

Effective Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture for Secure Household Nutrition

Executive Summary

Gender and “gender mainstreaming” have become buzzwords around Feed the Future, the Obama Administration’s response to global food insecurity, as well as other food and nutrition security initiatives in recent years. However the true meaning of gender mainstreaming and the policy framework that must be in place to ensure equal benefit to women and men are often misunderstood by both policy makers and practitioners.

Women in developing countries contribute significantly to agricultural production and are increasingly recognized, in words if not in practice, for this contribution. But there is still a long way to go to match their reality to this rhetoric and to ensure that women receive adequate support so that their efforts in the field contribute in the best way possible to health and nutrition-related household-level outcomes. Women’s agricultural work, in addition to their work around the home that is unrecognized as part of the formal work sector, have long been ignored by developing country policy makers as well as the international donor community. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimated in 2008 that women received only 7 to 9 percent of assistance devoted to agricultural development.¹ However, as the year 2015 draws closer, and the international community increases its level of commitment and collaboration to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), women, as producers and as those responsible for a household’s food security and nutritional well-being, are being targeted by both policies and programming at an unprecedented level.

Gender mainstreaming is “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences integral dimensions in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”
-United Nations, 1997

Recent research has drawn attention to the importance of proper nutrition throughout pregnancy and for the first twenty-four months of a child’s life. The effects of undernutrition in this period are irreversible, as evidenced by a reduction in productivity and diminished lifetime economic growth, as well as diminished physical and cognitive growth. Undernourished girls are also more likely to perpetuate the cycle of undernutrition, giving birth to underweight babies themselves.

Unfortunately the intersection between women’s agricultural work and the health and nutrition outcomes for her household has not been widely researched to date. Better understanding gender mainstreaming, developing an evidence base and using it to dictate innovative policy at country, global,

¹ Bread for the World/The Hunger Project (2010). Fact sheet: Gender, nutrition, and agriculture. Accessed on May 15, 2010 at http://www.thp.org/system/files/InternationalWomensDay_FactSheet.pdf.

and donor levels can ensure that gender mainstreaming in agriculture achieves positive nutritional as well as economic outcomes.

Introduction

Gender inequalities in agriculture have been carefully scrutinized in recent years. In 1995, the UN Fourth Conference on Women included amongst its priority areas two activities that will have a positive impact on agriculture: increasing the role of women in power sharing and decision making, and promoting gender equality in natural resource management and environmental protection.² The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations focused on women in agriculture for its 2010-2011 publication, *The State of Food and Agriculture*; however, benefits to closing the gender gap as highlighted in the report focus on productivity, production gains, and social and economic benefits rather than on health.³ Other literature addressing the feminization of agriculture neglects to mention nutrition in discussion of trends, implications, and promising policies.

More recently, a variety of donors, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), have emphasized gender mainstreaming, linkages between nutrition and agriculture, and the critical time period for physical and cognitive growth that lasts from conception through twenty-four months of age. Recent studies have underscored the importance of nutrition for pregnant women and for young children under the age of two, providing further evidence that early initiation of and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of age, along with timely introduction of complementary foods once a child reaches six months, provide a solid nutritional start for infants. Other literature shows a negative correlation between time a mother spends working outside of the home and her children's nutritional statuses, possibly because she is not present to provide these key nutritional interventions. Several studies link positive health outcomes to the amelioration of women's economic, social, and educational status, but few address the tradeoff in nutritional outcomes for a woman and her children as they pursue certain time-consuming agricultural activities.

The growing body of research has recently been translated into advocacy efforts around these issues. The Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) process and framework, begun in 2009 with a Roadmap released in September 2010 by the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, was developed to harness government and donor energy towards demand-driven and country-led nutrition initiatives. Around the same time, the United States, Ireland, and other global partners launched the 1000 Days initiative, to draw attention to both the critical time period from conception to twenty-four months and the need for a rapid global response to this topic.

² Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Rural Development: A Reference Manual for Governments and Other Stakeholders. Accessed on May 10, 2011 at

http://resources.thecommonwealth.org/Mar_Backup/backup/ARCHIVED%2022-OCT-2003/gender_old/htm/publications/plana4.pdf

³ FAO (2011). *The State of Food and Agriculture*. Accessed on May 10, 2011 at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

Donors, including the United States and the World Bank are also taking into account recent research on maternal and child health and nutrition, the nutrition-agriculture link, and the role of women in the developing world. The Feed the Future initiative, the Obama administration's response to global food insecurity, lists "improved nutritional status (women and children)" as one of its two first-level objectives.⁴ The three main indicators, prevalence of stunted children, prevalence of wasted children, and prevalence of underweight women, are all in line with both the promising practices outlined in a series of articles published in the *Lancet* in 2008, which underscored both the problem of maternal and child undernutrition as well as a series of effective nutrition interventions, and those in the SUN framework. To achieve these goals, Feed the Future seeks to increase resilience of vulnerable households and communities, improve access to a diverse and quality diet, improve nutrition-related behaviors, and increase usage of maternal and child health and nutrition services.⁵

Various USAID Missions, as per Feed the Future guidelines, have begun to implement programs which recognize the importance of women in agriculture and adopted the cross-cutting themes of gender and gender mainstreaming to act as underlying priorities and guidelines as part of the development of various country implementation plans. The quotes below are only a few examples of this recognition in Feed the Future documents:

- "Women play the predominant role in the production of food staples and in household nutrition, and women-owned businesses are increasingly prominent in the region's nascent food packaging/processing industries."⁶
- "The Government's manifesto also highlights the appreciation for the special role of fishermen and farmers, especially women, as the main producers, processors, and marketers of fish and food even though they have limited access to resources such as land, water, credit, inputs, and training."⁷

⁴ USAID (2011). Feed the Future Results Framework. Accessed on June 8, 2011 at http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF_Results_Framework.pdf

⁵ USAID (2011). Feed the Future Results Framework. Accessed on June 8, 2011 at http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF_Results_Framework.pdf

⁶ Feed the Future (2010). Feed the Future West Africa FY 2010 Implementation Plan. Accessed on June 24, 2011 at http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF_2010_Implementation_Plan_West_Africa.pdf

⁷ USAID (2010). Feed the Future Ghana FY 2010 Implementation Plan. Accessed June 24, 2011 at http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF_2010_Implementation_Plan_Ghana.pdf

Policy Checklist:

Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture:

- Baseline sectoral gender analysis
- Analysis of gender-based constraints to achieving sector-based goals and objectives
- Institutional assessment and capacity building on gender equity achievement
- Participatory planning and policy formation
- Improve budgeting process to incorporate gender concerns
- Establish and/or improve monitoring and evaluation of gender components of the given strategy
- Access to land, inputs, and credit for women

Source: FAO

This acknowledgement is a good first step; however it is not enough to ensure strong outcomes. Gender mainstreaming, as described below, requires additional steps to provide an enabling environment for women.

There is a great deal to be gained by putting policy into practice in the near future. The international community recognizes the lead roles that women play around the world for small scale agriculture and contributions to household health and nutrition, yet further analysis is needed to understand how these things are interrelated and how they affect young children. Now is a good time to push at the international, country, and donor levels to harness the current energy and global attention surrounding gender mainstreaming, nutrition, agriculture, and the relationships among them.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming, “the process through which an organization or a government ministry assumes a comprehensive gender perspective”⁸ or “the process of assessing the implication of women and men of any planned action [sic], including legislation, making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences integral dimensions in the design, implementation monitoring and evaluation of all agricultural policies and programmes so that women and men benefit equally”⁹ has become a buzzword in food security circles of late. Gender mainstreaming recognizes the fact that women and men have different situations in life and that policies must focus less on equality between the sexes but more on providing conditions that will enable women and men to reap equal benefit from them.

Successful gender mainstreaming depends on the following:

- Commitment at the country and donor levels to change policies and procedures so that gender concerns, particularly those of rural women, are incorporated into programming and policy making;
- Commitment by these same groups to mobilize resources; and
- A universal commitment to keeping gender and gender mainstreaming on the political agenda.¹⁰

Gender mainstreaming has been well defined, and several publications already exist describing steps which must be taken to realize it in practice and not only in rhetoric.¹¹

To achieve true gender mainstreaming, as well as to ensure the highest quality outcomes without doing harm, there is need to include this concept on the international agenda, and to ensure that political will and adequate resources exist to ensure success.

Optimal feeding practices for infants and young children

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga/downloads/En/Macroen.pdf>

⁹ Opio. F. (2003). *Gender mainstreaming in agriculture with special reference to Uganda: Challenges and prospects*. Africa Crop Science Conference Proceedings, 6. (99-703).

¹⁰ FAO Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (2003). *Macro Level Handbook*.

¹¹ FAO Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (2003). *Macro Level Handbook*.

UNICEF cites two immediate determinants of malnutrition in children: inadequate dietary intake and disease; and also lists three underlying causes: insufficient household food security, inadequate maternal and child care, and insufficient health services and an unhealthy environment.¹²

Studies have shown that certain care and feeding practices of infants and young children contribute significantly to future health and growth. Practices such as initiating breastfeeding immediately after birth so that the newborn can benefit from the nutrient-rich colostrum, exclusively breastfeeding for six months, introducing appropriate complementary foods in a timely manner, and respecting rules of hygiene decrease the chance that an infant or young child will suffer from either acute or chronic malnutrition.¹³

Breastfeeding, and other infant and young child feeding practices, have long been in the spotlight, though it is only in recent years that the depth of its importance to children under two years of age has garnered attention. One hundred thirty nine countries endorsed the Innocenti Declaration of the Protection, Promotion, and Support of Breastfeeding, which called, at a 1990 World Summit for Children, for all countries to develop national breastfeeding policies. This declaration was revisited and re-ratified in 2005 to highlight the importance of breastfeeding in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The 2005 declaration lists nine operational targets and describes action steps for a variety of stakeholders, including governments, multilateral and bilateral organizations, international financial institutions, and public-interest non-governmental organizations. Specific actions include governmental adoption of maternity protection legislation and other measures that facilitate six months of exclusive breastfeeding for women involved in all sectors, “with urgent attention to the non-formal sector”; identification and allocation of sufficient resources to fully implement actions delineated in the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding; increased levels of technical guidance; support for operational research; and calling attention to activities incompatible with those found in the Innocenti Code and the Global Strategy so that they can be “effectively addressed in accordance with national legislation, regulations, or other suitable measures.”

In 1989, WHO and UNICEF jointly published *Protecting, promoting, and supporting breast-feeding: the special role of maternity services*¹⁴ which contains a checklist of “ten steps to successful breastfeeding,” designed for use in all facilities providing maternity and newborn care services.

Because this issue is entwined with so many others, support for any policy development or adaptation must come from a variety of sources: government Ministries (health, agriculture, women’s); NGOs and other organizations working in the fields of health, agriculture, and nutrition; international agencies such as WHO, FAO, and UNICEF; donor countries or organizations; and other professional organizations. A broad stakeholder base will ensure support at a variety of levels, first and foremost at the household

¹² UNICEF (1990). Conceptual Framework of Nutritional Status

¹³ Black et al (2008). Maternal and child undernutrition: Global and regional exposures and health consequences. *The Lancet*.

¹⁴ WHO (1989). *Protecting, promoting, and supporting breast-feeding: the special role of maternity services*. Accessed on May 15, 2011 at <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/9241561300.pdf>

level where benefits will be felt by the women themselves. Support for women will, in principle, extend to support for their families and communities as a whole.

State of working women in agriculture

To best achieve gender mainstreaming, it is necessary to understand the major role women already play in agriculture around the world. Agriculture is comprised of cash crop cultivation, food crop cultivation, and fish and/or livestock rearing. Women are often most involved in the growing of food for consumption in the home, which is commonly undervalued compared to other forms of agriculture. FAO estimates that globally, around 80 percent of basic foods and other household commodities are produced by women.

Women involved with agriculture in developing countries are responsible for work that is formally recognized, but even more of their time is taken up with activities not recognized by the formal work sector. Work of women has traditionally been underestimated for a variety of reasons: their informal activities are often home-based, and therefore difficult to measure; women, especially in rural areas, hold multiple jobs, which also go unmeasured; and value-adding post-harvest activities such as transformation and packaging of goods are also unmeasured.¹⁵ Gathering water and fuel can take several hours a day. Caring for children, including meeting their nutritional and health needs, also falls under a woman's work domain, but is seldom recognized as "work." Further complicating her situation, women are disproportionately less likely to benefit from time-saving agricultural technologies, including animal-driven traction.¹⁶ Women in agriculture across the developing world are paid less for longer working days.¹⁷

According to the UN, the "'feminization of agriculture' has placed a considerable burden on women's capacity to produce, provide, and prepare food in the face of already considerable obstacles."¹⁸ Women face problems that other societal groups do not. In addition, obstacles such as high HIV prevalence, protracted crises such as civil unrest, and male urban migration in search of paid labor have led to an increase in female-headed households around the world. Women in most parts of the world often gain access to land upon marriage and are primarily responsible for working that land to produce food for the household, but lack legal control of that land.¹⁹ Women often have less access to technologies that facilitate the agricultural and post-harvest processes and also have less access to market.²⁰

Conflict between work and family care

¹⁵ Charmes, J. (1998). Women working in the informal sector in Africa: New methods and new data. Accessed on June 6, 2011 at www.wiego.org/papers/charmes.doc

¹⁶ Opiyo, F. (2003). *Gender mainstreaming in agriculture with special reference to Uganda: Challenges and prospects*. Africa Crop Science Conference Proceedings, 6. (99-703).

¹⁷ IFAD (2010). Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty.

¹⁸ United Nations Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries. (2007). *Globalization, Agriculture, and the Least Developed Countries*. p. 3

¹⁹ Opiyo, F. (2003).

²⁰ Opiyo, F. (2003).

Because gender mainstreaming affects the design and implementation of employment policies and programs, it is essential that those involved in the design understand more than the economic effects of labor.

As the goal of gender mainstreaming is to equalize outcomes for women and men it is important, when applying this concept to any workplace, to keep in mind other roles and responsibilities of working mothers, particularly child care and child feeding. It is essential for the first six months, and very important through the first two years, that a child has access to its mother for regular breastfeeding. Programs that aim to mainstream gender take this into account when planning woman-centered policies and activities.

Studies have shown that there is a correlation between a mother's employment and the nutritional status of her children. In Indonesia, it was found that children of non-working mothers were less likely to be malnourished; and amongst children of working mothers, those with mothers employed in the informal sector were at highest risk.²¹ Data from Mali shows agricultural labor allocation, especially for the primary caregiver, has an impact on health and nutrition. The same study finds that when children do not have regular access to or interaction with their caregivers, they achieve negative growth outcomes.²² Other studies have found that women working outside of the home are mothers to the most malnourished children.

While there is a wealth of literature surrounding baby-friendly workplaces in the developed world, very little examines infant feeding and maternal and child nutrition in environments outside of an office space with infant/child care or private rooms for breastfeeding/pumping milk, refrigeration, running water, and public and private policies in place to ensure that women are afforded time to feed their children. However, the majority of women around the world are not recognized as "working" in the formal sector sense, and these millions of women, particularly those involved in agriculture, do not receive any benefits or special care based on the needs of their infants and young children.

To highlight the prominence of women in agriculture, and negative nutritional outcomes stemming from practices that do not accommodate the needs of either mothers or children, note the following: women provide ninety percent of the labor involved with rice cultivation in India and Nepal. Rates of moderate and severe low weight for height (wasting) are 20% and 13%, respectively. Moderate and severe low height for age (stunting) are 47% and 49%.²³ Exclusive breastfeeding rates in these countries are relatively low at 46% and 53%.²⁴ While there is no research directly linking labor rates to these nutritional outcomes in this country, it is highly probable that there is a link. Early introduction of complementary foods (before six months) is another cause of undernutrition in young children – in most

²¹ Waters et al (2004). Weight-for-age malnutrition in Indonesian children, 1992-1999. *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 33. 589-95.

²² Penders et al (2000). Agricultural development and child nutrition: What do we know? Accessed on May 10, 2011 at www.agobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=30223

²³ World Health Organization, 2010.

²⁴ UNICEF, 2010.

cases caused by a mother's inability to continue breastfeeding due to premature return to work, particularly in situations where the working mother gives up her primary caregiver status.

Proposed policy solutions

Gender mainstreaming is misunderstood, women's work is underestimated, and undernutrition is an invisible problem. Knowledge of the interaction between these is lacking. As a result, services to address these issues are often not in high demand by communities where they are a problem; and nutrition in particular is often ignored by government policies related to agriculture and women's rights.

There are several levels at which this issue must be addressed: both country- and donor-level efforts must be pulled together by a comprehensive global response.

Country-level policy options

Several countries have conducted studies and/or established protocols and policies on gender. Zambia practiced a Women in Development policy from 1983-1999 and updated it with a Gender Development Policy in 2000. Kenya's Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock Development conducted World Bank-funded research on women in development throughout the 1990s. Despite these models and others like them, however, gender mainstreaming has not been made mandatory by any country's governing body.²⁵

At a country level, through a process known as the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), African nations are working to define national policies that will chart agricultural development processes and policies over the coming years, yet few make clear that they recognize the importance of gender and the role that women play in the continent's food security situation, and also the particular vulnerabilities of women and children.

Mention of gender, gender mainstreaming, and gender equality are conspicuously absent from CAADP literature, though the documents were written with the acknowledgement that women and children make up the majority of the poor and hungry people in the world. CAADP was designed taking into account a variety of other Pan-African commitments, such as the Pan African Nutrition Initiative, the African Regional Nutrition Strategy for 2002-2015, the African Ten Year Strategy, the African Union protocol on African Women's Rights, and the AU Child Survival Framework, all of which place emphasis on the importance of gender and/or nutrition. Despite the lack of gender mainstreaming language, Pillar III, which seeks to ensure that agricultural growth agendas target poor and vulnerable people, does recognize maternal and child health programming, prenatal and neonatal health and nutrition, employment and income generation for women, adolescent female nutrition, and investment in women's behavior change and social marketing amongst immediate, medium-, and long-term solutions to addressing problems of food access and utilization.²⁶ While the CAADP compact development process

²⁵ Farnworth (2010). Gender aware approaches in agricultural programmes: A study of Sida-supported agricultural programmes. Accessed on May 15, 2011 at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/22/46145893.pdf>.

²⁶ CAADP/NEPAD (2009). Pillar III – Framework for African food security. Accessed on January 12, 2011 at www.caadp.net/pdf/CAADP%20FAFS%20BROCHURE%20indd.pdf.

and policies and the programs stemming from it are too young to provide concrete results in terms of gender mainstreaming success, the recognition of these potential solutions is a promising step. Inclusion of recent gains in knowledge in the areas mentioned above will allow CAADP to measure its successes and support various countries as they develop and begin to implement their CAADP compacts, or country-driven development plans. Non-African nations, in the absence of a formalized process such as that of CAADP, are still called to make the same commitments.

Some specific steps developing country governments should take:

Safety net programs should be designed to provide protection rations to families of women who have given birth to extend the time that she has to spend with her new baby rather than returning immediately to the field.

Land reform to provide women with rights to the land that she works has often been cited as another promising policy avenue, though it will take time to balance this with societal and cultural norms. This is one issue raised repeatedly by a variety of sources at the international, country, academic, and donor levels which unanimously claim that female ownership of the land she works on results in improved

Promising Practices:

- Baby-friendly communities modeled on the Ghana experience
- Breastfeeding-specific training for community health volunteers
- Inclusion of men – husbands and community leaders – in community based programming and training
- Providing women with small ruminants for income generation/animal protein source
- Safety nets, including provisions for maternal leave and child care
- Access to microfinance for time-saving agricultural and post-harvest technology
- Increase in the number of female extension workers and gender sensitization training for all extension workers

economic and nutritional outcomes at the household level.²⁷ Land ownership provides women with the potential to hire outside workers or utilize on the aid of friends and neighbors to work her land while she devotes time to a newborn.

Rural women participating in agriculture are less likely to access medical facilities when they give birth and so regulations and guidelines should be adapted for use by traditional birth attendants and other community health volunteers. Countries should begin by incorporating this into their health/childcare policies, and then collaborate with the aforementioned other stakeholders to assist with financing and technical assistance as needed.

Governments can also address structural impediments to health and nutrition by improving their investment and involvement in nutrition and health. Improving current situations punctuated by inaccessible and understaffed health centers and insufficient tools for the prevention and treatment of undernutrition is an important first step

to breaking the cycle of malnutrition.

²⁷ Farnworth (2010). Gender aware approaches in agricultural programmes: A study of Sida-supported agricultural programmes. Accessed on May 15, 2011 at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/22/46145893.pdf>.

There have been successful initiatives taken to mainstream gender into agricultural work. In 1995, certain communities in the Gambia piloted a “baby-friendly communities” initiative, which set standards and support systems in place to ensure that women were relieved from heavy labor in the three months prior to giving birth and for the first six months afterwards. This model drew from the “Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding” and was adapted to fit the Gambian cultural context. Additionally, each community appointed a group of eight people, including a community health worker, a traditional birth attendant, and an elected committee comprised of three men and three women. This is a promising practice, as it is based on empirical evidence, draws from established breastfeeding best practices, and incorporates the entire community to ensure accountability. Once a practice is established as having potential and has garnered community-level support, it can then be taken to scale and incorporated into national policies, as was the case in the Gambia. This model was taken to scale between 1995 and 2004, increasing its reach from 12 to 200 communities, and was also incorporated into national policy as part of an early child development policy framework. Standardized training tools on the baby-friendly community initiative were also developed.²⁸ This may not be gender mainstreaming in its truest sense, but the Gambia recognized the fact that women and men needed different treatment around the birth of a child in order to achieve optimal health for the entire household.

It is also important that countries design policies that are realistic and reflect women’s current working, home life, and legal situations within that country context. Policies must be developed with appropriate stakeholder input and on a realistic timeframe. For example, countries in protracted crisis, several of which count amongst the world’s most food insecure, employ coping mechanisms which often have very different outcomes for women as they do for men.²⁹ Women and girls in a household are more likely to cut back on meals or portion sizes in response to household food shortages.³⁰

Donor-level policy options

USAID-funded projects are required to conduct an environmental assessment to ensure that the project will not cause environmental harm and to establish a mitigation plan should activities have a negative impact. The Infant and Young Child Feeding program recently developed a similar toolkit to examine, more broadly, the overlap between nutrition and agriculture. With the starting point of “do good, but first do no harm,” the group devised a series of steps that model the environmental survey model, including the mitigation plan component.³¹ A similar tool could be developed for use in all projects to assess secondary impact on children of targeted beneficiaries, or the interaction between the **process** of gender mainstreaming and nutritional outcomes. As the knowledge base develops, it will influence policy and programming. Donors should also scrutinize the woman-agriculture-nutrition link when writing grant and contract guidances and committing resources.

²⁸ Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Newsletter (2004). *Baby friendly communities in Gambia*. Accessed on May 2, 2011 at http://www.childfriendlycities.org/pdf/baby_friendly_communities.pdf.

²⁹ FAO, (2011). *The state of food insecurity in the world: Addressing food insecurity in protracted crises*.

³⁰ IASC, *Gender and Nutrition in Emergencies*. Accessed on May 10, 2011 at www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/downloadaddoc.aspx?docID=4097

³¹ USAID/Infant and Young Child Nutrition Project. (2010). Available online at <http://www.iycn.org/maximizing.php>

Many Feed the Future indicators are disaggregated by gender, which will contribute to the developing evidence base. Various USAID Missions have prioritized gender mainstreaming while working with recipient governments in the development of Feed the Future Country Implementation Plans. In order to live up to their promises to value civil society involvement and input, Feed the Future and the World Bank-administered Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) should take measures to ensure that women, and female producer groups, are included in the group of consulted stakeholders. Awarded funds should be contingent on meeting this criterion.

Global response – develop evidence base

It is clear that there has been little research directly addressing the link between the time and energy involved with a woman's involvement in agriculture and the consequences, positive or negative, on the nutritional status of her household. Activities that contribute to a woman's social and economic empowerment have been proven beneficial to the food security situation of her household; however, given the recent attention to nutrition and the essential 1000 day window for optimal development, the links between "gender mainstreaming" activities, particularly as they intersect with time-consuming activities and nutrition, require further examination.

The lack of evidence base thus far emphasizes the need to focus on measuring programming outcomes to develop solid policy options. Benefits of adherence to baby and child-friendly feeding practices are clear, and the empowerment of women both inside and outside of the home also has direct positive correlation to the health of children, but there is not enough research to contribute to the formation of a sound advocacy platform around these issues. A few programmatic steps must be taken to set up an effective policy push. These include development and utilization of tools and questionnaires to measure and gauge health outcomes for children of mothers involved in agricultural labor compared to children of women who are not. Anthropomorphic measurements and other quantitative data is also needed.

Baseline data also needs to be updated. According to the MDG Monitor, a publication that tracks country by country progress towards the various MDGs, very few countries provide data on their progress. For example, information on the first MDG index on the percentage of the population living under \$1/day is missing for a large part of Africa and the Middle East, and much of that which is available dates back to 2000 or 2001.³²

Gender equality in education and economics may have a stronger impact on household nutritional and health status than the amount of time a woman spends in the field, but it must be recognized as time away from her family and small children, who rely on their mothers' milk as a primary source of food. The international community, in collaboration with various governments and donors, must find a way to harness the energy devoted to women and their roles as both producers and mothers to ensure food secure and nutritionally sound households.

³² MDG Monitor (2011). Accessed on May 10, 2011 at <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/map.cfm?goal=2&indicator=0&cd=>