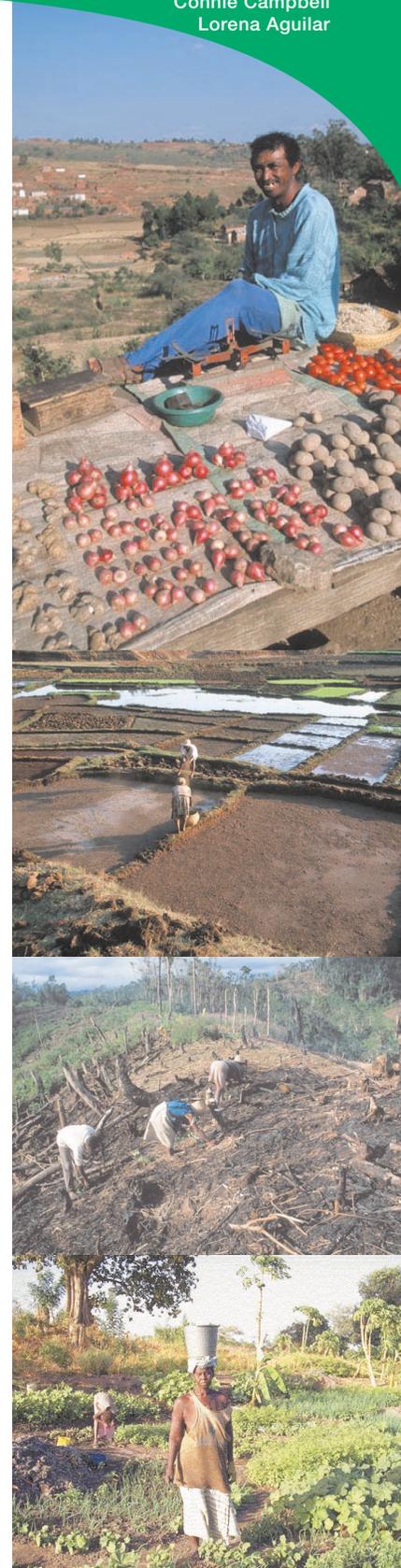


Gender Makes the Difference

- Women play major roles in food production in Africa. In Sudan women provide 30% of the labor for food production, while in the Congo women provide 80% of the labor. The percentage of women economically active in agriculture ranges from 48% in Burkina-Faso to 73% in the Congo.
- Oftentimes, secluded women are not considered farmers. However, in Afghanistan extensive agricultural production is carried out by women within their household compounds - bee-keeping, dairy animals, flowers, orchard trees (nuts, fruits), chickens – all destined for both home consumption and the market.
- Powerful social norms in many areas – among them Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan - restrict women's movement in the public domain. Women selling their agricultural production in Afghanistan often must rely on men to serve as their link to the marketplace, a public space.
- Contract farming of non-traditional agricultural export crops is a farming system that involves both men and women. But in Kenya contracts are given to small farmers with the understanding that male household heads can mobilize the labor of women in the family. Men often sign the contracts and receive the payments.
- Social norms define female work and male work. In Tamil Nadu, India, both male and female agricultural workers agreed it would be humiliating for a man to be paid the same as a woman, even for the same work.
- Primary responsibility for household tasks and childcare limits the activities of women. One project working at the interface of agriculture and biodiversity conservation in Petén, Guatemala, provides childcare to assure women's participation in economic enterprises related to sustainable natural resource management.
- The non-reciprocal forms of control that senior men exercise over women's labor, time, outside employment, and access to land reduce women's opportunities in agriculture. When men in Kenya expand their contract farming operations, they often use the land they had formerly allocated to their wives for household food production – thus displacing women.

Agricultural systems, and the roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women who farm, differ according to geographic and cultural context. Ester Boserup's classic study of 1970 made a great contribution to understanding women's role in development by recognizing women as important economic actors. Boserup was the first to define female farming systems (shifting cultivation and food production) and male farming systems (settled, plow-based cultivation and private land tenure), and her influence is still seen today through the widespread recognition of the complexity of agricultural systems and their gendered variations.



FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC CAN BE FOUND AT:

IUCN- Gender and Environment
www.genderandenvironment.org

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
www.wedo.org

The International Food Policy Research Institute
www.ifpri.org

The Food and Agricultural Organization
www.fao.org/gender

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By considering farming systems through a gender lens it is possible to identify development approaches that may act against women's interests. For example, women often have a small political presence on community councils, agriculture extension programs may be perceived as male spaces and local agrarian organizations and institutions may be based on male hierarchies. Also, gender analyses have made clear that men and women often manage, use and control natural and agricultural resources differently. By understanding these differences, and the gendered power relations behind them, agricultural programs and policies achieve greater equity and efficiency.

WHY GENDER MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN AGRICULTURE INITIATIVES

- When women's land and property rights are made visible in awareness campaigns and the provision of legal assistance, gender equity increases and with it the perception that women are able to participate fully in economic growth initiatives. Legal reform programs increasingly address inheritance inequities and assure that mechanisms for land tenure enforcement are accessible to women.
- Promoting vegetable gardens and food crops, which are often within the purview of women, improves the nutritional status of the rural family. Another investment in nutrition for both girls and boys is to improve access to education. Education ensures that girls (and boys) have care-giving skills that will help them achieve better nutrition for themselves and their future children.
- Gendered research takes into account women's concerns and knowledge and therefore helps to increase farm productivity and the sustainable management of natural resources. Scientists are using gender analysis to make modern agricultural research more relevant to resource-poor farmers – efforts include developing crops that grow rapidly, cook easily and are higher in protein and other nutrients.
- When women receive the same education as men, farm yields rise by as much as 22 percent. In Kenya, an information campaign targeted at women increased yields of maize by 28%, beans by 80% and potatoes by 84%. But, women farmers still receive only 5% of all agricultural extension services worldwide.
- Women's roles in fishing are changing and women fisher folk are increasingly more visible. Asian women have made headway as fish farmers and expert networks have been established to assist women in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.
- Income and organization can lead to political participation for women and increased decision-making in the household. After the introduction of a groundnut project in West Africa, the Samanko women's group not only earned cash from new groundnut varieties but also began to influence community decision-making.
- Crops in many instances are "gendered". In much of West Africa women are the rice farmers. Newly available varieties of rice can double production, by being harvested 30 to 50 days earlier than their predecessors. This allows for a second crop of beans or vegetables, and provides additional protein, a boom in a region where malnutrition widely affects pregnant women. The new varieties choke off weeds, diminishing the need for weeding, a traditional chore for women. Additionally, a dehulling machine is available, thus relieving women of a labor-intensive chore.

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