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What Hinders Men to Participate in Project Activities Linking Nutrition and Agriculture?

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Abstract

Women and children form the most vulnerable group when it comes to dietary intake and thus are the focus of most nutrition programmes. However, at household level men are most often considered to be the decision maker. Therefore, to improve dietary intake mobilisation of both men and women is considered essential.

Women from 50 farming households in Kapchorwa District, Uganda, took part in trials of improved practices (TIPs) to improve local nutrition education messaging. Qualitative data collection was carried out through private counselling with the women at their homes. Part of the programme was a solar-dryer construction session together with the women and their husbands participating in the TIPs. Finally, group discussions were held with women and men separately. No incentives were provided for joining the solar-dryer construction sessions, while a travel allowance was paid to all participants for joining the group discussions.

While 37 husbands participated in the workshops, only 8 participated in the solar-dryer session. Those who joined the solar-dryer session joined out of their own interest or because they felt obliged to come. Some of the main reported reasons for not participating were being busy with farm activities, the weather conditions, and late invitations. In addition, some husbands thought the invitation was just for women because the project deals with vegetables, which are considered crops for females. Lastly, women reported their men stating the project was a waste of time and thus not participating because there was no financial allowance. However, seeing the solar-dryer at the workshops, men became very interested to learn how to construct it.

The results imply that men may not feel the necessity to join the research activities because they believe the topics like vegetable production address women only. Further, allowance is seen as a bigger motivation than knowledge gain which is questionable because allowance impacts the sustainability of the activity. Hence, nutrition-agriculture projects

need to specifically identify alternative incentives to improve participation of both, men and women, to enhance impact of its activities.

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