

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* project has laid a strong foundation for promoting the use of a gender-informed approach that links agriculture and nutrition in order to reduce hunger and undernutrition in sub-Saharan Africa. What does the project reveal about the leadership network strategy, and how to implement the linked approach within policies, organizations, and communities? This section presents a set of conclusions drawn from the project and recommends what needs to be done to consolidate changes and address remaining gaps.

Conclusions

The agriculture-nutrition linked, gender-informed approach promoted by the *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* project is an effective way to combat hunger and undernutrition. The project achieved a remarkable degree of buy-in to this approach in a relatively short time through its leadership strategy that involved a wide range of actors and organizations. In addition, individual team members have applied what they learned about using these linkages to their own work, creating a multiplier effect. The following conclusions can be drawn from the multi-country project.

Leadership networks: The teams successfully brought the project approach to the attention of development practitioners and policymakers, prompting action. Their success was due in part to the members, who were recognized leaders in their sectors, represented different types of organizations and agencies, and had access to decision makers and communities. They pooled their personal and professional assets, learned from each other, and in the end, their influence was felt by a large number of audiences.

Evidence-based advocacy: The teams achieved the changes they did partly because they had the evidence they needed to make their case and the skills to present it in a compelling manner to

strategically chosen audiences. They showed how adoption of an agriculture-nutrition linked, gender-informed approach enhances the effectiveness of key policy initiatives and community programs.

Participatory processes: The teams effectively used participatory processes to promote the project approach. Using these processes created the opportunity to bring a wide range of people into the decision-making process. Because hunger and undernutrition are most visible at the individual and household levels, having community input was invaluable, putting a human face on the problem and demonstrating the benefits of using the linked, gender-informed approach.

Action-oriented solutions: The teams also were successful because they went beyond the question of “why” an agriculture-nutrition linked, gender-informed approach should be used to “how” it could be implemented. Advocacy strategies included specific actions decision makers should take, rather than leaving them to puzzle out what they should do. The leadership networks provided actual text to rephrase policies so that they would better reflect and support the linked approach. They trained specialists how to use gender methods to design and implement program interventions; they worked with community leaders and household members to demonstrate how to change production patterns to enhance family nutrition and health. All of this made a difference, especially in catalyzing change in a relatively short time.

Capacity strengthening and learning: Annual workshops provided an efficient and effective means to strengthen capacity of all team members, and a forum in which team members could ask questions and learn from each other. The teams also learned on the job by working with their fellow team members and communities. This active, iterative learning process was key to

building a successful multi-country network of informed and skilled leaders.

Gender knowledge and skills: Linking agriculture and nutrition while accounting for gender was a new approach for most of the team members, and they had to gain enough familiarity and comfort with the approach and how to articulate it before they could convince others of its value. Because the gender training focused on building skills in using gender analysis as a practical research and planning methodology, participants moved beyond simply learning more about what gender is.

Recommendations

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* project made an initial investment in creating a strong and effective network of knowledgeable and skilled leaders who could promote greater use of a linked, gender-informed approach. The following recommendations are grounded in the belief that follow-on work lies, for the most part, in the hands of these leaders. International partners, donors, and professional organizations and universities also have roles to play in supporting their efforts.

African leaders can:

- ▶ Enlist the support of potential allies, such as health and budget specialists and economists, in framing the agriculture-nutrition-gender case, promoting its adoption, and ensuring it is translated to action at the community, institutional, and policy levels.
- ▶ Determine the best way forward for their nascent networks, access resources to continue work at the community level, and follow up with other actions initiated in the project.
- ▶ Use every opportunity, including regional meetings and international conferences, to continue to educate others about the approach to combating hunger and undernutrition, how to operationalize it, and its benefits.

- ▶ Remain engaged in policy formulation and review, and provide oversight and input to budgetary allocations so policies that truly reflect a linked approach are implemented and have their intended effects.
- ▶ Identify and address resistance to adopting and investing in the linked, gender-informed approach.

International partners can:

- ▶ Support the country leaders in identifying and accessing resources to implement country-specific or regional projects to address the most critical institutional factors that inhibit building stronger links between agriculture and nutrition, and use of gender strategies and methods.
- ▶ Assist the country leaders in identifying opportunities to continue to strengthen their gender capacity and extend that learning to their fellow network members.
- ▶ Identify resources to evaluate the sustainability of leadership networks in reducing hunger and undernutrition.

Donors can:

- ▶ Provide resources to maintain this newly established and successful network.
- ▶ Develop a compendium of materials that articulate the approach and how to apply it in program development and implementation.
- ▶ Realign funding strategies to support efforts across sectors and disciplines to achieve sustainable development outcomes, including reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

Professional organizations and education professionals can:

- ▶ Explore ways to expand nutrition capacity in underserved countries and communities.