

# Gender, Food and Nutrition Security: Introducing a strategic gender framework for improving household wellbeing in Southern Ethiopia from a Canada-Ethiopia Project

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## Extended Abstract

### Objective

Collaborative projects have been undertaken between Hawassa University, Ethiopia and the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, funded by Canadian International Food Security Research Fund, IDRC/DFATD, with aims at mitigating protein and micronutrient malnutrition in Ethiopia. The main objective of this study was to examine the links between Gender, food and Nutrition Security and then introduce a strategic gender framework for improving the wellbeing of most vulnerable household members in Southern Ethiopia.

### Methodology in brief

The gender framework adopted in this paper involves the analysis of baseline data generated from 665 households randomly drawn from four districts of Southern Ethiopia (Damot Gale; Halaba; Hawassa Zuriya; and Adamitulu Jido Combolcha). Data were generated through household survey tools and checklists involving household heads, focus group discussions and key informants from the four study districts and collected information on background characteristics of households, demographic characteristics of respondents, crop production, consumption, and marketing, decision-making in production and consumption, household diet and feeding practices. The information on Household Hunger and Nutrition Security was analyzed based on baseline data compiled by a total of nine independent studies/ baseline data conducted by the project.

## **Results in brief**

The Descriptive analysis show that Close to 70 percent of the households were headed by male. About 60 percent of the respondents could not read or write. When the data was disaggregated by sex, more than 68 percent of female respondents, compared to 54 percent of male respondents, fell under this category. Female-headed households own much less land, livestock and other important strategic resources compared to male-headed households. In terms of land holdings, the findings revealed that a large percentage (33.1%) of female-headed households had 0.5 to 1 hectare. Those reporting less than a half hectare accounted for 25.7 percent of participants. The percentage of respondents owning more than one hectare were also significant (38%). As expected, the landless households were very small (3.5%) and comparable with the regional and national figures. Since 2005, a new Federal Rural Land Administration Proclamation to benefit female-headed households and for individual married women to gain control of land, yet, there is still a local level customary system of land distribution preventing women's land ownership rights in many parts of the study region. Some of the female-headed households engaged in transferring their land on temporary basis to others because they did not own oxen and labor to execute the demanding agricultural activities. Chi square analysis revealed a significant association between gender and livestock ownership (at  $p = 0.05$ ) where the percentage of male-headed households owning 4-6 TLU is 12.6 compared to 3.5 for female-headed households. Similarly, those male-headed households with over 6 TLU, is 12.6 % compared to 5.3 % for female-headed households.

Also, there is a quite significant difference in the proportion on the use of extension services among male and female headed households, where the later use much lesser of both full and partial packages (11.7 and 31.6 percent respectively). Those reporting non use of the packages account for 10.5 percent of the households. Extension services in the study areas like in other parts of the country involve a top-down approach. New technologies are integrated into extension packages (which usually include improved seed, varieties of inputs, family life education among others) and are addressed by local extension agents. The home-based extension programs usually focus on hygiene, cooking techniques, family planning, childcare and the like) while the farm based extension programs focus on use of fertilizer, selected seed, land management, pest control among others. There are many circumstances where female-headed

households are not well provided for in the extension process. As indicated in chi-square analysis, female-headed households have lesser access to these agricultural packages ( $\chi^2 = 0.019$ ) as 31.6% of male-headed households are full package users compared to only 11.7% of the female-headed households.; 31.4% of male-headed households are partial package users compared to only 14.7% of female-headed households (see table 5). The issue of access to agricultural inputs and technologies is mainly related to the issue of whether or not women are perceived as farmers in view of their limited access to land and oxen.

With regards to decision makings in the sales, transportation and spending of the income generated, the husband's responsibility was reported as 35.8%, 38.8% and 38.3% respectively compared to the wife's 10.2%, 10.1% and 10.2% respectively.

On the other hand, the findings with regards to household wellbeing further revealed that complementary feeding practices are unacceptably poor in all the districts considered (i.e. about 75 percent households fell in Diet Diversity Score < 4) where the most frequently consumed food groups were low protein grains, roots and tubers. All the study zones had low wealth index and high household food insecurity and hunger (about 76%), which were reflected in very high levels of stunting and underweight among infants and young children.

### **The gender framework**

Finally, based on the main findings, a strategic gender framework was developed, which proposed five key gendered pillars for improving food and nutrition security at household level especially among infants and young children; namely, Knowledge, skills and training acquisition; Participation in production; Access to resources; Control over resources; and Policy development. (Note: the full framework will be included in the full paper)