

Relationships between gender and nutrition in Africa: Some insights

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Gender relations, attitudes and management of the dynamics can make or break nutrition in the household and the subsequent cycle of malnutrition and poverty.

In Africa, women make up a fair share of the small holder farmers/food producers, yet women remain – apart from young children - the most vulnerable to malnutrition and its related dire impacts and consequences; making them even more vulnerable, and less resilient to eminent or emerging challenges around health, livelihood, productivity and sustainable development.

Over the millennia many things have not changed when it comes to gender relations and women's empowerment. Strong traditional values, mores, and taboos that many a times hamper the very nutritional outlook of the family still persist; and thus must be revisited and put in the right and sensible context with optimum nutritional outcomes/consequences in mind.

By and large women are not only food producers, but they plan and prepare the family meals and are the focal overall care takers for the household. This being the case, gender relations have to take cognizance of the woman's workload, compared to other family members – young, male, female, and those with special needs. What is the contribution, what are the tradeoffs etc.?

On *technology*; it has to be gender sensitive and gender informed. Men and women should equally have a voice and contribute to the conception, design and delivery of technologies that aim to improve food systems and nutrition for communities overall.

On *policies and programmes*; policies and programmes must be both gender sensitive and nutrition sensitive. This requires a serious mind shift in terms of e.g. asset ownership that enables or leads to better nutrition.

Let's not forget that the one thing that preoccupies every woman's mind is if and how her family is fed. But to be able to feed and provide the best nutrition, she herself has to be well fed and nourished. She requires all the tools she can muster... to do better.

“Nourish the woman, nourish the child, nourish the nation, nourish the future” Bibi Giyose

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