

USAID Advancing Nutrition India

Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Strategy





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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASRLM	Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission
CABI	Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International
CMIE	Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HCD	Human-Centered Design
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
JSI	John Snow, Inc
NDTV	New Delhi Television
PRI	Policy Research Institute
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
SBC	Social and Behavior Change
SMC	school management committees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WSHG	Women self-help group

Introduction

USAID Advancing Nutrition India

USAID Advancing Nutrition India provides technical assistance to government and public sector partners in Assam to demonstrate the potential for community-led nutrition-sensitive agriculture to achieve our goal of improving diets while engaging with potential private sector partners to identify pathways for sustainable, scalable actions. We implement activities under three specific objectives:

- Strengthen women-led nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices and business opportunities
- Strengthen partnerships among multi-sectoral and multi-interest nutrition stakeholders to implement nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities
- Document lessons learned and best practices and disseminate through a learning platform.

Objective of the SBC Strategy

The Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Strategy for the USAID Advancing Nutrition India project is an articulation of our approach to foster social and behavior change in the focus communities for two prioritized behaviors over the course of our project. The USAID Advancing Nutrition India team developed the SBC Strategy to further reflect on the SBC formative research conducted in July/August 2022 and to identify and plan for activities that are responsive to the factors identified in the SBC formative research.

The SBC strategy is a guiding document for our SBC activities and shares the strategy with our partners and other relevant stakeholders to use in their programming (e.g., Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM)).

Components of the SBC Strategy

The following sections of the SBC Strategy document provide an overview of the nutrition situation in the program implementation area, followed by a brief overview of the SBC formative research and findings, and lastly, the articulation of the prioritized activities aimed at addressing the factors for behavior change. We also present our monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach to assess changes in the determinants of behavior change and/or uptake of the behaviors.

Background

Nutrition Situation in India and Assam State

Despite considerable economic progress in recent decades, 224.3 million people in India are undernourished (FAO 2022). *The 2022 Global Hunger Index* ranks the country as 107 among 121 countries, placing it at the level of "serious' hunger" (von Grebmer et al. 2022). In 2020, findings from the *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)* showed an increase in stunting among children under five years old in 13 of 22 states and union territories reported through December, as well as an increase in wasting in 12 of 22 states and union territories (Chatterjee 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic worsened food security and nutrition globally, even in countries such as India that have made considerable economic progress (FAO, 2022). The Indian Women and Child Development Ministry estimated 927,606 children from six months to six years were "severely acute malnourished" across the country, up to November 2020 (NDTV 2021). Plausible reasons for the declines in progress include worsening economic and socioeconomic conditions, which likely impact livelihoods (Chatterjee 2021).

Among Indian states, Assam is one of the poorest. It is home to 34 million people, one-third living in poverty (NITI Aayog 2021). While poverty levels in Assam declined between 1994 and 2015–2016, the incidence of poverty remains higher than the national average. At the state level, undernutrition persists with 36 percent of children under five years stunted (NFHS-5). It is relatively unchanged from the fourth NFHS. Among children in the same age group, wasting increased between the fourth and fifth NFHS (17 to 22 percent). Only 8 percent of children 6–23 months are fed a minimally acceptable diet, ranking next to last for this indicator of recommended dietary intake among all states (CFNS 2020). Anemia is prevalent among children and non-pregnant women, with more than 60 percent anemia reported in both groups (CFNS 2020).

Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture for Improving Diets, Nutrition, and Economic Opportunities

Early evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated malnutrition and worsened socioeconomic conditions, particularly among women. Some reports suggest declining food diversity, decreased food intake, and periodic episodes of missed meals. According to a recently published report, 90 percent of households surveyed reported reduced food intake during the national lockdown last year, and even six months later, about 20 percent still reported a similar trend (Azim Premji University 2021). Data also suggests that COVID-19 is having a prolonged impact on rural communities through lost livelihoods and economic opportunities. A sharp increase in unemployment in rural areas through May 2021 is thought to signal a further loss of employment (Vyas 2021).

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture offers dual pathways to improve diet quality and nutrition through activities that increase diverse, nutritious foods for consumption and economic opportunities that increase income for purchasing diverse, nutritious foods. Evidence suggests that nutrition-sensitive agriculture, particularly in the Indian context, can provide a pathway to improve diets and nutrition through a convergence of activities to strengthen production approaches and behaviors that guide intra-household distribution and consumption of foods, especially among women and children (Pingali

and Abraham 2019). Furthermore, the utilization of SBC approaches within nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities can help improve the relevance of the activities by understanding the key factors that support or deter target behaviors and considering these factors when designing the activities. Therefore, USAID Advancing Nutrition conducted the SBC formative research.

SBC Formative Research

USAID Advancing Nutrition conducted SBC formative research in the three program districts of Tinsukia, Goalpara, and Barpeta in Assam to inform the project's SBC activities. The study objective was to understand the factors affecting the target population, including women and adolescent girls, from adopting key nutrition-sensitive agriculture and diet-related behaviors, as well as to receive input on preferred activities for addressing the identified factors. USAID Advancing Nutrition used a qualitative, cross-sectional research design. Specifically, we used focus group discussions (FGDs), employing methods from human-centered design research. A total of 22 FGDs were conducted in July–August 2022, including six in Barpeta, eight in Goalpara, and eight in Tinsukia. The formative research resulted in the understanding of the current status of nutrition-sensitive agriculture behaviors, and identify potential solutions to address the barriers and opportunities. The FGD participants prioritized two behaviors, which are the focus of this SBC strategy. These were selected based on what the participants felt would have the greatest impact on their agricultural productivity, and thereby have a positive impact on incomes and consumption, as well as overall dietary diversity of women, adolescent girls, and children. The priority behaviors are:

- 1. Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets related to agriculture and agricultural activities
- 2. Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.

Problem Statement

According to the formative research, there are internal, societal, and structural factors negatively affecting the adoption of the two prioritized behaviors.

We found that attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge, as well as gender and social norms affect the adoption of behavior #1. Specifically, both women and men believe that women have less knowledge and ability to make decisions related to agriculture, marketing, and/or use of income. Additionally, they believe that it is the man's role and that if a woman were to make a decision that subsequently did not go well, there would be negative consequences within the family and the community. Positively, FGD respondents believe that promoting joint decision-making within the household will increase the income and savings of the household.

Internal and societal factors were also poignant for behavior #2. Self-efficacy/skills, perceived consequences or personalized benefits, access and affordability of productive inputs, as well as to markets also affected the adoption of this behavior. More specifically, the formative research revealed that women do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in agriculture, as was reported by female FGD respondents. Furthermore, they felt that information has not been accessible to them and has traditionally been targeted at men. Women also felt they do not have adequate access to agricultural inputs, finance, and/or markets to be successful in agriculture livelihood development activities.

Influencers and supporting actors who may negatively or positively impact the adoption of the behaviors include men within the household, respected male peers and community members, village headmen, and development actors, such as community cadre actors from the government. USAID Advancing Nutrition will focus on these structural factors in its private sector engagement (PSE) and development of business opportunities in nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities. These activities are not presented within the SBC strategy and will be articulated in other PSE documents.

Strategic Approach

Program Impact Pathway - Overall Summary

As seen in figure 1, USAID Advancing Nutrition has prioritized the following factors:

- Women are not seen as capable producers or to participate in decisions on household assets
- Women lack the skills and knowledge related to agriculture and livelihood development
- Women lack confidence and do not believe in their ability to participate meaningfully in agriculture or household decision-making.

To address these factors, we have prioritized the following bulleted activities. Where possible, we prioritized activities that could address both behaviors, given the duration of the project and resources available. We also prioritized activities that could be built within existing activities. For example, the project had already planned to implement nutrition-sensitive agriculture trainings. However, after the SBC formative research, the team has refined the priority messages and activities that could better address the unearthed factors (e.g., providing more time and space for women to practice the agriculture activities to build their confidence).

- Nutrition-sensitive agriculture trainings implemented with members of the women self-help groups to increase their productivity and promote the consumption of nutritious foods
- Interpersonal communication via household visits by trusted community cadres to reinforce training topics and counsel men, other family members, and women to help address gender barriers.
- Interpersonal communication activities aimed at empowering influential community members with materials and messages aimed at addressing the behavioral factors
- Select community-level events that aim to spread messages on a wider scale through community-preferred platforms, such as wall murals and videos.

In the subsequent sections, we detail the specifics of each of the prioritized activities for USAID Advancing Nutrition India to undertake in FY23.

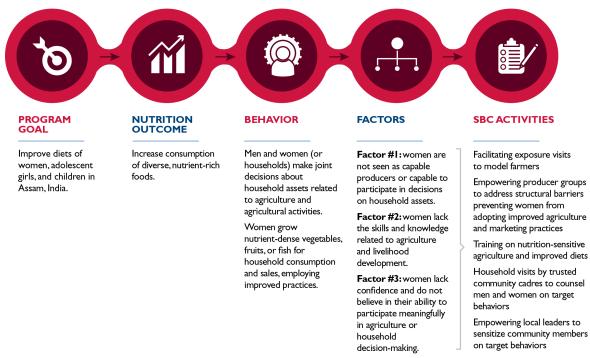


Figure I: USAID Advancing Nutrition India SBC Program Pathway

Activity-by-Activity Description

The following tables provide details on USAID Advancing Nutrition India's activities that will promote the adoption of the two priority behaviors (See Tables 1-7).

Table I. Tra	ining of Community Cadres on Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets related to agriculture and agricultural activities.
	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.
Activity description	Community cadres play an important role as community-level training providers for women self-help group (WSHG) members. First, the project will train the community cadres to prepare them to cascade the trainings to the WSHG members. The project will involve two categories of community cadres—one for horticulture (Krishi Sakhis) and another for aquaculture (Pashu Sakhis) as master trainers. These two categories of community cadres under State Livelihood Mission will be trained separately. Both cadres will receive trainings on following:
	 concepts of nutrition-sensitive agriculture role of women in nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities; understanding the prioritized behaviors as defined by the SBC formative research

Table 1. Training of Community Cadres on Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture	
	 roles and responsibilities of community cadres under the project modalities for conducting trainings of WSHGs
	Sector-specific training, on either horticulture or aquaculture, will be provided using a project-developed package of practices. Krishi Sakhis will receive training on horticulture and techniques of climate smart farming practices, and Pashu Sakhis on aquaculture.
Factors addressed	The training aims to build the capacity of the community cadres to subsequently address the following factors: social and gender norms; confidence and self-efficacy; and knowledge via important influencers The training will develop the skills of the community cadres to involve other household members. It will also demonstrate the positive consequences of joint decision making on household assets via role playing, as well as meaningful participation in agriculture.
Content and materials needed	 Content includes: concepts of Nutrition-sensitive agriculture role of women in Nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities factors of behavior change, per the SBC formative research Package of Practices on horticulture and aquaculture practices natural farming practices roles and responsibilities of community cadres under the project modalities for conducting WSHG trainings.
Target participants	Approximately 90 community cadres from both categories from selected project blocks.
Implement ation area	The activity will be carried out in project districts. District level trainings will be provided to Krishi Sakhis and Pashu Sakhis. Following the training, these cadres will be the trainers of WSHGs on horticulture and aquaculture at the project blocks.
Actors involved	Implementing partner in collaboration with State Livelihood Mission, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Fisheries

Table 2. Training of WSHG members on Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture		
Targeted	Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets	
behavior(s)	related to agriculture and agricultural activities.	
	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household	
	consumption and sales, employing improved practices.	
Activity	Trained community cadres will train the identified WSHG members at the village level.	
description	Selected WSHG members will get the opportunity to learn and identify the ways to bring	
	about behavior change in for the prioritized behaviors. The training will also build their	

	confidence to adopt the promoted horticulture and aquaculture practices for household
	consumption and sale.
Factors	The training aims to address the following factors: social and gender norms; confidence and
addressed	self-efficacy; and knowledge. Decision-making role plays will take place in the training to
	demonstrate the benefits of joint decision making and identify the ways of enabling
	household joint decision making. The trainings are expected to build the confidence of the
	women's ability to implement the horticulture and aquaculture practices, by increasing their
	knowledge and giving them a space to practice the behavior. Further, during follow-up visits
	for adoption of practices, community cadres will share information on the supply of inputs
	with the WSHG members and establish linkages for sourcing inputs. This will increase the
	WSHG member's knowledge of sourcing inputs for adoption of practices.
Content and	Content includes:
materials	 concepts of nutrition-sensitive agriculture;
needed	 role of women in nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities
	 Package of Practices on horticulture and aquaculture
	• natural farming practices.
	Materials: Demonstration materials, training modules, colored charts, videos. Additionally,
	the project will use videos as a mixed method to train WSHG members.
Target	Approximately 35,500 WSHG members are expected to be trained by Krishi Sakhis on the
participants	Package of Practices for horticulture and approximately 14,500 WSHGs will be trained on
-	aquaculture practices.
Actors	Implementing partner in collaboration with State Livelihood Mission and trained community
involved	cadres.

Table 3. Household Visits by Community Cadres		
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets related to agriculture and agricultural activities.	
	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.	
Activity description	The community cadres are expected to do follow-up visits with the WSHG members to encourage their adoption of the practices promoted during the WSHG trainings. During the follow-up, the cadres will do stepwise monitoring in accordance with the Package of Practices. The community cadres will also demonstrate certain agricultural practices, such as preparing and applying organic fertilizers, to further promote adoption of the targeted improved agricultural practices. During the follow-up visits, community cadres will involve both men and women in order to build the women's confidence to discuss the agricultural practices with her husband and family members, as well as increase the perceived positive consequences of the woman engaging in agriculture by her husband.	

Factors addressed	This activity is expected to address the gender, confidence, and knowledge factors associated with the prioritized behaviors. During the follow-up visits by community cadres, the community cadre will involve men and other family members in the demonstrations and meetings, which will help address intra-household factors.
Content and materials needed	Content: Targeted messages from the WSHG trainings, dependent on the needs during the visits Materials: Demonstration materials, training modules, colored charts from the WSHG trainings.
Target participants	Approximately 20 percent of the trained WSHG members. The community cadres will identify the WSHG members who may need further follow-up and reinforcement through regular WSHG meetings and interactions.
Actors involved	Community cadres and WSHG members.

Table 4. Sup	port Community Influencers to Sensitize Community Members
Targeted	Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets
behavior(s)	related to agriculture and agricultural activities.
	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household
	consumption and sales, employing improved practices.
Activity	The project will organize sensitization programs for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)
description	members and other village leaders, who are well respected members within the communities.
	The project will hold brief trainings for the PRI members and other village leaders to prepare
	them to sensitize community members, particularly male influencers. Additionally, the project
	will facilitate sensitization sessions, where PRI members can host small community-level
	events to discuss the prioritized behaviors, address the behavioral factors, and support men
	to support their spouses.
Factors	This activity aims to address the knowledge, social, and gender factors associated with the
addressed	prioritized behavior Specifically, the activity aims to equip PRI members to sensitize the male
	village members about the positive consequences of joint decision making at the household
	level and adoption of nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices. The PRI members and other
	village leaders will help create awareness in the village about the importance of diverse diets
	from various food sources such as animal source, legumes, staples, fruits, vegetables, oils and
	fats. The activity will promote changes in dietary practices in the community, which may pull
	on supply for the production and sale of nutrient dense fruit, vegetables, and fish.
Content	Content:
and	 Role of women in Nutrition-sensitive agriculture
materials	• Factors of behavior change, per the SBC formative research
needed	
	Materials: Presentation, posters, banners, leaflets.

Table 4. Support Community Influencers to Sensitize Community Members	
Target	Approximately 300 persons from PRIs/other village leaders are to be sensitized.
participants	
Actors	PRI members and other village leaders
involved	

Table 5. Sens	sitization Programmes of School Management Committees
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets related to agriculture and agricultural activities.
	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.
Activity description	The project will be organize sensitization programs for SMCs. SMCs comprise of parents and teachers. The project will sensitize the SMCs on the positive consequences of joint household decision making for improved household nutrition and economic growth. Specifically, the project will organize sensitization sessions with the SMCs. The aim of the activity is to influence potential program participants who are part of the SMCs, as well as increase general community awareness for the target behaviors.
Factors addressed	This activity aims to address the social and gender factors, specifically factor #1 and #3, to increase the importance of joint household decision making and women's involvement in livelihood development activities.
Content and materials needed	 Content: Role of women in Nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities Factors of behavior change, per the SBC formative research Materials: Presentations, posters, banners, leaflets.
Target participants	Approximately 300 persons from SMCs.
Actors involved	SMCs.

Table 6. Producer Groups Sensitization		
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.	
Activity description	The implementing partner will organize sensitization sessions for producer groups to understand how they can promote the adoption of agricultural practices amongst their members, as well as better reach WSHG members. Specifically, the implementing partner will visit producer groups, during the meeting times, to sensitize the members on key messages from the behavior change research and discuss opportunities to increase link	

Table 6. Produ	ucer Groups Sensitization
	them to WSHG producers. Specifically, how the producer groups can facilitate increased access to inputs, markets, and financial resources/bargaining power for the WSHG producer.
Factors addressed	This activity aims to address access and knowledge factors for the prioritized behavior.
Content and materials needed	 Content: Factors of behavior change, per the SBC formative research concepts of nutrition-sensitive agriculture; Opportunities to link with WSHGs
	Materials: Presentation, posters, banners, leaflets.
Target participants	Approximately 29 producer groups.
Actors involved	Producer group leadership and members.

Table 7. Nuti	rition sensitive Agriculture Exposure Visits
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.
Activity description	The implementing partner will organize exposure visits for approximately 90 women (25-30 women from each district) to other model female farmers either within their home district or in nearby districts. This activity will provide a cross-learning opportunity for the female members, and allow them to see the promoted agricultural practices in-person, which aims to build their confidence on the technical skills that they have gained through horticulture and aquaculture trainings. Additionally, the exposure visits will be an opportunity for the women to gain knowledge about market prices and bargaining during the procurement of inputs as well as during marketing activities.
Factors addressed	This activity aims to address self-efficacy and skill factors associated with the prioritized behavior.
Content and materials needed	None.
Target participants	Approximately 90 female members.
Actors involved	Program participants, identified producers, and local nongovernmental organizations in other parts of Assam.

Monitoring Behavior Change

Monitoring progression along the behavior change pathway is critical to understand whether the project is addressing the factors appropriately with the selected activities. The following metrics and indicators will be collected and evaluated to understand progress towards behavior change and inform program adaptation.

Table 8. Behavior(s)/Activities and Metrics/Indicators

Behavior(s)/Activities	Metric/Indicator	
Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets.	Percent men and women who understand the benefits of joint decision-making about household assets associated with agricultural activities.	
Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.	 Percent of women who grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish using at least one promoted agricultural practice Percent of women who participate in agricultural marketing activities 	
Factor I: Women's confidence	Percent of women who report feeling confident to make agriculture-related decisions.	
Factor 2: Women's skills	Percent of women who have demonstrated nutrition-sensitive agriculture skills.	
Factor 3: Trust in women's decision making skills	Percent of men who trust their wife to make sole or joint decisions about household assets.	

Key Materials and Messages for Communication

Key Materials

USAID Advancing Nutrition India will develop the following materials to support successful implementation of the prioritized activities. Project activities will use these materials to sensitize program participants and/or support actors and social influencers on the target behaviors.

- **Posters and leaflets** will be used in sensitization activities aimed at empowering social influencers and supporting actors to support behavior change. Specifically, the leaflets will be distributed in the sensitization programs of PRIs and SMCs. The messages in the materials will reinforce the benefits of women producing fruits, vegetables, and fish for household consumption and sale.
- Videos on horticulture and aquaculture practices will be developed to show in the nutrition-sensitive agriculture trainings to demonstrate how specific agriculture practices should be implemented for instances when in-person demonstration may not be feasible. In addition to agriculture components, the videos will promote the consumption of safe, nutritious foods.

Promoted Messages and Depictions for Key Materials

USAID Advancing Nutrition has developed the following messages for the various communication materials aimed at promoting behavior change. These messages target the prioritized factors for the two priority behaviors.

Target behavior	Materials and Messages	Factors addressed
Behavior #I	 Decision-making and women's participation in agriculture poster with an assortment of pictures: women sitting in a market selling vegetables family members sitting for mealtime, wherein mother-in-law feeds ripe papaya to a child under two years of age on her lap father-in-law manages is managing the channels within the lay-out husband helps irrigate the agricultural plot women with a small basket of fresh vegetables from the agricultural plot men and women in a papaya orchard, working jointly together men and women sprinkle fish feed in a pond. 	Social and gender factors
	Messages against the pictures:	

Table 9.	Materials,	Messages.	and	Factors	They	Address
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Target behavior	Materials and Messages	Factors addressed
	 Men: Together we decided to have an agricultural plot on our household land. Women: I am capable of discussing with my husband how to grow nutrient-rich foods. Father-in-law: I help and support my daughter-in-law in making the agricultural plot more productive with fresh vegetables. Mother-in-law: I feed my grandchild with nutrient-rich food so that my daughter-in-law can go to the market to sell the vegetables. Image to share in WSHG/community cadres WhatsApp group: image depicting women's involvement in joint decision making about household assets. 	
Behavior #1 Behavior #2	 Horticulture and aquaculture videos shown to WSHG members: videos depict households discussing household assets, as well as the importance of nutrition for the household. The videos aim to reinforce messages related to joint decision making about household assets, participate in agriculture and other livelihood development activities, and increase dietary diversity for improve household nutrition. Colored flipcharts on Package of Practices: Flipcharts will depict pictures demonstrating target horticulture and aquaculture practices. The project will provide flipcharts to community cadres to use during trainings, meetings, and demonstrations with WSHGs. Digital training platform: The project will develop a digital training platform, which community cadre master trainers can use for information on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, dietary diversity, and the prioritized behaviors. These training materials will help reinforce the project's in-person training sessions. 	Attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and self-efficacy
Behavior #2	Wall paintings in villages: Wall painting in communities will depict both men and women participating in market activities together. Specifically, men encouraging women's participation in agriculture and economic opportunities for household income and nutrition.	Social and gender factors

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