crisis, it is important to invest in  
2 areas where the returns are high. Why are the  
3 returns of investing in women so high? It is  
4 exactly because women right now have such low  
5 access to agricultural services, inputs, and assets  
6 that an additional dollar invested in women in  
7 agriculture will give a very high return. That is  
8 a simple economic law. If you start from a very  
9 low basis, investing an additional dollar will give  
10 you higher returns. And the Sourcebook shows many  
11 examples that the basis is really very low.

12           For example, an analysis of a credit  
13 scheme in five African countries showed that women  
14 received less than one-tenth than the credit that  
15 was received by male small-holder farmers. And  
16 according to FAO data, women received only 2 to 10  
17 percent of all agricultural extension contacts. It  
18 is for this very reason, that we are starting from  
19 such a low basis, that returns to investing in  
20 women in agriculture are very high.

21           The second reason, as we also have heard,  
22 women are hardest hit by the current food crisis  
23 and, therefore, not investing in women would incur  
24 high costs, both in terms of foregone opportunities

1 and wasted lives. Research shows that women often  
2 end up being the shock absorbers of the food  
3 crisis. They reduce their own consumption to leave  
4 more food for other household members. And girl  
5 children are the first to be taken out of school,  
6 which jeopardizes their opportunities later in  
7 life. And these problems are more severe because  
8 the global community has neglected women in  
9 agriculture for far too long. And, therefore, it  
10 is both a matter of smart economics and a matter of  
11 equity and justice to invest in women in  
12 agriculture now.

13 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you.

14 I should just remind you that in your  
15 media packs on your chairs, there are biographies  
16 of each of the speakers if you would like to know  
17 more details about them. But thank you for all  
18 those very compelling arguments for the importance  
19 of investing in women.

20 I think given the timing, what we might do  
21 is just take questions now. If you have a  
22 question, if you could introduce yourself and the  
23 organization that you represent, and tell us who  
24 you would like your question directed to. And if

1 you would like to do follow-up interviews with any  
2 one of the panelists later, then we would be happy  
3 to organize that as well.

4 But right now the floor is open to you.  
5 Are there questions? Yes, sir.

6 QUESTIONER: [inaudible] from Southern  
7 Economist, India. What are the practical ways of  
8 investing in women [inaudible] both men and work  
9 there on the farm. [inaudible].

10 MS. BIRNER: There are many examples. One  
11 example is increasing the access of women to  
12 agricultural extension. That would imply, for  
13 example, also having more female extension agents  
14 because they can relate better to women. Right now  
15 worldwide we have only 15 percent of all extension  
16 agents are women, and in many countries, it's even  
17 far less. That would be one example.

18 Forming women's groups to create them with  
19 better access to credit would be another very  
20 important example. And we heard examples from the  
21 marketing side.

22 So these are three areas in research  
23 addressing--in the priority setting of agricultural  
24 research focusing on those commodities and those

1 crops that are important for women, which may  
2 include dairy--I mean, India is a very good example  
3 that that has really improved women's lives to  
4 invest in dairy. So there are many areas where one  
5 can specifically address the needs of women in  
6 agriculture.

7 MS. DOUGLAS: Anybody else? Cheryl.

8 MS. MORDEN: I would just add that in our  
9 experience it's important also to find ways that  
10 women are able to participate in an ongoing way in  
11 community-level decisionmaking so that they can  
12 speak for their own needs and their own  
13 perspectives and contribute their own experience in  
14 a more sustained way. So for us that is also an  
15 important component in the overall question.

16 MR. GUSTAFSON: If I could just add on  
17 that too, I think a really critical aspect of the  
18 Sourcebook is to turn the situation around a little  
19 bit. We know how to invest in markets. We know  
20 how to invest in institutions. We know, in fact,  
21 how to invest in institutions to make them more  
22 aware of gender issues and so on. But, really, the  
23 focus of the book is really on the people and how  
24 you improve the capacity of women to make better

1 choices around technologies, around markets and so  
2 on, either individually or through their groups.  
3 And I think when we look at really--sort of the  
4 crux of the gender issue is to look really at the  
5 constraints and opportunities of the people who are  
6 involved, not just of the larger setting, which is  
7 also critical, and policies and markets and so on,  
8 but really the focus on the people, and within  
9 that, women, of course, are critical. And it's  
10 that kind of investment in their capacity and the  
11 capacity of their organizations that's also  
12 critical.

13 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you. Go ahead.

14 MR. DIXIE: If I could just add, in the  
15 book you will see there's a very interesting case  
16 example of Andhra Pradesh and the women's groups  
17 there and the mobilizing of them. And the second  
18 thing is on the market side, if you look at the  
19 India example and the way that the consumer  
20 consumption is changing, we can clearly see that  
21 the animal protein in the milk sector will grow  
22 very quickly, both of which are pro-poor and pro-  
23 women.

24 QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. My name

1 is Pap Saine from the Gambia, co-publisher of The  
2 Point newspaper and dean(?) of writers in the  
3 region.

4           First of all, I would like to make a  
5 request to have statements from all of the  
6 panelists, your statements.

7           And, number two, you are talking about  
8 this gender. I would like to draw your attention  
9 that in Africa, particularly in the Gambia, the  
10 women, most of them they don't have lands to (?)  
11 to do their farming. There are a few of them who  
12 used to have farms for the vegetables. Do you  
13 think the World Bank or FAO can help to encourage  
14 African women to have their own lands and (?)  
15 other things?

16           Thank you.

17           MS. DOUGLAS: Grahame?

18           MR. DIXIE: Well, I did work actually in  
19 Gambia in about the year 2000 looking at intensive  
20 irrigation systems for women, and that was an FAO  
21 project with African Development Bank funding. And  
22 what that was particularly looking at was intensive  
23 irrigation systems to be able to generate high  
24 levels of income from small areas, particularly

1 around the periurban, where we saw an increasing  
2 demand for vegetable consumption, particularly in  
3 the urban areas. And, therefore, it was generating  
4 the demand for this kind of periurban agriculture,  
5 often leaf vegetables, which could be done at very  
6 intensive levels and generate high incomes from  
7 small areas. They were allocating lands on the  
8 outskirts of towns.

9 MR. GUSTAFSON: Could I add? From FAO's  
10 perspective, there are a couple of instances or  
11 areas that I think are particularly critical.  
12 Certainly land rights for women and changes in land  
13 rights and recognition of women's land rights is a  
14 critical issue that we have worked on with others  
15 for a long time.

16 In addition, I think that is also  
17 highlighted in the Sourcebook. A lot of what we  
18 are working with governments and NGOs and others on  
19 is really the changing circumstances in  
20 agriculture, in Africa and elsewhere. Gambia, I am  
21 sure, is no exception in this regard. And the  
22 changes often in modernization or changes of  
23 production patterns and so on often tend to  
24 discriminate against women. And a lot of the work

1 is looking in much more depth and, let's say,  
2 explicit focus on how those changes affect women  
3 differently than men. And there are a number of  
4 examples in the book also, I think, that are  
5 fascinating on changes in the way that dairy  
6 products are used or in high-value export crops or  
7 other things and how those changes affect different  
8 groups differently.

9 MS. MORDEN: I would just--may I say one  
10 quick--

11 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

12 MS. MORDEN: This is also a concern and  
13 one that we have tried to address in our case as  
14 well, and I think our way of approaching it is to  
15 invest in women in the short term within the  
16 existing constraints, so often quite a lot of  
17 emphasis on enterprise development for women who  
18 don't have access to land, while at the same time  
19 in conversation with the government looking at  
20 these more systemic questions of landownership and  
21 land use, and then in between, discussions at the  
22 community level to sort of raise awareness about  
23 the implications of women's lack of access to land  
24 and more community decisionmaking and problem

1 solving at that level.

2 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you. Actually, I have  
3 one question here, and our panelists need to go to  
4 a lunch which is part of the book launch, and you  
5 are all very welcome to join us for that lunch. I  
6 think we probably only have time for one more  
7 question--we'll take two questions. Can we do  
8 that? And if we could have just very short  
9 answers, that would be great.

10 QUESTIONER: Thank you. I'm Hannah  
11 Foullah from Sierra Leone. I work with Radio  
12 Democracy. I'm happy that at least there's  
13 something to address the inequality when it comes  
14 to agriculture, and I know recently the IFC and the  
15 World Bank are now working in collaboration with  
16 one of the African banks, Ecobank, in providing  
17 help in agribusiness.

18 But this is my own problem because in  
19 Sierra Leone, most of the private sector, like the  
20 banks, would not support anything like agriculture  
21 which they think is not very safe to invest in. I  
22 wonder if the Sourcebook addresses that issue and  
23 whether there's any maybe, let's say, offering of  
24 suggestions as to how the private sector could also

1 support women.

2 MS. DOUGLAS: Grahame?

3 MR. DIXIE: Well, the banking sector is  
4 always nervous about investing in agriculture  
5 because it's risky and so on and so forth. Some of  
6 the ways that we have overcome that--an example  
7 would be the catfish story in Nigeria--was in order  
8 to model the success of the small-scale business  
9 and then be able for the bank to understand that  
10 this is a successful investment and for other  
11 entrepreneurs to see that it's a successful  
12 investment. So there's that kind of process, and  
13 I'll leave it to the others.

14 MS. MORDEN: I would say in our case,  
15 because we do financing as well for programs and  
16 projects, we're currently in the process, with the  
17 African Development Bank, of assessing agriculture  
18 and rural development projects in Africa. We hope  
19 to have this completed by the end of the year. And  
20 with the insights from that evaluation, to come at  
21 this question of financing from agriculture from a  
22 sort of rational approach where we can have a good  
23 division of labor and make sure that there are more  
24 resources going into the sector from all sources--

1 private, government, and multilateral.

2 MS. DOUGLAS: We will just take a final  
3 question.

4 QUESTIONER: I am John from Manila. I  
5 work for the Business Bureau. My question has to  
6 do with the fact that Manila imports the balance of  
7 10 percent of its rice requirement from world  
8 markets, and I understand it's one of the largest  
9 demand. My question really is: If banks are  
10 hesitant to lend to the agri-sector because of the  
11 risks that are involved, are there instructive  
12 models anywhere in the world that could, in fact,  
13 teach the Philippines to perhaps use the issue of  
14 gender inequality to boost rice production in our  
15 country? Are there models that could be copied for  
16 Manila to address its lack of--I mean, insufficient  
17 supply of rice?

18 MS. BIRNER: Well, there are certainly  
19 many examples in the Sourcebook on how to address  
20 the various constraints that limit production of  
21 food, including rice. And certainly access to  
22 credit is one of the most important ones, and we  
23 have already seen some examples. But one very  
24 important approach is using cooperatives or groups,

1 and that has very well worked for the case of micro  
2 credit. And the task is to make that kind of  
3 credit--to have the conditions right for the  
4 agricultural sector. So there's certainly  
5 important examples, and there is certainly an  
6 important example of how to address other  
7 constraints to production as in the marketing  
8 sector or with regard to agricultural technology  
9 and extension.

10           So the Sourcebook is actually full of  
11 examples that could be very useful for your  
12 situation.

13           MS. DOUGLAS: I think we actually need to  
14 close this session, unfortunately. If people have  
15 questions they would still like to ask, if you  
16 could let me know, then I can find the panelist for  
17 you and put you in touch for follow-up questions.  
18 But they do need to move on to the next event.

19           QUESTIONER: [inaudible, off microphone.]

20           MS. DOUGLAS: The statements? Yes. And  
21 we'll get a transcript for you for that. I'll get  
22 your card in a moment.

23           QUESTIONER: Thank you.

24           MS. DOUGLAS: I think if any of you are

1 interested, we do have--there is a lunch happening  
2 over at the MC Building now. If you have the time,  
3 the panelists are going over there, and you would  
4 be welcome to join that lunch. There will be many  
5 experts there continuing this discussion, so you  
6 would be welcome. We have some places reserved for  
7 media there, so please, let me know if you would  
8 like to go, and we'll organize that.

9           We also have copies of this film available  
10 if any of you can use those on your websites or in  
11 other areas.

12           Thank you so much and please let me know  
13 if you have any other questions.

14           [Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the briefing  
15 was concluded.]