

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

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Introduction: In most developing countries, gender discrimination is deep-rooted in the rural community and leads to lack of land rights and decision-making power, malnutrition, infant mortality and poverty, with women caught in the middle of the vicious cycle. Because women and men often have different production priorities and face different production and marketing constraints, rural advisory services must be tailored according to the gender roles within the community. Another gigantic issue which exists within the society - rural and urban - is the chronic hunger and poverty which lead to malnutrition or under-nutrition in many developing nations. While focus of policy makers have shifted from increased production to reduced poverty and malnutrition, mitigating malnutrition is yet to be achieved due to lack of awareness, advisory services, nutrition education, poor dietary intake, social beliefs and customs.



Fig. 1: Tailoring school- Non farm activity

Agricultural extension system has its own set of problems when it comes to integrating gender and nutrition in extension services - insufficient resources, both human and financial, to dedicate gender-nutrition focused activities; communication gap; and multiple work agenda. With the outlook of the above scenario, the study focussed on (1) understanding the status of nutrition and gender as part of the set of agricultural extension activities in different regions of the world, (2) finding out extension approaches

adopted by various organizations to address gender and nutrition in agricultural extension activities in India, and (3) critically analyzing challenges faced by existing agricultural extension services and opportunities for strengthening these services.

Methodology and research design: To identify and explore key players working towards integrating gender and nutrition both in agricultural extension system within India and across the globe, mapping exercise were carried out followed by reviews from secondary sources and informal conversations with experts in agriculture, nutrition and gender, consisting of representatives from government and research/academia, all of whom were having varying levels of expertise in agriculture, nutrition, and gender. ICAR- Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (Bhubaneswar), National Institute of Nutrition (Hyderabad), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Hyderabad) were identified as major stakeholders working on gender, nutrition and its integration with agricultural extension. Systematic review of literature and snowball sampling technique were used for data collection.



Fig. 2: Preparing nutrition recipes

Status of nutrition and gender as part of the set of agricultural extension activities in different regions of the world

S.N.	Particulars	Details
1.	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and India	Rural women as the targeted population in agricultural policies with objectives of national gender equality plan which includes gender indicators at the outcome and output level
2.	Brazil	Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is included in all of the current food and agriculture policies and those plans related to promotion of the family farming model is especially nutrition sensitive.
3.	Sierra Leone	Women participate in most of the agricultural production but have no land right or decision making power for marketing and other production related issues.
4.	Senegal	Nutrition sensitivity is integrated into the agricultural policy documents but not in a broader spectrum.
5.	Malawi	National policies indicate for diversified production, especially of leguminous crops. Knowledge and emerging practices using indigenous crops, cooking and preparation exist at a local level, which can contribute to nutrition-sensitive agriculture, are needed to be promoted.
6.	Mozambique	The main challenge is the insufficient promotion of dietary diversification and lack of broader strategic documents.
7.	Nepal	National planning commission developed major plans to check malnutrition among children, improve food and nutritional security through poverty reduction, agricultural trade surplus and higher income for rural households, improving sustainable agriculture-based livelihoods.

Approaches for integrating gender and nutrition in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services:

All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Home Science has 14 centres across the country, each centre involved in identifying local problems and developing drudgery reduction tools and technology. Custom hiring centers with available drudgery reduction tools especially for women were established in the project villages with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) intervention. AICRP on Home Science also encouraged non-farm activities of farm women, to develop protective clothes/aprons, hand gloves, natural dyes and colours from flower and leaves extracts. Trainings on tailoring, embroidery, food processing i.e., jam, jelly, pickle, candy, juice preparations were also given for economic empowerment of women.

Parichay, an innovative extension methodology for introducing all available technologies in a public gathering like a weekly market. The advantage of this new concept is without wasting time and efforts on forceful intervention of new technologies, this lets people observe and arouse their own interests.

CRIDA conducted trials of growing bio-fortified crops under the village adoption program. Bio-fortification by agronomic practices can be helpful to the rural community and is a cost-effective and cheap source of fortified food than available in the urban supermarkets. Research is being carried on to genetically modify rice varieties of different cultivar to ensure consumption of nutrient-rich food as part of the daily diet of the Indian population. The field units of Food and Nutrition Board, Telangana have been developing low-cost nutritious recipes from locally available food, keeping in view the requirements of infants and pre-school children and propagating the same through training courses and nutrition education programs. International Crop Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has developed an Agri-Innovation Platform to support the entrepreneurs by creating a demand pool with validation for marketing. Double fortified salt enriched with Iodine and Iron is a low-cost technology developed by the National Institute of Nutrition

NIN is developing a mobile app named 'Nutrify India Now', which will be downloadable from Google Play with more than 300 recipes and their nutrient values collected from various areas of India.

(NIN), Hyderabad, as its ingredients are easily available and consumption of this fortified salt can ensure safety from two types of nutrient deficiencies. NIN were using different extension methodologies to create awareness about appropriate dietary guideline among the prevailing group of people with help of print media like posters, leaflets

folkways, jingles and drama, street plays, puppet show, Burrakatha and nutrition games. Food and Nutrition Board, Telangana and the KVK of Central Research Institute of Dryland Agriculture celebrates different events with a motive to create awareness among people about food and nutrition issues, minor millets, etc., by organizing quiz competition, painting, etc., on nutrition themes along with display of different nutrient-rich food specimens and lectures on nutrition issues. These events help create awareness and sensitize rural people, ICDS officials, Anganwadi teachers, etc.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra was conducting exposure visit for rural women to various project sites to educate them about nutrition and gender friendly tools/ technology, method demonstration of women-friendly tools and nutrition food recipes, multi-grain flour, post-harvest technology, food preservation technique, kitchen gardening, result demonstration on nutrition deficiency, malnutrition abnormality, take home material to educate people on nutrient security, value addition and micronutrient deficiency. Training was the main component to create knowledge about nutrition and gender activities especially for extension workers and officials working in grassroot level. Backyard poultry rearing with country chicken and duck varieties was also encouraged for income generation and daily nutrition of the household. In multi-agency approach, scientist during their action research period, employed a male para-extension professional and female para-extension professional within the community and also gave necessary financial support for carrying out various activities.



Fig. 3: Awareness about nutrition issues through flash cards- NIN initiative

Problems identified by different organizations

1. Myths about the diet of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women by elderly members of the families.
2. Interventions are only taken to educate and reach to the pregnant and lactating women but no initiative to create awareness among the head of household or elderly members.
3. Low participation of the targeted beneficiary i.e., women, as the decisions of food and management of family resources are done by the house head or elderly member.
4. Poor health of mother results in the birth of a child suffering from malnutrition.
5. Anganwadi workers are good at extension work, but may skip as there is no collaboration between Anganwadi and Axillary Nurse Midwife (ANM).
6. There is no land right for women, therefore no decision-making power, no purchasing powers, often leading to gender discrimination.
7. Most of the dairy management practices are carried out by the women but they hold no rights to decide about the marketing of animal products.



Fig. 4: Demonstration of seed drill planter

8. It is found that due to poverty men tend to migrate to cities seeking jobs but women solely handle the crop production practices but there are less policies and programs for women farmers.
9. Improper meeting time for women followed during village meetings.

Recommendations:

1. To prevent malnutrition, there is a need for a family approach rather than a group or individual approach.
2. More efforts to grow nutrition garden and include information about nutrient value of different local food items in every household and schools.
3. A number of women and men Village Level Workers (VLWs) should be sensitized properly about gender and nutrition perspective.
4. Selection of suitable timing and venue for women's meetings.
5. Need to get the support of male members of the family as they are often taking decisions regarding the social mobility of women. They can even be convinced to join in the nutrition and gender-related meetings for better understanding and implementation.
6. Approaches should be need and problem based and try to create empathy about the situational factors of the particular area.
7. Selection of appropriate group of beneficiary - otherwise wrong selection often leads to zero results.



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Complete report on 'Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services' is available at www.manage.gov.in

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the document are that of the authors based on the research conducted and are not necessarily those of MANAGE or the officials interacted with during the study.

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