

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Activity Sheet  
January 2016

**Who Eats What? Analyzing Gendered Intra-household Consumption Patterns**

**Time:**

60 – 90 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

- A big dish filled with uncooked rice or some other type of grain.
- Raw vegetables – approximately 2 kg. Different varieties if possible.
- 3 eggs or stones to represent eggs.
- Drawings of dried fish or other photos representing local meats.
- 6 small plates to put foodstuffs on.

**Introduction**

Child and maternal malnutrition – in particular child underweight, child micronutrient deficiencies, poor breastfeeding practices, and anemia – are by far the largest nutrition-related health burdens at the global level. “Cultural norms” are sometimes responsible for contributing to these issues and can be analyzed if the intra-household consumption patterns are “unpacked” with the community. If these cultural norms are better understood, opportunities for changing long-standing gendered behaviors related to food security and malnutrition can be improved.

**Objectives**

- ✓ To examine inequalities based on gender and position within a household and the potential impact of such inequalities on the type and amount of food each family member receives.
- ✓ To explore who has the authority to decide and who may be disadvantaged in terms of food distribution in a household.

**Steps**

- 1) Construct a typical rural family that is familiar to everyone by asking for volunteers to come forward and giving each a sign indicating their role: Husband, Mother-in-law, Father-in-law, Eldest daughter, Youngest son, Youngest daughter, Wife (add others if needed)
- 2) A female participant takes the role of the wife. Ask the wife to invite her family to sit down so that all participants can see them and place an empty dish in front of each. Explain that it is dinnertime and the wife has prepared rice, vegetables, eggs, and some fish (or other culturally appropriate food items). An example of how the food items can be distributed among family members:
  - Husband – full plate of food with a bit of everything, including one egg
  - Father-in-law – same as husband’s plate, but smaller amounts
  - Mother-in-law – rice , vegetables, and one piece of fish





- Eldest daughter – small amount of rice and vegetables
- Youngest son – rice, one piece of fish, vegetables, and egg
- Youngest daughter – small amount of rice and vegetables
- Wife – smallest amount of rice and leaves from vegetables

3) Thank the players; ask the following questions for everyone to respond:

*Why did some family members get more food than others?*

*What gives some family members more access to food than others? Less access than others?*

*Who decides how much and what each family member will get to eat?*

*In what ways is this type of food distribution changing?*

4) Debrief the activity by asking the participants:

*In what ways and with what audiences can you implement this activity? What changes would you make?*

## Resources

FAO (2013) Food Based Dietary Guidelines – Bangladesh. Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. [www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines/regions/countries/bangladesh/en/](http://www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines/regions/countries/bangladesh/en/)

FAO (2013). The State of Food and Agriculture: Food systems for better nutrition. Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Helen Keller International (2015) Nurturing Connections. Adapted for Homestead Food Production and Nutrition. Technical Resource Guide. Bangladesh p.p. 59 - 61.  
[www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/TOPS\\_Nurturing%20Connections\\_English\\_FINAL\\_P.pdf](http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/TOPS_Nurturing%20Connections_English_FINAL_P.pdf)

SPRING - Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally [www.spring-nutrition.org](http://www.spring-nutrition.org)



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