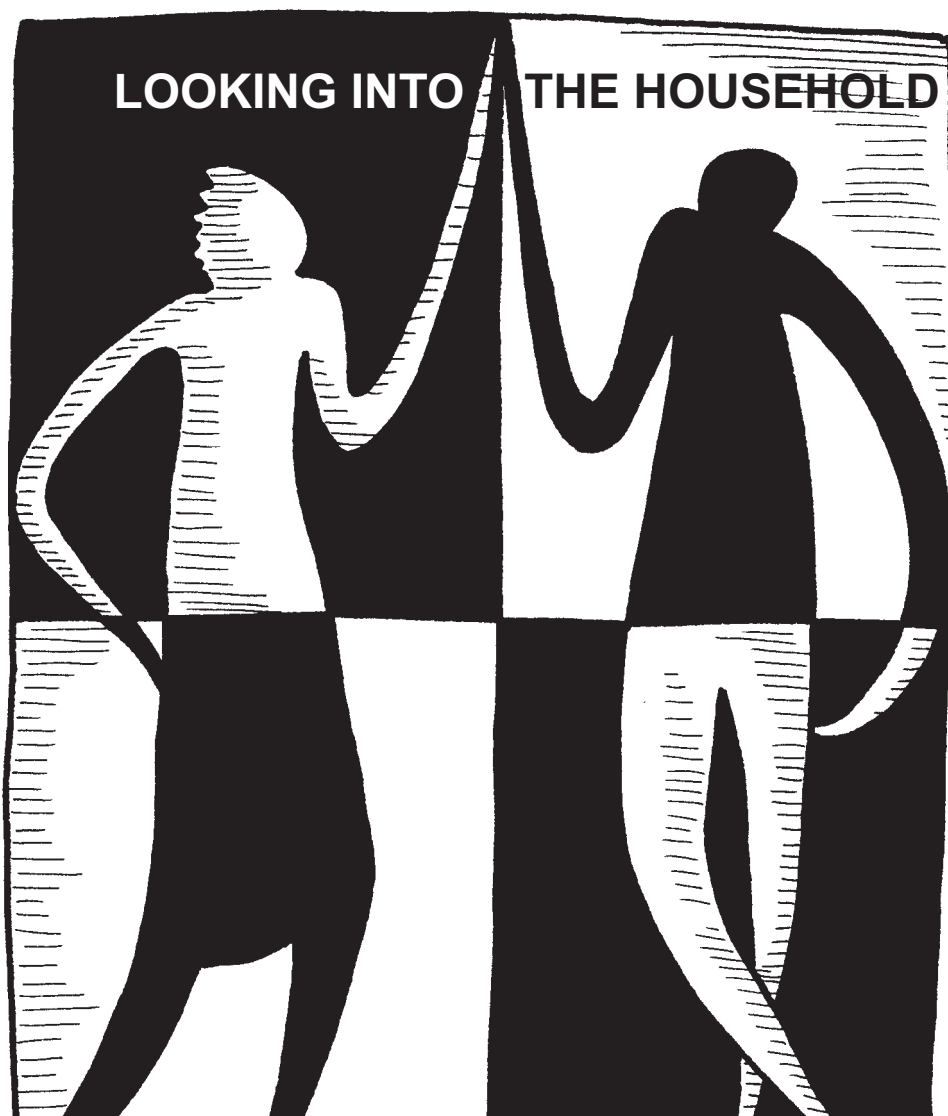




IFPRI

WOMEN

THE KEY TO FOOD SECURITY



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INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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FLIGHT FINDINGS

1 Agricultural productivity increases dramatically when women get the same amount of inputs men get.

In Sub-Saharan Africa women have less access to education and to labor, fertilizer, and other inputs than men do. When women obtain the same levels of education, experience, and farm inputs that currently benefit the average male farmer, they increase their yields for maize, beans, and cowpeas by 22 percent. In Kenya, where the amount of education women receive is extremely low, a year of primary education provided to all women farmers would boost maize yields by 24 percent.

In Burkina Faso men and children provide more labor to field plots controlled by men than to women's plots, while women primarily contribute the labor on plots they control. Men have greater access to nonhousehold labor and fertilizer for their plots than do women. Not surprisingly, then, farm plots controlled by women have 20–40 percent lower yields than plots controlled by men. Total household agricultural output could increase by 10–20 percent if currently used inputs were reallocated from men's to women's plots.

Sources: A. Quisumbing, "Male-Female Differences in Agricultural Productivity," *World Development* 24 (1996): 1579-1595; and C. Udry, J. Hoddinott, H. Alderman, and L. Haddad, "Gender Differentials in Farm Productivity: Implications for Household Efficiency and Agricultural Policy," *Food Policy* 20 (1995): 407-423.

2 Gender differences in property rights hinder natural resource management.

A person's gender affects the property rights—the rights to use and manage land resources—that person holds. Property rights greatly influence land care. Farmers with long-term access to land have a greater incentive to sustain that land and develop ways of preserving and regenerating it. Clearly, the ability of women to own or cultivate land over the long term will affect the management of natural resources.

In the cocoa growing regions of Ghana, "gift" transfers have become increasingly important as a means of acquiring private rights to land. Wives typically acquire land as a gift with strong,

individualized rights in return for helping their husbands establish cocoa farms. The way the help is valued, however, differs by gender. Men must plant 20–25 percent of a parcel with cocoa trees before the land is transferred to them. But women have to plant 40–50 percent of the land before acquiring it as a gift. The emergence of gift transfers actually has strengthened women's rights. Formal titling of land outside these evolving community land tenure rules, however, may shut women out of the new opportunity for land acquisition via tree crops.

Source: A. Quisumbing, E. Payongayong, J. Aidoo, and K. Otsuka, "Women's Land Rights in the Transition to Individualized Ownership: Implications for the Management of Tree Resources in Western Ghana," FCND Discussion Paper 58, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 1999.

3 Increasing women's human capital is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty.

Studies in Egypt and Mozambique have shown that mothers' education is crucial to poverty reduction. In Egypt, increasing the education level of mothers from none or less than primary to completion of primary school reduces the proportion of the population below the poverty line by 33.7 percent. Similarly in Mozambique, increasing the number of adult females that have completed primary school in each household by one leads to a 23.2 percent decrease in the proportion of the population living below the poverty line. In both of these studies, female education had a much larger impact on poverty than other factors, including male education.

Another important form of human capital is social capital—the depth, breadth, and quality of an individual's link to other individuals and to civic and other groups. A study of social capital in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, indicates that participation in networks is important for household welfare. Male networks tend to be more important for moving households out of poverty, and female networks are more important in preventing households from falling further into poverty in the aftermath of a negative shock.

Sources: G. Datt and D. Joliffe, "The Determinants of Poverty in Egypt," IFPRI, Washington, D.C., mimeo, 1998; G. Datt, K. Simler, and S. Mukherjee, "The Determinants of Poverty in Mozambique," IFPRI, Washington, D.C., final report, 1999; C. Cross, "Social Capital in KwaZulu Natal: A Qualitative Study," mimeo, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 1999.

4 Increasing women's assets raises investments in education and girls' health.

IFPRI research in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and South Africa indicates that although women bring far fewer assets to marriage,

these assets play a significant role in household decisionmaking, particularly in the allocation of household expenditures to education

Recent research conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) confirms the central role women play as producers of food, managers of natural resources, income earners, and caretakers of household food and nutrition security. Eight such research findings, based on analysis of household surveys, are presented here. In addition, three sets of recommendations are included to inform the design and implementation of more effective food policy.

and children's clothing. In all four countries, assets in the hands of women increase the share that households spend on education. Even in patriarchal societies such as the one in Bangladesh, where husbands control most of the resources, wives' and husbands' assets

lead to different outcomes in household welfare. Women's assets increase expenditures on children's clothing and education and reduce the rate of illness among girls.

Sources: A. Quisumbing and J. Maluccio, "Intrahousehold Allocation and Gender Relations: New Empirical Evidence from Four Developing Countries," FCND Discussion Paper 84, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 2000; A. Quisumbing and B. de la Briere, "Women's Assets and Intrahousehold Allocation in Bangladesh: Testing Measures of Bargaining Power," FCND Discussion Paper 86, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 2000.

5 Women's education and status within the household contribute more than 50 percent to the reduction of child malnutrition.

IFPRI recently examined the factors that helped reduce child malnutrition by 15 percent in the developing world between 1970 and 1995. The evidence shows that increases in women's education accounted for 43 percent of the total reduction in child malnutrition, by far the largest contribution. Improvements in women's status accounted for another 12 percent. Improvements in food availability came in a distant second to women's education, contributing 26 percent to the rate of reduction.

Can the higher rate of child malnutrition in South Asia compared with other developing regions be explained by women's lower status

in South Asia? IFPRI is currently undertaking a research project using demographic and health data for more than 150,000 women from 40 countries. Research to date shows that women tend to be less educated than their husbands, with the difference being greatest in South Asia and smallest in Latin America. Differences in the preferred numbers of girls and boys similarly are largest in South Asia and smallest in Latin America, and it is also in South Asia that boys receive the most preferential treatment with regard to preventive health care. These findings suggest that the preference for sons may be greater in countries in which women have lower status.

Source: L. Smith and L. Haddad, *Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: A Cross-Country Analysis*, Research Report 111, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 2000.

6 Females in South Asia consistently fare worse than males on a number of health fronts, while girls in Sub-Saharan Africa do better than boys. This difference is linked to the relative value placed on boys and girls in these two regions.

The strongest evidence for pro-male bias in nutritional care comes from South Asia. The bias against females arises from the dowry system, which requires that families pay bridegrooms to marry their daughters. In Sub-Saharan Africa, where bridegrooms are the ones who have to pay to get a spouse, daughters receive slightly better nutritional care than sons. At most slight gender differences exist in the

health care males and females receive in the developing world, with the significant exception of South Asia, where males are favored by a wide margin. Mortality rates are higher for girls than boys in the Indian subcontinent, resulting in a surplus of males in the adult population: 950–970 females for every 1,000 males.

Source: L. Haddad, C. Peña, C. Nishida, A. Quisumbing, and A. Slack, "Food Security and Nutrition Implications of Intrahousehold Bias: A Review of Literature," FCND Discussion Paper 19, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 1996.

7 Good care practices can mitigate the effects of poverty and low maternal schooling on children's nutrition.

Based on a sample of 475 households in Accra, Ghana, IFPRI research indicates that the provision of care to children by mothers has a large and positive impact on children's nutritional status. Almost three-quarters of mothers in the sample had less than a secondary education. Among this group, better maternal care practices brought the height-for-age measurements of children from poorer families up

to the level of children from wealthier families or to the level of children with more educated mothers. This outcome suggests that if poor mothers with little formal education were trained in optimal child feeding practices and use of preventative health services, the impact on the nutritional well-being of children living in poverty would be large.

Source: M. Ruel, C. Levin, M. Armar-Klemesu, D. Maxwell, and S. Morris, "Good Care Practices Can Mitigate the Negative Effects of Poverty and Low Maternal Schooling on Children's Nutritional Status: Evidence from Accra," FCND Discussion Paper 62, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 1999.

FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

8 Women are at a disadvantage when food and nutrients are distributed within a household.

IFPRI recently measured the distribution of food consumption in rural Bangladeshi households. The distribution was unequal. Preschoolers were favored, particularly preschool boys, who received a disproportionate share of animal and fish products. Adult women received less than their share of preferred foods. Although adult women consume substantially greater amounts of energy in the

form of food than preschool children, their consumption of animal and fish products roughly equals the amount preschool boys consume. This is cause for concern because women's needs for iron and other micronutrients greatly exceed those of preschool boys. Men do not face the same disadvantage in distribution that women face.

Source: IFPRI, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies, and the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, "Commercial Vegetable and Polyculture Fish Production in Bangladesh: Their Impacts on Income, Household Resource Allocation, and Nutrition," final report, IFPRI, Washington, D.C., 1998.

Many of the publications listed in this brochure can be downloaded from IFPRI's website at:
<http://www.cgiar.org/ifpri/divs/fcnd/dp.htm>



THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Reform and monitor legal, social, and cultural institutions to improve the status of women.

Legal, social, and cultural institutions must be changed to create an environment in which women can realize their full potential. Specific areas where change is needed include divorce laws, social entitlement and transfer programs that benefit women, and property rights laws that allow women to hold individual or joint title to land.

Monitoring these and other changes, including those in government outlays for men and women, can help reinforce the reform process and raise the consciousness of policymakers and constituents.

2 Be innovative in the design of agricultural, food, and nutrition programs.

A whole new set of government projects has taken innovative approaches to improving women's roles as gatekeepers of food security. Mexico's PROGRESA provides an integrated package of health, nutrition, and educational services to poor families and directs monetary transfers directly to women. Bangladesh's Food for

Education Program uses a wheat ration as an income supplement to release poor children from household obligations, enabling them to go to school. As result of this program, school attendance has increased, especially for girls.

3 Design projects to be more sensitive to the livelihoods of both men and women.

Experiences from the past 15 years suggest that "mainstream" gender-sensitive projects are the best way to meet women's needs and improve their socioeconomic status. Projects should be designed to benefit women by enhancing their productivity and earnings alongside those of men. A review of 271 World Bank projects by IFPRI shows that when projects address the needs of both men and

women their sustainability increases by 16 percent. Project planners and policymakers need to shift their attention from the important question of how to help women to the central question of how to help men and women. More effective projects can be formulated only through a better understanding of the totality of local gender asymmetries and relations.