

GUIDANCE: Designing Nutrition-Sensitive Interventions

Women's Access to Production Resources

E.g., Women's Participation in Farmer Associations



BACKGROUND

Farmer associations are effective in helping members access inputs, trainings, resources, and markets to increase incomes and productivity. Unfortunately, women are often unable to access these associations for a range of reasons.

At the same time, evidence shows that there is a clear link between empowering women with better incomes and more decision making power and improving nutrition for children and households. Therefore, agriculture projects focused on developing stronger farmer associations to increase farmer productivity and incomes should ensure gender equality so that these benefits reach female producers.

CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURE-TO-NUTRITION PATHWAYS

Improved agriculture through women's participation in farmer associations can contribute to one or more of each of the three main agriculture-to-nutrition pathways:

1. **Production pathway:** by increasing household production of high-quality, diverse foods available for home consumption and for the market.
2. **Income pathway:** by increasing women's income and improving household allocation of income that can be used to purchase diverse foods.
3. **Women's empowerment pathway:** by addressing social norms that limit women's participation in household production decisions and access to productive resources and services.

TARGET BENEFICIARIES

- Women's groups in agriculture
- Farmer groups/associations staff
- Farmer groups/associations members

OBJECTIVES

1. Increased income and productivity for women

2. Increased women's access to productive resources and training
3. Increased women's participation and leadership in farmer associations
4. Increased women's access to savings and finance

INDICATORS

1. Percent change in women's income (outcome)
2. Women's self-efficacy score (outcome)
3. Percent of women who feel included in decisions made by their farmer association (outcome)
4. Percent of women accessing savings accounts (outcome)
5. Percent of women with access to cash savings and/or credit (outcome)
6. Percent of women with access to inputs (outcome)
7. Number of women members in leadership roles in farmer associations (output)
8. Number of women members in farmer associations (output)
9. Number of farmer associations conducting gender-related training for their members (output)

ACTIVITIES

1. Conduct a gender analysis focused on women's membership and leadership in farmer association (reference ACDI/VOCA's GenderFirst tool for more information on how to do this). Questions related to women's participation in farmer associations could include the following:¹
 - *Are there fewer women than men in farmers' organizations? If so, why are women less likely to participate in cooperatives than men?*
 - *Are there women in leadership roles in farmers' organizations? If not, why are women less likely to be in a leadership roles' in cooperatives than men?*
 - *Are there gender differences in attendance and participation at cooperative meetings, training courses or events? Why is this the case? Are there ways to encourage more balanced attendance?*
 - *Do male and female members tend to use different types of services offered by the organization, such as group savings programs?*
 - *Do the cooperatives with which the project is working have gender policies, a women or gender subcommittee and/or have done gender-related training for their members?*
2. Identify potential interventions that will allow farmer associations to increase women's participation, including but not limited to:
 - Ensure farmer association policies and procedures are supportive of women's inclusion for membership and leadership (i.e., allow non-landowning members, factor in women's schedules when offering trainings)
 - Provide incentives that encourage women to join associations by facilitating women's access to important social as well as agricultural services, such as group savings and loans, literacy training, and health care.
 - Strengthen existing women-led associations

¹ Taken from the Intervention Guide for Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI).

3. As the project implements the targeted interventions, conduct regular monitoring to ensure that women are not experiencing negative consequences as a result of the intervention (such as gender-based violence, increased demands on their time, etc.).
4. To promote nutrition knowledge, use farmer associations as a venue for conducting Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) training on importance of dietary diversity through crop diversity and purchase of diverse food. Include training on joint household budgeting for nutritious foods, to support use of increased income to purchase nutritious foods.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

1. Supporting women's participation and leadership roles in farmer associations cannot happen in a vacuum. Involvement of men and community leaders is essential to address social norms affecting women's ability to participate and lead in farmer associations.
2. Deeply entrenched socio-cultural value systems and values.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equity](#). UN Women Training Centre, 2016.

[Intervention Guide for the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index \(WEAI\)](#). ACDI/VOCA, 2016.

[Women's Collective Action: Unlocking the Potential of Agricultural Markets](#). Oxfam, 2013.