

What We Do

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

CREATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



Women play a major role in food production in the developing world—contributing as much as 60 percent of labor on family farms in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example—but they often have no control over farm income or agricultural resources such as seeds, fertilizer, and land.

Our work to reduce hunger and malnutrition and to help smallholder farming families improve their lives cannot succeed without addressing the role of women in agriculture. We work with our grantees and partners to be responsive to women’s roles, responsibilities, and priorities in all of our agricultural development programs.

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When women farmers are meaningfully included in agricultural development opportunities, not only do farms become more productive but adoption of new technologies increases and overall family health improves.



Evidence shows that if women farmers across the developing world had the same access as men do to resources such as land, improved seed varieties, new technologies, and better farming practices, yields could increase by as much as 30 percent per household and countries could see an increase of 2.5 to 4 percent in agricultural output.

Women have also been shown to be more likely than men to reinvest income in the health of children and other family members and in a more varied and nutritious family diet.

We ask our grantees and partners to adopt three priorities in ensuring that our programs are gender responsive:

- **Know her.** Programs should take into account the context and circumstances of women farmers. Our grantees must investigate women's needs, constraints, responsibilities, and priorities and anticipate how programs will affect women's labor, time, current practices, and resources.
- **Design for her.** Programs must use the information collected about women farmers to inform program design. Our best projects are designed specifically to reach and benefit women farmers, and they include goals and milestones that account for women's participation.
- **Be accountable to her.** We work to ensure that program objectives include women's active involvement and that progress be evaluated in terms of women's successes as well as household successes. Programs should collect feedback, measure results, and adjust their design to ensure that women are participating and benefiting.

The following examples show the range of approaches that our grantees take to be responsive to gender.

Gender Transformative

Some of the programs we support account for gender differences and inequalities from the start, with an emphasis on gender equity and transforming relationships between women and

men. We consider these programs *gender transformative*.

One gender-transformative project we support is an effort by the international nonprofit organization Landesa to improve food security and income for 200,000 households in rural India by increasing women's land ownership.

Landesa facilitates state government programs that grant small plots of land—enough for a home and a kitchen garden—to low-caste people. It works with the state governments to put land titles in women's names, either jointly with their husbands or individually. The project includes community meetings to explain the practical benefits of land ownership for women and to encourage men to support this social change.



Landesa **knows** the relative position of low-caste women in India and understands their limited access to assets. It has **designed** the project to change systems that can undermine women's empowerment and productivity. Landesa ensures that it is **accountable** to women by monitoring the impact of the project through baseline surveys and periodic focus groups.

Gender Aware

Most of the agricultural programs we support consider how women and men will participate and benefit, and they strive to benefit both and harm neither. We consider these programs *gender aware*.



One example is the United Nations World Food Programme's Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, a pilot program that aims to increase procurement from smallholder farmers for humanitarian food aid. When P4P field staff found that their program targets were difficult to reach, they sought help from the foundation. We are collaborating with them to refocus the project around gender and find approaches to achieving ambitious gender-based targets.

For example, P4P is conducting studies on gender roles in farming and is taking steps to ensure that it reaches women, such as by using illustrations to convey information to illiterate

women, offering childcare services during training sessions, and encouraging farmers' organizations to move women into leadership roles.

Through its data collection and analysis, P4P is working to **know** women farmers and understand how the initiative might affect women and men, in both intended and unintended ways. It is **designing** measures to reach women more effectively, and it is ensuring **accountability** by conducting gender-disaggregated monitoring of all program activities.

Projects That Do Not Account for Gender

Differences

We receive some grant proposals that do not account for gender differences and do not consider how agricultural initiatives may benefit or hinder women or men. We refer to such proposals as *gender neutral*. The foundation does not support these types of projects because women can be further marginalized if their concerns and needs are not explicitly factored into the program design.

Very few programs set out to exclude women, but some inadvertently have this effect. One example is a project that aimed to breed and distribute improved varieties of staple crops. When the breeders conducted field testing, they sought opinions primarily from men, who valued yield above all other traits. The breeders selected varieties based solely on this feedback and yields improved, but the household adoption rate was lower than expected.

Women farmers, whose responsibilities include land preparation, weeding, and cooking, have additional priorities in choosing which crops to grow, including pest resistance, cooking time, and taste. Because the new varieties increased the time women spent on their other tasks, they were less likely to choose those varieties.

A better approach would have been to study women's and men's responsibilities in the home and in the fields and to design a strategy that included women's preferences and involved women in farm trials. The end result might have been a higher rate of adoption and better outcomes in terms of income and family health.



Common Grantee Concerns and Questions

We understand that many agricultural programs focus on crops and not necessarily on the people who produce or consume them. We also know that not all organizations have experience with—or the mandate to implement—gender-responsive approaches.

We work closely with our grantees to ensure that their programs serve both female and male farmers, and we encourage them to reach out to their program officer to solicit more information as they design and implement their grant.

Here are some frequently asked questions from grantees:

What if my project doesn't reach farmers directly?

We acknowledge that a gender-responsive approach will be more important for some projects than for others. However, even research and development efforts will one day affect farmers. We ask that all grantees design a logical path to the ultimate user of a service or a technology. In most cases, both women and men will be affected by your intervention, and we ask that you anticipate what those effects might be.



Won't it be expensive to reach and involve women?

It might be. Because women often lack education, are occupied with child rearing, and have little role in public life, it can cost more to reach them and actively involve them. We recommend that you work with your program officer to determine the additional costs of designing and implementing a gender-aware or gender-transformative program.

Changing culture and society is not our role.

We acknowledge that all development projects will affect individuals, households, and communities—we hope for the better. When we ask grantees to address women's needs, we are simply asking that they apply smart design principles that support women—not undermine social norms or effect changes that are unsustainable or unwanted by the community itself.

How do I know where to begin?

Begin by having a conversation with social scientists and other staff within your organization who have worked with smallholder farmers or have dealt with gender-based issues. Ask how your idea might affect both women and men and how you might actively reach out to women. If no such resources exist internally, ask your program officer for assistance and resources. The following chart offers some initial guidance for designing a gender-aware or gender-transformative program.

	KNOW HER	DESIGN FOR HER	BE ACCOUNTABLE TO HER
Gender Aware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Conduct a gender analysis of the sector and region. » Understand the differing roles and responsibilities of women and men. » Know the context and circumstances of women on the farm, in the market, and in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Set targets for women's participation and leadership in program activities. » Hire and train women to reach women farmers. » Anticipate the program's effect on women's time and labor. » Account for women's productive, reproductive, and other responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Monitor how the program is benefiting women and men and how it is addressing women's aspirations. » Measure women's involvement and their influence on the project goals. » Continually revise the project strategy to deepen women's participation. » Collect sex-disaggregated data.
Gender Transformative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Understand the structures and systems that determine women's position in society. » Study social dynamics and determine how the project might affect women's power and influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Include in the program objectives more equitable and beneficial outcomes for women. » Work with women's rights organizations to shift and challenge social norms that limit women's economic empowerment. » Engage men to change their perceptions and behaviors about gender roles and allocation of resources between women and men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Measure the project's impact on men and the entire community as well as on women. » Account for goals that transcend a single intervention—such as changes in the status and position of women at large.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation aspires to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. We are dedicated to discovering and disseminating innovative approaches to addressing extreme poverty and poor health in developing countries and improving the U.S. education system. Because our financial resources, while significant, represent a small fraction of what's needed to address these challenges, we work in partnership with governments, the private sector, and other donors and organizations to achieve the greatest possible impact. www.gatesfoundation.org