

# Gender in Agriculture



## About the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*

The history of agricultural development programs and projects leaves us with a rich legacy of experience, both positive and negative. It is experience that can inform the design and conduct of interventions underway today. Some of the practical information available for us to refer to is quite recent. Some of it regards work in progress, long before it can possibly lay claim to the kind of empirical validity that can only be established by *ex post* analysis. (Even with the advantage of hindsight, development practice is not a hard science, and virtually every application of existing knowledge consists of an adaptation of that knowledge, purposefully tailored to accommodate the specific realities of a comparable but different setting.) Current information about work in progress often commands attention on the basis of its potentially high relevance, or because it represents a novel or innovative approach to some familiar problem. Capturing this timely information is critically important, for the problems we confront are affecting people now and their situations are often critical. The situation of women farmers in developing countries is a cardinal case in point.

The *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook* presents a rich compilation of experiences, some of them ongoing, in which agricultural projects have incorporated gender-related components or adapted their operations to allow for gender variables and engage issues that affect men and women differently. These very often carry great practical consequence for the respective potentials of men and women as agricultural producers. The experiences chronicled capture a rich blend of hopeful innovations and cautionary lessons about the importance of avoiding the pitfalls of “gender-neutral” operations in areas in which gender issues are a salient variable in agricultural production – namely in the large majority of rural settings in those low-income countries in which agriculture remains a major engine of economic growth. Other lessons emerge from projects in middle income developing countries.

The *Sourcebook* is a joint publication of the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and most of the accounts related in it draw

from the operations of the three agencies. More than 100 authors and reviewers contributed to its production, which actually continues after the print release of the publication on October 8.

An online edition ([www.worldbank.org/genderinag](http://www.worldbank.org/genderinag)) containing the print publication is also intended to serve as a “living document” to which additional chapter will become appended as they become available. Post print chapters already include a note on property and inheritance rights among widows and children in households affected by HIV and AIDS in Africa, and profiles of project activities in El Salvador and labor legislation in Chile, among others. Future contributions will examine the differential impacts of the food price crisis on men and women and will seek to document good practices that enable women to reduce their vulnerability and hopefully increase their capacity to respond to price signals from increasing demand. Migration, rural-urban inter-linkages, biofuels, genetically modified foods, agricultural finance, and food safety were touched upon in the current edition of the *Sourcebook*, and will likely be expanded upon and addressed in greater detail in subsequent additions to the web-based edition. In general though, future addendums will be added as experts come forth to share their experiences in bringing gender considerations to bear in agricultural policies and programs.

### Audience

The *Sourcebook* targets practitioners and technical staff in development agencies, public officials in developing countries responsible for the formulation and conduct of agricultural policy, and civil society and nongovernmental organizations that work in rural communities. It can also be a useful resource for academics and members of the research community. While it will likely be of interest to gender and development specialists, its principal audience consists of technical experts and policy makers who require practical, operational guidance on how to incorporate gender variables into their planning and decision making.

The dissemination of the *Sourcebook* within the FAO, IFAD, and World Bank has been planned to consist of a road show visiting the various regional and country offices of the three agencies. Preliminary plans are also being prepared for a series of learning events to be developed based on the *Sourcebook* modules. Additional partners such as the Canadian and Danish International Development Agencies (CIDA and DANIDA), and the Inter-American Development Bank are also planning to use the *Sourcebook* in their agricultural operations.

### **The Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook and the 2008 World Development Report Agriculture for Development**

The *Sourcebook* reinforces and expands upon a number of messages of the 2008 World Development Report, which recognized in no uncertain terms the essential of women smallholders as agents of agricultural growth and food security – and the devastating consequences that follow when their potential is left unrealized. Like the *Forests Sourcebook* and *Sustainable Land Management Sourcebook*, which were also released by the World Bank's Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Department this year, the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook* is intended to serve as a highly practical manual with practicable principals that can be readily applied directly to development policy and operations. The ARD sourcebooks, including the *Agriculture Investment Sourcebook* seek to impart the working processes through which the principles of the 2008 World Development Report and other economic and sector work can be translated into practical reality.

### **How is this Sourcebook different from other resources on gender in development?**

The agriculture sector is rapidly changing, with new opportunities and challenges for reducing poverty and ending hunger. Markets and demand for agricultural commodities and advances in agricultural knowledge and technology are changing rapidly, and these changes require stronger need to unleash the full potentials, strengths, and com-

plementaries of all key players, both women and men. However, women's disproportionate lack of access to productive resources, collective action, political voice, and limited mobility hinder their optimal participation into these emerging markets. This in turn leads to low agricultural growth and food insecurity in many countries.

Factors outside of the sector, such as widespread environmental change and climate change, are also altering agricultural potential throughout the world. The composition of rural households is changing considerably as a consequence of HIV and AIDS, with deaths of young adults and farm households left in the hands of children and grandparents with subsequent impacts on agriculture. Migration, arising mainly from poverty or prompted by natural disasters or violent conflict, now forms a dynamic force, changing the landscape of the rural population. In some regions, men more than women are likely to abandon agricultural work at home and migrate first to seek income in other sectors. Women are being left to carry the full burdens of agricultural production, but often with no legal protection or rights to property ownership. All these changes present new challenges, opportunities, and entry points in addressing gender disparities and empowering women.

This *Sourcebook* provides an up-to-date analysis and timely resource in understanding the challenges and opportunities for women and men in the context of rapidly changing agriculture sector. The *Sourcebook* is not a primary research product, advocacy piece, or toolkit; it capitalizes on the real development experiences of task managers and operational staff in designing and implementing gender-responsive agricultural projects. The *Sourcebook* synthesizes in one place knowledge, experience, and tools, which are currently scattered in many different places using a unifying framework on sustainable livelihoods. This framework looks at (1) access to and control of assets; (2) access to markets; (3) information and organization; and (4) capacity to manage risk and vulnerability through a gender lens.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## *Critical Issues on Gender in Agriculture*

### **1. Is there evidence of significant economic returns to investing in women?**

Evidence shows that when women and men are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster, more of the poor move more quickly out of poverty, and the well-being of men, women and children is enhanced. In Burkina Faso, evidence suggests that both the output of women's plots and total household output could be increased by between 10 and 20 percent by reallocating existing resources from men's plots to women's plots. In Tanzania, reducing the time burden of rural women could increase cash income among smallholder coffee and banana growers by 10 percent. In Kenya, if women farmers had the same access to farm inputs, education, and experience as their male counterparts, their maize, beans, and cowpea yields could increase as much as 22 percent. This would have resulted in a one-time doubling of Kenya's GDP growth rate in 2004 from 4.3 percent to 8.3.

### **2. How pervasive is gender inequality in agriculture?**

Women are the major players in the sector, producing as much as 80 percent of most crops in low income developing countries; however, they have less access than men to productive resources and lack political voice. Some examples help illustrate the extent of the inequalities.

- Men's landholdings average almost three times the size of women's landholdings.
- Fertilizer is more intensively applied on men's plots and is often sold in quantities too large for poor women to buy.
- An analysis of credit schemes in five African countries found that women received less than one-tenth of the credit that was received by men smallholders.
- In most developing countries, rural women's triple responsibilities—farm work, household chores, and earning cash—often add up to a 16 hour work day, much higher than their men counterparts. However, women continue to lack access to important infrastructure services and appropriate technologies to ease their work loads.
- Women-owned businesses face many more constraints and receive far fewer services and support than those owned by men. In Uganda, women's enterprises face substantially higher barriers to entry than men's, although those that exist are generally at least as productive and efficient as men's in terms of value added per worker.

- In Guatemala, women hold only 3 percent of snow pea production contracts but contribute more than one-third of total field labor and virtually all processing labor.

### **3. Are women hardest hit by the effects of the current food price crisis?**

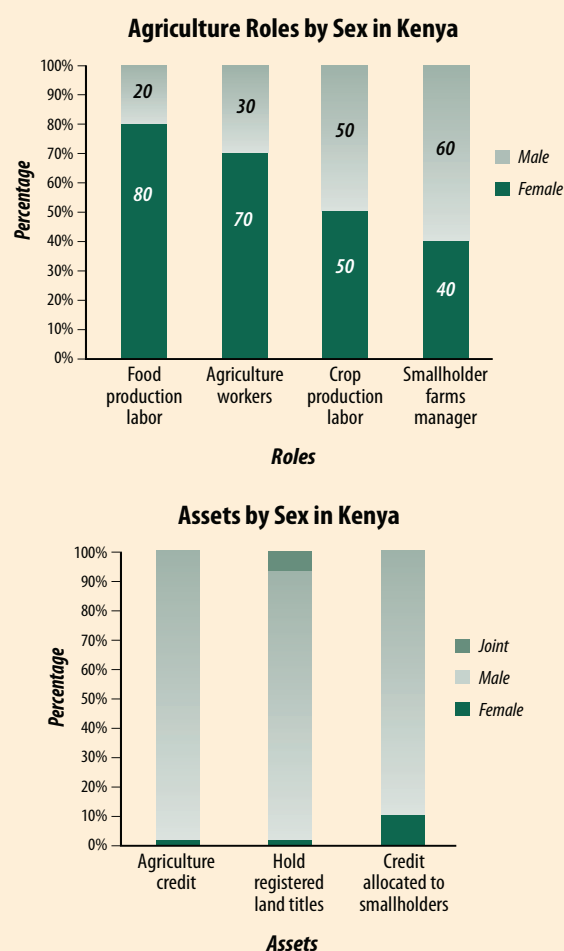
Evidence suggests that women are hit the hardest by the effects of the current food price crisis. They typically spend a higher proportion of their income on food than men, and higher food prices are likely to erode their purchasing power disproportionately. With fewer assets and heavier burdens on their time, women are more vulnerable to shocks and less well positioned to respond to them. They usually enjoy fewer rights and protections under both customary and statutory legal systems than men. Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa women and children tend to consume fewer calories than men, leaving them more vulnerable in terms of their nutrition status. African women and girl children in rural central India are customarily the last members of the household to eat. The lack of employment opportunities or access to resources that would enable them to start up and maintain business enterprises can quickly become desperate constraints in a context of soaring food prices. Among those women who work, a disproportionate number are employed or self-employed in the informal sector, which provides no social protection or safety nets to fall back on.

### **4. Is the food price crisis worse because of gender inequalities in agriculture?**

Evidence suggests that persistent gender inequalities in agriculture may very well have substantially worsened the current food price crisis and exacerbated its effects.

Figure 1 illustrates the gender gap in terms of economic roles and access to productive assets in Kenya, revealing a scenario common in many developing countries. This disparity between what women *do* and what they *have* indicates a highly inefficient allocation of resources that seriously inhibits growth in agricultural production. The supply side constraint that results from this inefficiency assumes increased urgency as price signals tell smallholders to grow more but inputs become too expensive for farmers to afford – disabling them from putting together the supply response that market demand would otherwise induce. Considering the proportion of resources available to women producers reflected in figure 1, *their* capacity to respond to market signals can be inferred.

**Figure 1. Roles and Access to Assets by Women and Men in the Agriculture Sector**



Source: World Bank. 2007. Gender and Economic Growth in Kenya. Washington, DC: World Bank.

In addition to the key role in agricultural production, women play a central role in translating agricultural development into food and nutritional security for their households. When women have an income, substantial evidence indicates that the income is more likely to be spent on food and children's needs. Studies indicate that to achieve the same improvements in children's nutrition and health with a \$10 increase in women's income would require a \$110 increase in men's income. Relative lack of access to resources and control over incomes by women has contributed to the devastating effects of the food crisis on hunger and malnutrition, and has effectively disabled women in their roles as agents of food security.

### 5. Will addressing poverty automatically solve food and nutrition insecurity?

Poverty is a major driver of food insecurity, but the two are not always linked. Evidence shows that poorer households headed by women often succeed in providing more nutritional food for their children than those headed by

men. This demonstrates the importance of gender-based knowledge and roles with regard to food security. Men who lack knowledge about food preparation may not be able to translate food availability into nutritional security for their households.

India has been remarkably successful in using agricultural development and has moved from food deficits to food surpluses on the national level. India has a higher gross national income (GNI) per capita at \$730 than most of sub-Saharan Africa but its child stunting rate remains high at 46 percent. Niger's GNI per capita is just \$240, but its stunting rate is 40 percent. The Gambia demonstrates what can be achieved despite poverty, with a stunting rate of just 19 percent against a GNI per capita income of \$290. Many would argue that the inferior status of women in South Asia is a key factor in the failure to translate agriculture-led poverty reduction into nutritional improvements.

### 6. Do climate change and natural disaster impact women more than men?

Unequal power relations and access to livelihood assets mean that men and women have different capacities to mitigate or adapt to climate change. Water shortages and forest degradation means women and girls have to travel alone over long distances to collect water or fuelwood, increasing not only their workloads but their vulnerability to gender-based violence. Rural women are poorly informed about mitigation and adaptation strategies because policy, program design and information systems are still primarily directed at men.

### 7. Does environmental degradation impact women more than men?

Environmental degradation can have significant gender impacts particularly in increasing women's time burden. For example, in hilly villages in Nepal, where women perform 82 percent of the firewood collection, extensive deforestation increases the time they take to complete this task by 75 percent per load of firewood, which translates to an additional 1.13 hours each day collecting firewood. On the Central Plateau in Burkina Faso, where population density is high, women spend between 32 and 35 hours each week collecting firewood. Studies in Pakistan find that as women's access to potable water deteriorates, their time spent collecting water increases.

### 8. Will women lose even more as a result of the biofuel revolution?

The rapid development of biofuels presents a broad range of opportunities for achieving sustainable energy but it also entails multiple trade-offs and risks. Current biofuels

depend on food crops, including corn, sugarcane, soybeans, rapeseed, and palm oil. Expanded production of these crops for biofuels has contributed to some of the rises in food prices. A second concern is the impact on sustainable livelihoods for rural households. If production and processing of biofuels occur through large-scale, vertically integrated commodity chains, small farmers will be unlikely to benefit. A number of important gender issues may result from the large-scale production of biofuels.

- Biofuels require the intensive use of resources including land, water, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides to which small farmers have limited access. Women, and particularly women in women-headed households, will face greater barriers acquiring these resources and participating in biofuel production.
- The large amount of land required for biofuel production will put pressure on marginal land and common property resources. The conversion of these lands to biofuel crops might result in the displacement of women's agricultural activities toward lands that are even more marginal, thus decreasing household food security.
- The potential loss of biodiversity from large-scale monoculture plantations may affect women and men differently. The establishment of plantations on previously uncultivated land may threaten wild edible plant species. Women often rely on the collection and preparation of wild plant species for food, fodder, and medicine.
- Livestock farmers will be particularly affected by biofuel production with the conversion of grazing land to crop land and the higher price of livestock feed. Livestock is extremely important for the food security of poor farmers.

Additional measures may be necessary for small-scale women and men farmers to be included in medium- or large-scale biofuel crop production, such as policies supporting decentralized production, local use of the energy produced, and organization of cooperatives or other forms of participation. Organizing small-scale women and men producers' groups can enhance local benefits. Cooperatives can play a useful role in linking large firms to independent growers in countries such as Brazil and Mauritius.

### **9. Do HIV and AIDS impact rural women more than rural men?**

In 2004 the Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS announced that 57 percent of Africans between ages 15 and 49 living with HIV and AIDS were women, and even more alarmingly that three-quarters of all Africans between the ages of 15 and 24 who are HIV-positive were women. Yet research revealed that many of the victims of the pandemic were not infected but were rather widows and children of

those who had died. HIV and AIDS affects people's physical ability to produce and use food, reallocating household labor and increasing the workload of women who carry much of the burden of caring for people with AIDS and orphans. As the household asset base dwindles and more members become sick, women's access to scarce resources is further diminished. Property grabbing from widows and children is becoming more common in communities affected by HIV and AIDS. A study of rural households in Mozambique has shown that an adult death due to illness, which is likely to be AIDS related, reduces the amount of staple foods produced by these households by 20–30 percent, contributing to household food insecurity.

### **10. What has the bridge or the road to do with gender equality and what kind of rural infrastructure development is key for women farmers?**

Rural infrastructure covers a wide range of physical infrastructure and derived infrastructure services, including energy, transport, information and communications technologies, irrigation, sanitation and hygiene services, potable water, market infrastructure, and social and administrative infrastructure. Each of these entails many different services, modes of delivery, variations in coverage, and range of users as well as technical parameters for construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance.

Various studies have increasingly documented four major differences between men and women with respect to rural infrastructure: (1) differences of needs for the type and location of physical infrastructure, (2) differences in priorities for infrastructure services, (3) unequal opportunities to participate in decision making on the choice of infrastructure services, both within the households and within communities, or to participate in the implementation of the infrastructure programs and the delivery of services, and (4) significant disparities in access to infrastructure services. The disparity in time poverty between men and women is the single most important economic factor that justifies integrating gender equity into rural infrastructure policies, program, and projects.

Given the wide range of women's and men's needs for infrastructure and infrastructure services, it is critical to ensure gender equity in planning, decisionmaking, and management processes lest the development of the infrastructure and services cause or aggravate gender disparities. There is a need to address women's time poverty with appropriate labor and time-saving technologies. Investment aimed at reducing the domestic burden of women, given the effect on productivity and labor, will substantially increase the benefits of other investments. There is a need to in-

clude labor and business opportunities for women and men during project implementation so that they can both benefit from the expansion of markets that results from rural infrastructure programs.

### **11. Given the great benefits to increasing investment in women in agriculture, why is it so hard to change the focus on funding?**

First, many policy makers remain unaware of the role of women and the economic returns that investing in women farmers can generate, and their priorities tend to focus on other development issues. Advocacy and interest groups have not been strong enough to fight for the cause of gender equality in agriculture. Second, many still assume that market mechanisms alone are capable of allocating resources efficiently between men and women. However, evidence suggests that cultural and social factors and gender norms constrain women farmers' ability to respond to agricultural incentives. Third, while development efforts are intensifying, the mistaken assumption that mainstream development interventions will somehow automatically benefit both men and women equally appears to persist among many practitioners and policy makers. Especially in agriculture, where the roles and responsibilities and access to assets and services are characterized by wide gender disparities, this misapprehension should have been resolved a long time ago. Fourth, redirecting development resources and changing policies requires political will and commitment by decision makers at multiple levels of government and society. Experience suggests that strong political leadership by committed champions is most likely to come from women decision makers and policy makers, and many developing countries lack this important political advantage. Getting women into leadership positions emerges as an important political priority.

### **12. Women receive less than ten cents in every dollar spent on agricultural assistance—what are FAO, IFAD, and the World Bank doing to address that imbalance?**

FAO assists governments to develop equitable and gender-sensitive policies in agriculture. It trains government ministries and local organizations to consider and apply equitable approaches towards all men and women farmers. FAO does not give financial assistance but helps stakeholders in developing countries to be aware of and address the needs of both their male and female vulnerable poor and hungry people. FAO supports specific capacity building projects for young people, rural women and communities and helps to carry out research on topics of local and global importance such as high food prices and climate change.

Over the last ten years, IFAD has worked hard with its partner countries in mainstreaming gender in the programmes and projects it finances, by integrating gender into key business processes and providing support for gender training, capacity-building, knowledge management and implementation. The clearest impact of IFAD supported-programmes and projects has been achieved in the area of economic empowerment, particularly in raising women's incomes.

The World Bank's goal is to reach a level where at least half of our agriculture and rural development projects include investments and activities that benefit and empower rural women by 2010. We are moving in the right direction, currently over thirty five percent of our rural projects address the role of women in design stage, up from 20 percent in 2001. As a signal of the World Bank President's commitment on gender in agriculture, funds have been made available to regional staff to mainstream gender into rural projects. But, we still have a long way to go. The figures are low in the face of the challenge of gender inequality in the sector on one hand and the evidence available on the significant economic and social returns to investments in women farmers globally on the other. Clearly more needs to be done and we need to stay on the pulse of collecting and sharing cutting edge resources and positive experiences with those who design and implement rural programs.

This is one reason why the World Bank put together the Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook—together with FAO and IFAD—which has practical examples and technical advice that will help development practitioners better integrate gender-responsive actions into agriculture and rural projects.

### **13. What are the key priority areas for renewed investment in gender equality in agriculture?**

*Rights:* Strengthening women's rights including right to land and property, asset ownership and access to services and opportunities for women

*Capacity:* (a) Developing capacity of gender units and women's organizations in sectoral governance; (b) Intensifying provision of education and skills formation for women;

*Collective action:* Promoting and building capacity for greater collective action for women for their economic and social empowerment

*Representation:* Affirmative action for more women in private and public institutions and organizations in agriculture

*Research:* (a) Increasing investment and strengthening capacity for gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis; (b) Intensifying analytical work and impact assessment on gender