Title: Fish on Farms Nutrition Bulletin #2

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Date: September 2014

IDRC Project Number: 106928

IDRC Project Title: Small-scale aquaculture to strengthen food security

Country/Region: Cambodia

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Abstract: The bulletin focuses on analysis of interrelated gender, nutrition and food security issues for the Fish on Farms Project.

Keywords: Bulletin, HFP, production, consumption, aquaculture, Fish on Farms, nutrition, income generation, gender, food security
Fish on Farms
Integration of Small Scale Aquaculture with Homestead Food Production for Improved Food and Nutrition in Rural Cambodia

Gender, Nutrition and Food Security: Fish on Farms Gender Analysis
Gender inequality is recognized as a contributing cause of food insecurity and malnutrition throughout developing countries including Cambodia. The Fish on Farms project aims to improve women’s empowerment, household food security, nutrition outcomes, and livelihoods through an integrated homestead food production (HFP) model. Gender is an important component of the Fish on Farms project as women’s autonomy is linked to positive maternal and child health, nutrition, and food security outcomes. Through our qualitative and quantitative results we found that there is unequal decision-making influence between genders, with men having the ‘final say’ over large household decisions. Also, men have little involvement in childcare. Women are working harder than men; however, women’s work around the household is not valued by men or women. Finally, we identified a high prevalence of alcohol consumption and violence, which threatens women’s empowerment and negatively affects household food security. Based on these findings, a gender strategy has been developed to make women’s empowerment a key outcome of the Fish on Farms project.

Fish on Farms Project Overview
Cambodia is among the developing countries in the world and has a high burden of maternal and child undernutrition. Although Cambodia has been food (rice) sufficient for nearly a decade, some provinces in the country are still considered chronically food-insecure. Food insecurity and undernutrition in Cambodia stems, in part, from the lack of dietary diversity. Rice, which is low in fat, amino acids, and micronutrients, accounts for 70% of the average Cambodian’s daily diet, while animal source foods make up less than 9% of total energy intake. Since 1998, HKI has successfully implemented HFP to increase the availability and consumption of micronutrient-rich foods. HFP encourages year round production of nutrient-rich vegetables and fruit by providing low-income households with initial farming inputs, such as quality seeds, small scale irrigation and other gardening tools. These inputs are complemented by providing training on year-round food production techniques and improved child feeding practices, combined with on-going behaviour change communication and nutrition education strategies. Using household polyculture fish ponds, the Fish on Farms project aims to test the effectiveness of an integrated HFP plus aquaculture model. It is a three-armed randomized control trial involving 960 households in four districts of Prey Veng province. The three treatment groups are HFP, HFP + aquaculture (polyculture fish pond), and a comparison group, and each contain ~330 households across 30 villages. Each village has one Village Model Farm (VMF) and ten household farms; the VMF serves as a site for training and demonstrations on aquaculture and horticulture techniques, and provides technical support. With this model, small indigenous micronutrient-dense fish, which are highly acceptable in the Cambodian diet, can be raised and consumed whole, providing a direct source of vitamins and minerals present in the viscera and skeleton. The sale of large fish at market provides women with a source of additional income, which along with extensive technical training and knowledge sharing, works to empower women. Gender is an important component of the Fish on Farms project as women’s autonomy has been linked to positive maternal and child health, nutrition, and food security outcomes.
Gender Research and Analysis

Objective

The *Fish on Farms* gender analysis research was completed in order to provide insight into what empowerment meant to beneficiaries participating in the project, and how *Fish on Farms* could best address the gender disparities that affect food security, nutrition and livelihood. Findings from the gender analysis have been integrated into the nutrition behavior change communication (BCC) strategy and used to design the training and BCC materials on gender, nutrition and marketing.

Methodology

A multi-component approach was taken to obtain a wide breadth and depth of knowledge on gender issues. The research team collected quantitative data related to income generation, ownership of household assets, and decision making using a household survey, which was administered to all 960 households in the study. A qualitative analysis was then conducted on a subset of 120 households during October and November 2012. Here, group discussions, focus groups, and key informant interviews were conducted with beneficiaries.

A four-day training on gender analysis key concepts, semi-structured interview skills, and use of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools was held for the research team in Phnom Penh. The fieldwork was carried out in Svay Antor/Kamchay Mea and Ba Phnom districts that are involved in the horticulture + aquaculture arms and understanding different aspect of empowerment or gender inequality at the community level. For example, one activity was the *pocket chart on household responsibilities*. Here, respondents listed all of the productive and reproductive tasks carried out within the household and allocated each task to the “pocket” of the person typically responsible for these tasks. The chart illustrated the gendered division of labor and disparities in workload distribution. Another activity was *body maps of gender norms*, where women and men illustrated a picture of the “ideal woman” and “ideal man,” respectively. Through the drawings, participants explored the customary and contemporary expectations for men and women and the ways in which they adhere to and contradict the traditional cultural codes.
Each day of data collection was followed by a day of analysis, which included consolidating and checking notes, and following structured guidelines to summarize the critical content and trends. During this process, the research team consolidated the critical gender issues that surfaced during the research and they prioritized the norms and behaviors that they considered important to address through the Fish on Farms gender strategy.

Key Findings from Gender Analysis

Unequal Decision Making Influence

The research showed that although women actively participate in decision-making with their husbands, there is an inequality in the final say over “big” decisions. If women disagree on a major decision, the husband’s viewpoint will generally prevail. Furthermore, while women are charged with managing the household income, they do not have the authority to veto a husband’s decision about how to use the money, particularly when it comes to his leisure expenditures. Women would like their opinions to be respected by their husbands, particularly over “big” asset decisions.

Unequal Division of Labour and Workload Burdens

Neither women nor men recognize the value of women’s household work, which is considered light and easy.

Unequal Involvement in Childcare

With a gendered division of labor and men’s work outside the home, men aren’t aware of the nutritional needs of children, the financial costs of good foods, or the long-term payoff of investing in children’s nutrition. Although they provide some support with the children, men are not involved in some of the more time-consuming tasks such as child feeding. Women would like men to gain a greater appreciation for reproductive and household work, and move towards a more equal gendered division of labour.

Prevalence of Alcohol and Violence

Alcohol consumption among men is a priority problem for women and is seen as a threat not only to women’s empowerment but also to food security and household nutrition. Alcohol consumption is recognized as a common problem by both sexes, and it is said to contribute to domestic violence, which is a symptom of women’s subordinate status. Both men and women were receptive to discussing this issue.

Gender Goals and Strategy

The team agreed upon a vision of gender equity and empowerment for the Fish on Farms project. For each issue identified in the key findings, above, the team developed positive messages or beliefs that can be promoted through behavior change communication activities and materials.

Women have considerably more work than men and less leisure time, yet men are not expected to be involved in childcare or daily household financial management.
Gender Goals

1) Build confidence in women’s decision making ability
2) Increased decision making influence of women
3) Joint financial planning
4) Men’s increased involvement in childcare and household support
5) Greater appreciation for reproductive work
6) Less tolerance for domestic violence

Using these goals as a guide, the Fish on Farms team used a gender transformative approach to tackle the gender issues present in Fish on Farms communities. Key messages relating to each of the above goals will be spread throughout the community, and will also be integrated into training sessions, and monitoring and evaluation activities. We have also added a specific gender training session that will take place in every Fish on Farms community as a means of creating awareness and sparking a dialogue on gender.

Conclusion

Applying a gender transformative approach, the Fish on Farms team is challenging underlying inequitable gender beliefs and norms, and taking steps to address the fundamental power imbalances present in rural Cambodian communities. The gender analysis has identified several key areas where the project can work to transform gender norms and promote equitable practices that are good for nutrition as well as for women’s strategic advancements. Given the positive conditions for change within the Fish on Farms communities, this project offers an opportunity environment for advancing women’s empowerment.