

## **Agriculture for Nutrition Security: Why Gender Matters**

*Dindo Campilan*, International Potato Center (CIP) South-West-Central Asia Region, India

*Krishna Sreenath*, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Directorate for Research on Women in Agriculture, India

*Gordon Prain*, International Potato Center (CIP), Impact Enhancement Division, Peru

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to examine the role of gender in enabling agricultural R&D to better contribute to human nutrition goals. Literature within and outside the CGIAR reveals good evidence on the link between: a) gender and agriculture, b) agriculture and nutrition, as well as c) gender and nutrition. Women and men are known to play equally important roles in agricultural systems especially by and for the poor. Meanwhile the contribution of agriculture to nutrition security has been shown through efforts to produce agricultural products with increased nutritional value (e.g. biofortification), and/or which support dietary diversification (e.g. cropping systems). And there is now increased call for more gender-responsive policy and practice in nutrition improvement efforts, resulting from greater awareness that women represent a large segment of nutritionally vulnerable populations (e.g. micronutrient deficiency), and at the same time they are instrumental in promoting nutrition security for the other most vulnerable group, children under three years old.

A continuing research challenge is the development of a more inclusive agriculture-nutrition-gender framework to better understand how a) men and women can be more effective agents in mobilizing agriculture for nutrition improvement, and b) benefits from agri-based nutrition interventions can be better distributed according to vulnerability and need. Good documented examples of gender-responsive agricultural R&D specifically aimed at nutrition goals are relatively rare. Approaches to facilitate synergies -- as well as to manage trade-offs -- with other agricultural development goals need to be further improved and the roles of men and women in those synergies and trade offs understood and built on. This includes reorienting agri-food value chain development towards taking nutrition into consideration along with economic and other human/social values. Likewise it is important that the gender-differentiated outcomes of agriculture-for-nutrition R&D are more closely examined. It is widely known that women are often more nutritionally vulnerable, especially pregnant women and lactating mothers, and that their own nutritional status can affect the health status of other household members, especially children. Yet there is evidence that, consciously or unconsciously, women's nutritional needs are de-prioritized -- either because of wider cultural norms and pressures or as part of poor households' short-term coping strategies. There is an urgent need for research to support the identification of alternative coping strategies and for capacity building to address cultural beliefs that de-prioritize women's nutritional needs.