



# Intra-household dynamics regarding nutritional decisions in rural Guatemala

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The study “His and hers, time and income: How intra-household dynamics impact nutrition in agricultural households” is a research project lead by CIAT and the University of Florida. This project is part of the Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions initiative funded by the UK Department for

International Development (DFID) to promote new measures and methodologies for agriculture and food systems to improve health and nutrition.

This project includes a multidisciplinary team comprised of agricultural economists, nutritionists and gender specialists.

## WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT? IT DEALS WITH NUTRITION, DECISION-MAKING AND GENDER ISSUES

**Nutrition and food security in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC):** Despite recent advances in nutrition and food security, these issues still represent a challenge in developing countries since consuming an adequate diet is not yet something affordable for many people. For example, the prevalence of malnutrition is high the case of Guatemala.

### Malnutrition in Guatemala

- The country has the fourth highest chronic malnutrition rate worldwide and the highest rate in Latin America. Almost half the children of less than 5 years of age have chronic malnutrition (WFP, n.d.).
- Obesity affects ca. 50% of the women in reproductive age (Rameriz-Zea et al., 2014).

### Causes of malnutrition

Recent studies carried out in the country have shown that malnutrition is not only a problem caused by lack of food availability; it is also associated with factors such as:

- Inequality within the household in accessing and using money to buy food.
- Inadequate use of food due to lack of knowledge regarding its nutritional value.

**Pathways to improved nutrition:** First, one of the paths from agriculture to nutrition requires **changes in family income**; an increase in income improves nutrition while allowing people to buy healthier foods.

Second, time allocation must be taken into account when considering nutrition issues; by transferring **time allocation** from food preparation to income generating or other productive activities, families tend to buy less healthy foods that save time; being more convenient in the short run, but leading to worsening their nutrition.

Third, **gender issues** must also be considered; women are often expected to stay at home preparing food and fulfilling caregiving responsibilities, while men carry out income generating and other productive responsibilities in the household. While more and more women are acquiring income-earning jobs, they are often still expected to fulfill the care giving roles in the household, including preparing foods. These cultural gender norms influence time allocation decisions and have implications on nutrition.

**Gender differences in agriculture and nutrition studies:** To address the points mentioned above, it is necessary to include women more in agricultural projects. Likewise, it is also important in nutrition projects to include men and improve their understanding of the decision-making around food consumption and nutrition.

## MAIN OBJECTIVES

· To understand the determining factors in the decision-making processes in households regarding food consumption and dietary diversity, and how these decisions are affected by changes in income and by improvements in nutritional information.



· To analyze if households where women have more decision-making power (in terms of time and budget allocation for food) differ in their consumption patterns compared to households in which men make most decisions.

## WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT SPECIAL? : AN INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGY

**Surveys (at household and intra-household level)** that seek to inquire about decision making within households and their characteristics, time allocation and food consumption.

**Choice experiments** that aim to understand the link between gender norms, time allocation, and decision making regarding food consumption in the household.

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· Choice experiments also intended to contrast decision-making in food selection for men and women individually and jointly under different scenarios (hypothetical and real).

### ¿Who does it focus on?

The project is intended to be carried out in coffee-growing zones in Guatemala with nutritional problems, and where coffee farming is relevant for income generation.

## EXPECTATIONS AND IMPACT

Through this project we hope to understand better:

- How decisions are made around food consumption and what is the role of men and women.
- Whether individual preferences of men and women dominate decisions in their households.
- Gender dimensions regarding time allocation, and how nutrition is affected at the household level.

Likewise, we expect that the information collected will be used to design nutrition programs and policies that promote better nutrition in rural families.

## REFERENCES

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## This project is supported / funded by



*'IMMANA is funded with UK aid from the UK government'*

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