

# ANALYTIC OVERVIEW, 2018



## Opportunities for strengthening gender equity in Pakistan's wheat sector

by Kristie Druzca



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development



**CIMMYT**<sub>MR</sub>  
International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center

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# Introduction

This report outlines Pakistan's gender and agricultural context and looks specifically at development of the wheat sector to improve food security. It outlines how an insufficient focus on the barriers women face continues to significantly impact the nation's agricultural productivity, economic growth and food security. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) signed by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) and other member states include a number of gender and food security indicators, such as eliminating hunger for all. All of them aim "to leave no one behind" and deliver more equitable development outcomes. Achieving these goals will require a new and inclusive approach to agricultural development.

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Pakistan embraced the Green Revolution in the 1960-70's,<sup>1</sup> when the government employed thousands

of agricultural officers and field assistants to provide farmers with the necessary extension knowledge to increase agriculture productivity.<sup>2</sup> Using new farming techniques such as dwarf varieties and fertilizer, the production of wheat increased by 79 percent in the first few years of employing the new techniques.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan's Green Revolution performance is considered the best in South Asia.<sup>4</sup>

Agriculture continues to play a large role in food security and poverty reduction. Agriculture contributes 18.9 percent to GDP, and employs 42.3 per cent of the labor force.<sup>5</sup> However, the average farm size has decreased from 13.1 acres in the

early 1970s to 7.7 acres in 2000. This is due to inheritance rights and a large population size which makes it harder for families to make a living from agriculture.<sup>6</sup> Nutrition and food security indicators are particularly poor for women. The gendered food security gap is one of the largest in the world with women scoring 11 percentage points higher than men.<sup>7</sup>



The lack of gender sensitivity of Pakistan's agricultural research and extension system has been highlighted

as an ongoing weakness in agriculture related literature.<sup>8</sup> The FAO estimates that ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women can lead to increases in agricultural output and reduce poverty.<sup>9</sup> It is imperative to reduce gender inequality in Pakistan's agriculture sector.

- 1 Lopez, V.M., Castro, M., Krutmechai, M., Kaewtankam V., & Habib, N. (2012). Women's Wisdom: Documentation of Women's Knowledge in Agriculture (Case Studies from Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan). Penang, Malaysia: Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific.
- 2 International Food Policy Research Institute (n.d) Agricultural and Advisory Services World Wide. Retrieved from <http://www.worldwide-extension.org/asia/pakistan/>.
- 3 Child, F. and Hiromitsu K. (1975) "Links to the Green Revolution: A Study of Small-Scale, Agriculturally Related Industry in the Pakistan Punjab." Economic Development and Cultural Change, 23(2), pp. 249-275.
- 4 Evenson, R. (2005) The Green Revolution and the Gene Revolution in Pakistan: Policy Implications. The Pakistan Development Review 44(4 Part I) pp. 359-386 World Bank and CIA Factbook (2018). Pakistan. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/PUBLICATIONS/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>.
- 5 Government of Pakistan (2018). Pakistan's Economic Survey 2017-18, Economic Adviser's Wing, Finance Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad. p13. Retrieved from [http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters\\_18/Economic\\_Survey\\_2017\\_18.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_18/Economic_Survey_2017_18.pdf).
- 6 World Business and Investment Library (2015). Pakistan: Doing Business and Investing in Pakistan: Strategic, Practical Information, Regulations, Contacts. USA: World Business and Investment Library, International Business Publications.
- 7 This is based upon data from the 2014-2015 FAO Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) survey and appears in this report: UN Women (2018). Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from <http://www.onumulheres.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SDG-report-Gender-equality-in-the-2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-2018-en.pdf>
- 8 Druzca, K and Peveri, V (2018). Literature on gendered agriculture in Pakistan: Neglect of women's contributions. Women's Studies International Forum, 69, 180-189.
- 9 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011). The State of Food and Agriculture Report, 2010-11. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>.

## Methodology

This analytic overview summarizes evidence collated from a research for development (R4D) project that ran in Pakistan from 2014 to 2018. The project sought to improve the gender-equity focus of wheat-related research and development. This overview collates evidence from:

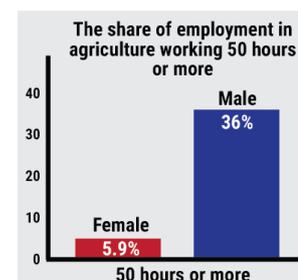
- A literature review of 73 documents on women's role in agriculture from 1990 until 2016;
- A meta-analysis of 41 project documents, including 18 evaluation reports;
- Qualitative research with 351 respondents (128 adult women, 136 adult men, 46 young women ages 16 to 24, and 41 young men ages 16 to 24) in six wheat-growing villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Baluchistan;
- Data mined a household wheat survey



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The population living below the national poverty line decreased from 64 percent in 2001 to 24 percent in 2015.<sup>10</sup> Pakistan's 2018 per capita income is \$1,467 USD and GDP growth is 5.8 percent, the highest in South Asia.<sup>11, 12</sup> Despite being one of the fastest growing economies in South Asia, Pakistan

faces many development challenges. Approximately 50 million people live below the national poverty line. With an average annual population growth rate of 2.4 percent<sup>13</sup>, the demand for food, infrastructure and humanitarian services continually increases. Meeting the SDGs by 2030 will be challenging for Pakistan.



Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries on the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report.<sup>14</sup> This ranking comes despite the country's national development plan, Vision 2025, which aligns Pakistan's goals with the SDGs and aims to "end the discrimination faced by women, and provide an enabling environment for them to realize their full potential and make their contribution to the socio-economic growth of the country." Vision 2025 also "seeks a just and equitable society in Pakistan where vulnerable and marginalized segments of the society are mainstreamed." Pakistan has the framework in place to improve the opportunities of women.

### WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK

is valued at PKR 683 billion, or 2.6 percent of GDP



This analytic overview provides agricultural development partners with a synthesis of the research and policy environment

necessary to improve agricultural productivity and address food insecurity for more of Pakistan's citizens by applying a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach.

10 World Bank (2018). Pakistan Overview.

11 Ibid.

12 International Food Policy Research Institute (n.d.) Agricultural and Advisory Services World Wide. Retrieved from <http://www.worldwide-extension.org/asia/pakistan/>.

13 World Bank (2018). Pakistan Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pakistan/overview>.

14 World Economic Forum (2006). Global Gender Gap Report 2016. Retrieved from <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/gender-gaps-and-income/>.

## Wheat in Pakistan

Wheat cultivation is part of Pakistan's long history and culture. A meal without bread is considered a snack in Pakistan.<sup>15</sup> Women will often visit each other's houses and bond over making chapatis together. However, the role of Pakistani women in producing wheat and how they use, value and share wheat products requires further scholarship.

Pakistan is one of the top ten wheat-producing countries globally and is the seventh most populous country in the world. Wheat production increased from 16 million tons in the 1990's to 26.3 million tons in 2018.<sup>16</sup> Wheat is integral to food security with a white flat bread known as chapati eaten with each meal. Winter and spring are wheat-growing seasons for both irrigated and non-irrigated (barani) wheat in all regions of the country. The prime wheat-growing

regions of Punjab and Sindh provinces dominate the literature on wheat, while other wheat-growing areas are neglected due to their low yields. Despite successful harvest seasons, feeding Pakistan's large and growing population requires continual innovation.



### RURAL WOMEN

79.8 percent of women live in rural areas

In most of Pakistan, grain crops are strongly associated with men; the plough, for example, is a symbol of male potency. Wheat and rice harvesting, though, is carried out by families – men, women and able-bodied children.<sup>17</sup> Women's contribution to agriculture, as identified by national statistics, is under-reported and under-valued.<sup>18</sup>

## Gender relations in Pakistan's rural areas

Approximately 75 percent of women and girls in Pakistan are employed in the agriculture sector, 60 percent of whom are unpaid.<sup>19</sup> Some of the strongest forces behind persistent gender gaps are harmful social norms and stereotypes that limit expectations of what women can or should do. This ultimately limits Pakistan's food security and growth.<sup>20</sup>



### UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Pakistani women do 10 times more than men

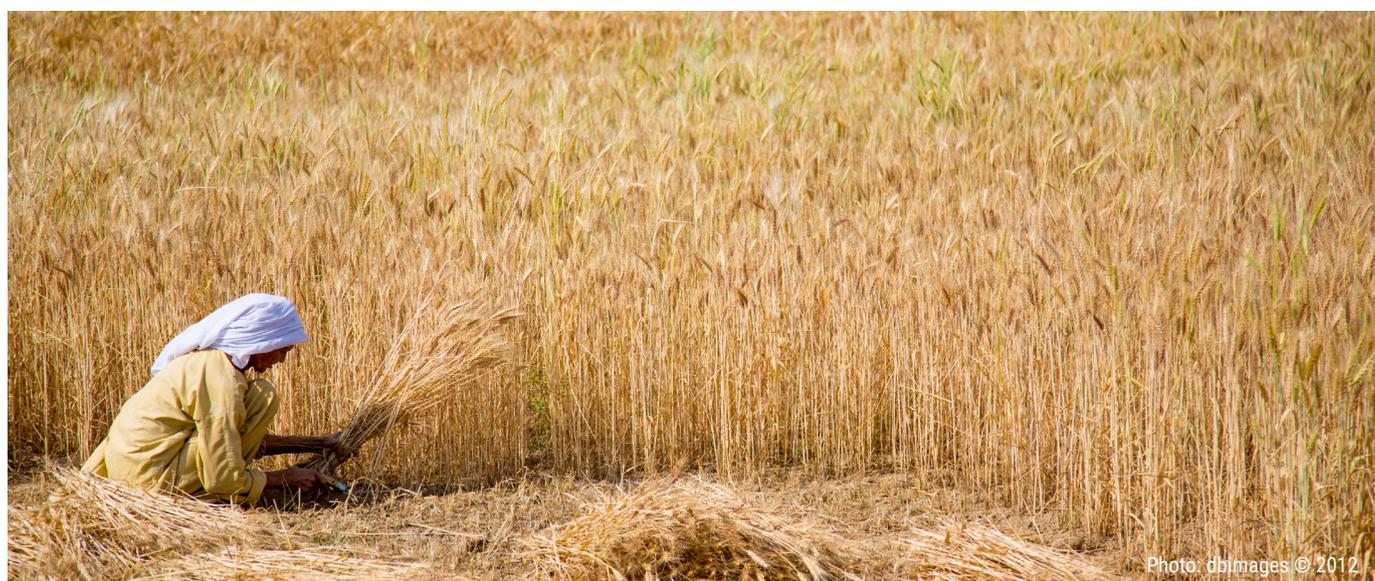


Photo: dbimages © 2012

15 Allan, N. (1990). Household Food Supply in Hunza Valley, Pakistan. *Geographical Review*, 80(4), 399-415.

16 World-Grain (2018). Pakistan wheat production up in 2017-18. Retrieved from <https://www.world-grain.com/articles/10791-pakistan-wheat-production-up-in-2017-18>.; Global Agricultural Information Network(2017). Report Number: PK1704; Niazi, T. (2004). Rural Poverty and the Green Revolution: The Lessons from Pakistan. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 31(2), 242-260.

17 Balagamwala, M., Gazdar, H. & Bux Mallah, H. (2015). Women's agricultural work and nutrition in Pakistan: Findings from qualitative research. *LANSA working paper series*, 2, 21-27.

18 GoP (2013).

19 UN Women (2018). *Rural Women in Pakistan Status Report 2018*, Islamabad, Pakistan: UN Women.

20 Unilever, see: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/why-is-gender-equality-in-decline-and-how-can-we-reverse-it/>.

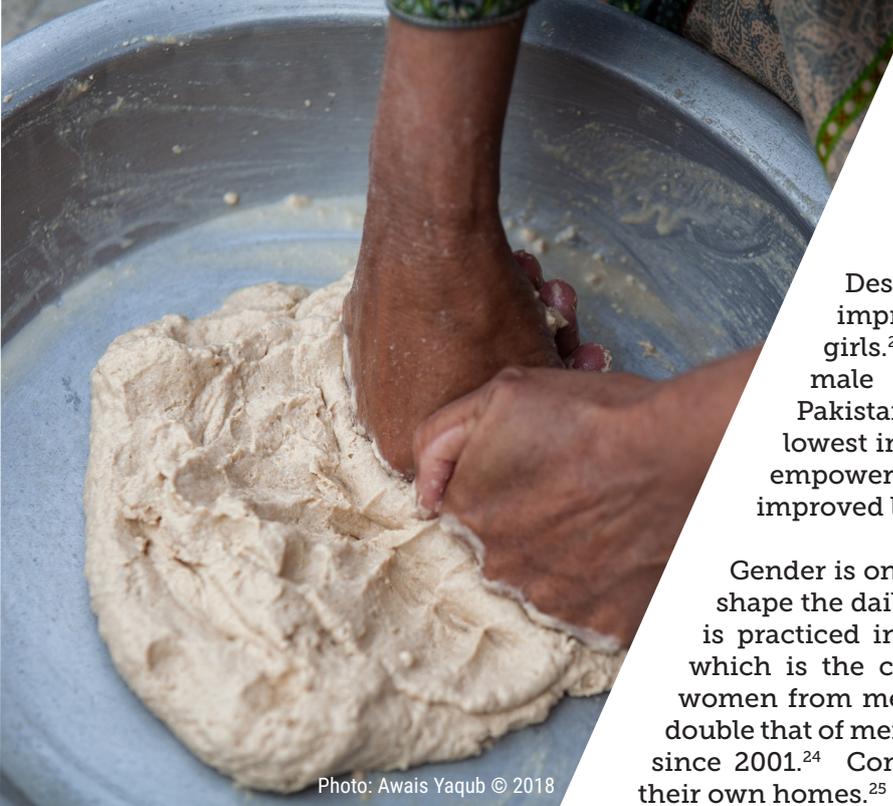


Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2018

## LOW EDUCATION

74 % of all women have less than 6 years of education



Despite many challenges, Pakistan has greatly improved access to education for women and girls.<sup>21</sup> Secondary school enrollment is 58 percent male and 42 percent female.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Pakistan's education and health indicators are the lowest in South Asia.<sup>23</sup> Education is key to women's empowerment, greater household nutrition and improved livelihoods.

Gender is one of the most powerful social relations that shape the daily lives of Pakistani people. Sex segregation is practiced in Pakistan through the culture of Purdah, which is the code of honor and modesty that secludes women from men. Women's unemployment rate is almost double that of men's, even though the gap has been shrinking since 2001.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, 30 percent of women work in their own homes.<sup>25</sup>

## HEALTH



Almost half of all women and girls aged 15-49 have no say in decisions regarding their own health care

Household decision-making is mainly dominated by men, including marriage-related decisions. Despite a high prevalence of intimate partner violence, Pakistan's divorce rate is only 1 percent due to social norms that discourage divorce.<sup>26</sup>

UN Women reports a correlation among women who were married before the age of 18, low education, unemployment and no agency in health-care decisions.<sup>27</sup> Women's empowerment requires a multi-pronged approach to address compounding factors that subordinate women.

For the large majority of women, especially from poorer households, the practical needs of survival necessitate mobility outside the home. The anthropological literature suggests Purdah is not always strictly observed – women in farming households travel to town and women have subtle ways of exercising their agency.<sup>28</sup>

Women start participating in economic activities from a very young age by keeping and tending livestock and poultry in addition to a number of other tasks that add to the family's income.<sup>29</sup> Women are visibly involved in livestock and cotton production, yet their role in agriculture is often overlooked.

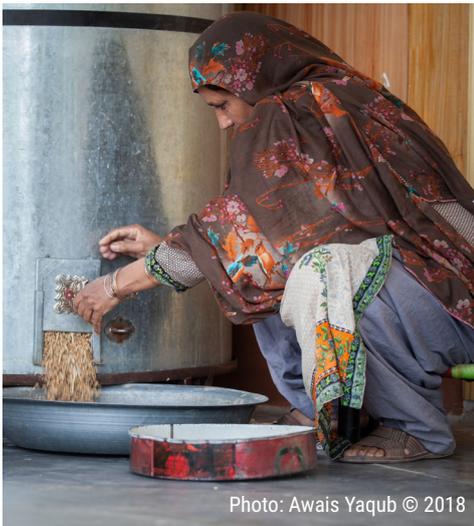


Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2018

- 21 Lall, M. (2009). Gender and Education in Pakistan: The Shifting Dynamics across Ethnic Groups. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*,9(1).
- 22 MoE (2015). Education for all 2015 National review report. Islamabad, Pakistan: Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education Academy of Educational Planning and Management.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Government of Pakistan Statistics Division (2013). *Pakistan Employment Trends*. Government of Pakistan Statistics Division, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.
- 25 Asian Development Bank (2016). *Policy Brief on Female Labor Force Participation in Pakistan*. Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.
- 26 Khan, M., Islam, S., & Kundi, K. (1996). Parasuicide in Pakistan: Experience at a university hospital. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 93, 264–267; Andersson, N., Cockcroft, A., Ansari, U., Ormer, K., Ansari, M., Khan, A., & Chaudhry, U. (2010). Barriers to disclosing and reporting violence among women in Pakistan: Findings from a national household survey and focus group discussions. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25, 1965–1985.
- 27 UNWomen (2018). P152
- 28 Druzca and Peveri (2018).
- 29 Mohyuddi et al., (2012). 243-247.

Gender hierarchies interact closely with socio-economic class hierarchies that change behaviors among different sub-groups of Pakistani women.<sup>30</sup> To some extent, Purdah is a luxury only the affluent can afford and is a cultural ideal that men aspire to for their women.<sup>31</sup>

#### WORK OUTSIDE HOUSE

Only 25% of Pakistani women with a university degree work outside the home



Women's restricted mobility epitomize women's sexual chastity and family honor, which reflects positively on the male as a good earner.<sup>32</sup> Masculinity is connected to women's opportunities.<sup>33</sup> Women, though, do contribute to the household's livelihood more than is publicly admitted.<sup>34</sup> The gender division of labor and practices such as Purdah keep women's subsistent and paid work hidden from government workers and data collectors.<sup>35</sup> The majority of agricultural scientists and extension workers are male, and Purdah makes researching and analyzing women's roles difficult. This creates a bias in agricultural research because Pakistani male scientists and

government officials privilege male ways of knowing and engaging with the world.<sup>36</sup>

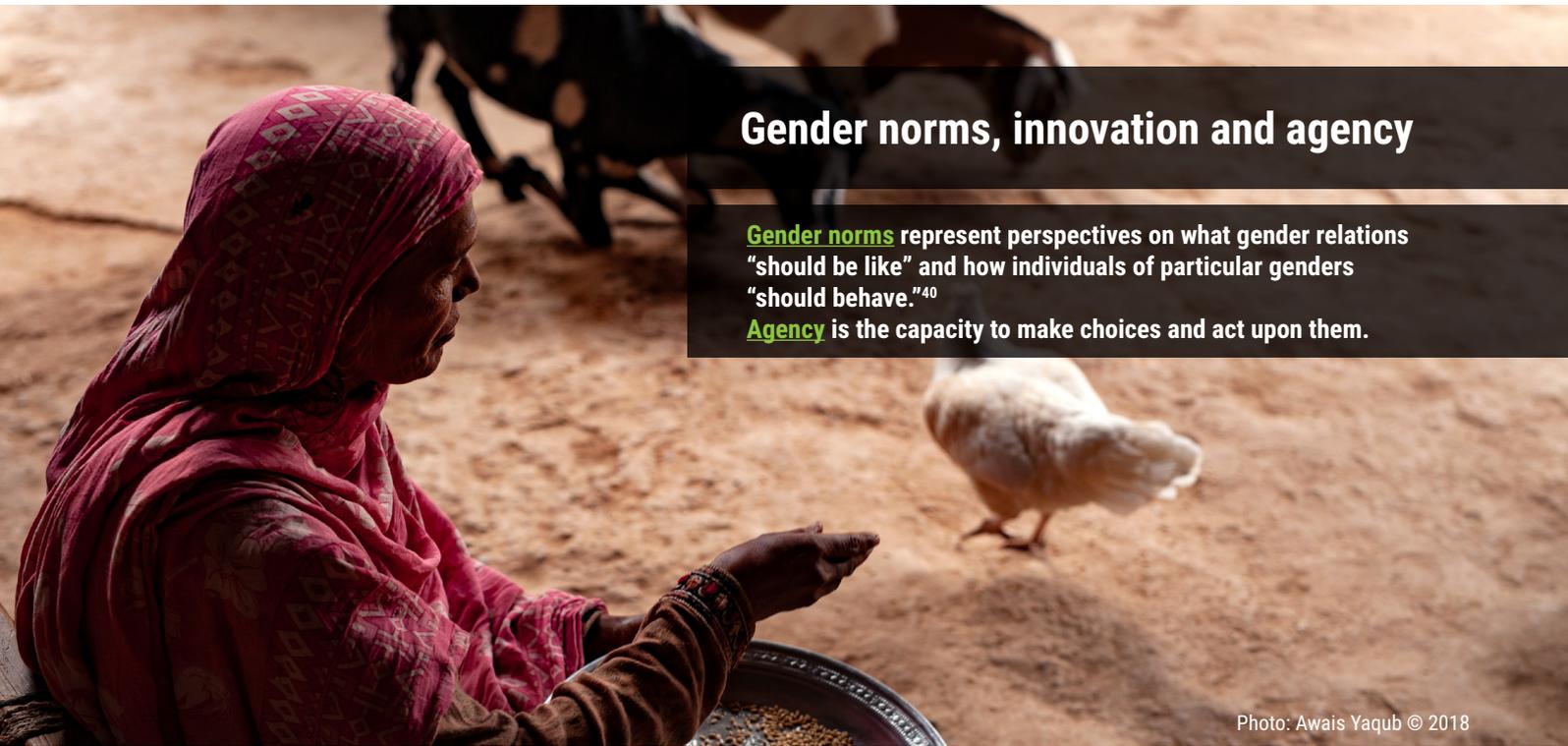
The role of women in agriculture is increasingly important. As the ability to earn an income solely from agriculture is reducing along with farm size, men are diversifying into the non-farm sector, leaving women to manage the family farm.<sup>37</sup> Rural and frequently illiterate women are under-researched in agriculture, though a few exceptions highlight their defiance of men's control.<sup>38</sup> These studies suggest possibilities of social networking and solidarity. In terms of agriculture, this means that group-based interventions may be more effective than one-to-one extension services.

Pakistan must leverage all of its resources to meet its development challenges and goals. Traditional gender norms can and must change for equitable development to prevail. Approximately The McKinsey Global Institute's 2015 report estimates \$100 billion USD could be added to Pakistan's economy annually if women had equal opportunity with men.<sup>39</sup> Hence, gender equality in Pakistan is not only good for women and children but also the national economy.



Photo: Awaís Yaqub © 2018

- 30 Ibraz, T. S. (1993). The cultural context of women's productive invisibility: A case study of a Pakistani Village. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 32(1), 101-125.
- 31 Sathar, Z.A., & Kazi, S. (2000a). Women's Autonomy in the Context of Rural Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 39(2), 89-110.
- 32 Zakar, R., Zakar, M.Z., & Kraemer, A. (2013). Men's Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Pakistan. *Violence Against Women*, 20(10), 1-23; Sathar, Z. A., & Kazi, S. (2000b).
- 33 Hailemariam, M., Druzca, K., & Tsegaye, M. (2018). Innovation and Development through Transformation of Gender Norms in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management - Pakistan Country Report. CIMMYT.
- 34 Mohyuddin, A., Chaudry, H., & Ambreen, M. (2012). Economic Empowerment of Women in the Rural Areas of Balochistan. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 19(2), 239-257.
- 35 Carpenter (2001). 17.
- 36 Nyborg (2002). 114.
- 37 Sathar, A., & Kazi, S. (2000b). Pakistani couples: Different productive and reproductive realities? *The Pakistan Development Review*, 39(4), 891-912:896.
- 38 Nyborg, I.L.P. (2002). Yours Today, Mine Tomorrow? A Study of Women and Men's Negotiations Over Resources in Baltistan, Pakistan. NORAGRIC PhD Dissertation No. 1, Agricultural University of Norway; Chaudhry, L.N. (2009). Flowers, Queens, and Goons: Unruly Women in Rural Pakistan. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(1), 246-267; Besio, K. (2006). Chutes and Ladders: Negotiating Gender and Privilege in a Village in Northern Pakistan. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 5(2), 258-278; Sathar, & Kazi (2000a).
- 39 McKinsey Global Institute 2015, The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth



## Gender norms, innovation and agency

**Gender norms** represent perspectives on what gender relations “should be like” and how individuals of particular genders “should behave.”<sup>40</sup>

**Agency** is the capacity to make choices and act upon them.

Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2018

Our research reveals that restrictive gender norms are one of the largest barriers facing effective innovation and engagement by women in the agricultural sector. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, we asked 351 respondents (128 adult women and 136 adult men as well as 46 women, and 41 men ages 16 to 24) in six wheat-growing villages about gender norms relating to behavior, innovation, technology and agency. Women and men from different socioeconomic backgrounds and age groups can be affected by gender norms differently. Moreover, gender norms and expectations can be contradictory and difficult for community members to navigate.

The intra-household decision-making dynamics are complicated in joint-family settings. Men are generally the decision makers, but not all men feel they have a high degree of power and freedom. Elders and khans have the ultimate decision-making power. The general perception is that women do not make any decisions except on household-related chores. However, the findings reveal that women are involved in joint decisions regarding subsistence crops and some livestock products. This implies that there is a certain level of negotiation taking place within households before making decisions. This requires further investigation.

### FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

10%



The ability for women to make independent decisions is a very important element of technology adoption.

One female focus group participant commented: “For innovation, the power of decision making is very important. It is difficult for a woman to take an independent decision in trying out a new way of doing things. Even if she wants to grow a new variety of vegetable, she has to ask permission from her husband or father... She does not have the courage to take the risk.”

Women often do not have the chance to practice independent decision-making, nor understand the economic consequences of decisions. If widowed, this has devastating effects on female-headed households and their children and reduces land fertility and agricultural productivity.

For men, class impacts a farmer’s ability to innovate. Rich farmers with larger land holdings are mainly at the forefront of agricultural innovations. Poorer farmers showed a level of precaution before adopting new technologies and follow the experiences of earlier adopters before they are comfortable adopting for themselves. Additionally, farmers indicated that new varieties and recommended practices are expensive and difficult to easily adopt. Farmers from all villages stressed that innovation involves risks. For example, one farmer explained that the majority of farmers “are small [holders] here and cannot afford to buy expensive wheat seeds and experiment. There is risk involved. In case of failure, we lose one whole year.” Many male respondents argued that improved seeds available in local markets are not only expensive but are also often not of good quality, and this increases the likelihood of failure

40 Marcus, R. (2014). Changing Discriminatory Norms Affecting Adolescent Girls through Communications Activities: Insights for Policy and Practice from an Evidence Review. London, United Kingdom: Overseas Development Institute.



Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2018

for small-holder farmers. Improved wheat varieties are adopted gradually by small-holder farmers.

Men and women in all villages agreed that financial position is one of the major enabling factors for agricultural innovations and decision-making. Interestingly, the findings revealed that this is not true for women. That is, women from financially well-off families are less mobile, do not work for pay and feel powerless.

Nevertheless, due to increased access to education, more women are joining the professional workforce as nurses, teachers and factory workers, among other jobs. Even household-bound women can make an income from dairy products; however, the findings showed that their contribution is not counted as an important contribution to the household's economy. There has not been adequate discussion about how women with independent incomes who are educated influence decisions beyond household chores. All these contradictions are important to

future development programs because they show how gender norms determine what is valued and impact a farmer's power and freedom.

#### FEMALE FARMERS

7.3% million rural women are engaged in agriculture



Women from all villages insisted that the availability of women-only vocational training

centers is crucial for them to try to innovate. Women felt they would be allowed to go to these places if they existed. Otherwise, for women, there is no way they can go into public places and learn in the presence of men apart from their relatives. The overall dynamics around enabling and constraining factors for innovation prove that gender norms inform opportunity structures for men and women differently. Moreover, socio-economic position, age, location and gender are important determinants for men and women in terms of their freedom to make decisions and innovate.

## Can gender norms change?

Gender norms are barriers to equality because they sanction the behavior of men and women based upon tradition and not economic need. Given that restrictive female gender norms stunt growth in Pakistan's agriculture sector, it is important to look at how these norms can shift. Our meta-analysis of 41 documents, including 18 evaluation reports from the agricultural sector, was conducted to understand if and how gender norms in agriculture can change during a project lifecycle.

### **BOX 1. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE <sup>41</sup>**

The Gender Equality for Decent Employment (GE4DE) programme's impact assessment found the projects' design included gender-focused interventions and high-level indicators about women and gender relationships. Consequently, the evaluation collected and analyzed data through a gender lens and found gender norm change present.

Overall, gender norm change is rarely achieved and is poorly reported in evaluations. However, the meta-analysis reveals that gender norms can change with the right kind of programming. The following factors are needed for a project to successfully change gender norms:

- Evaluations and project designs that adopt a gender lens from the beginning are more likely to succeed in reaching women and contributing toward gender equality.
- Developing theories of change around gender norms ensures indicators are developed that will enable evaluations to capture gender learnings and results.
- For women to benefit equitably from project activities, there will be a need to change gender norms. A gender strategy that is linked to budget allocations clarifies the connection between project activities and interventions and gender norm changes.

41 Impact Assessment of Skills Development Programmes of GE4DE p13.

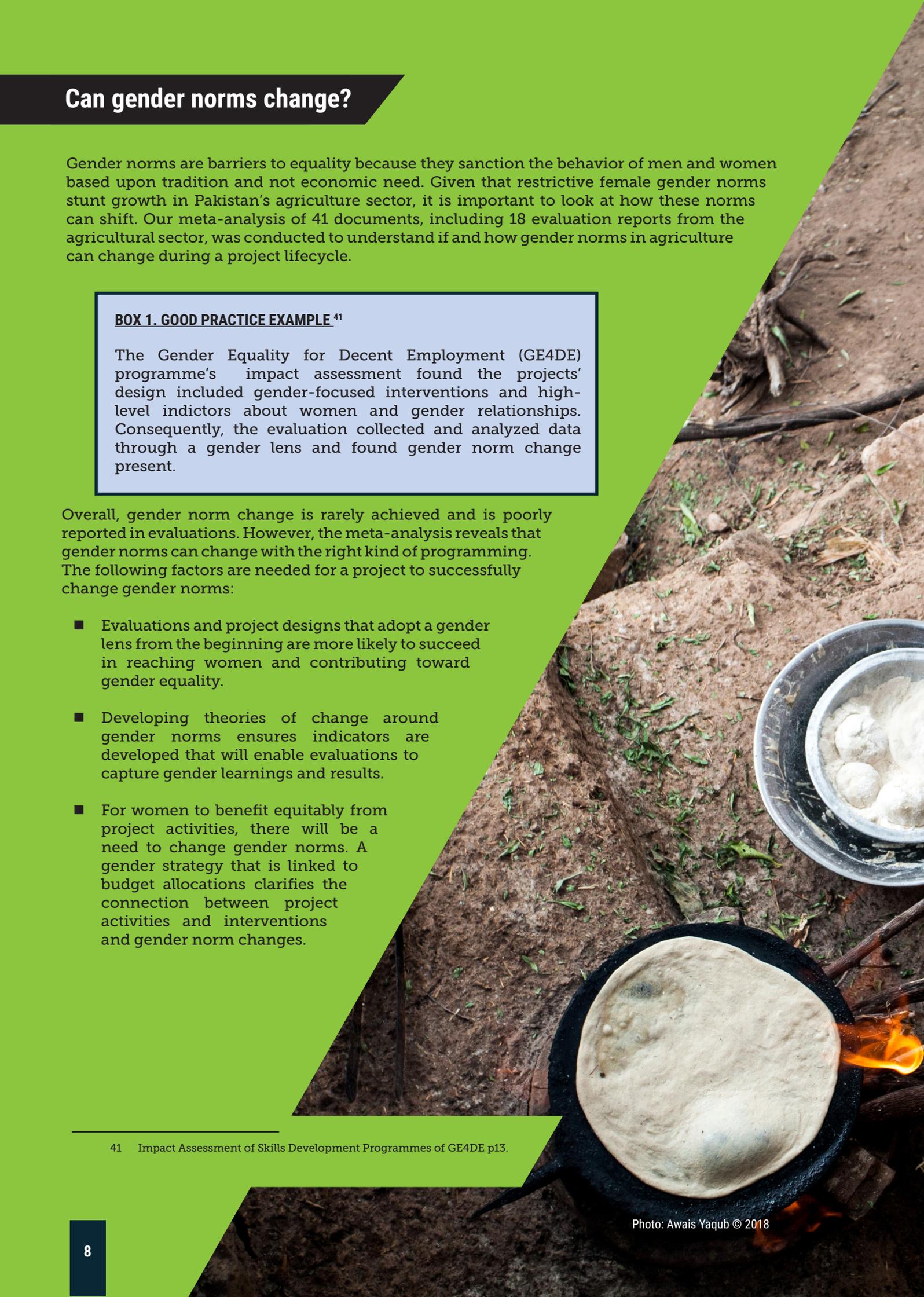




Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2018



Photo: dbimages © 2012

- “Empowerment” and “female-headed household” and other key terms need to be defined for enumerators, evaluators and implementers.
- Projects should develop solutions (design interventions) collaboratively with the community and address its specific gendered needs.
- All staff should be trained and held accountable for gender results, not only the gender adviser.
- Projects should establish an enabling environment for gender-norm change by coordinating with non-agricultural projects that offer services that help address women’s unique needs. Interventions that followed a multi-pronged approach, such as provision of seed and plant resources along with skill development trainings, have proven to be more effective for normative change and to allow women to benefit from income-generating activities.<sup>41</sup>
- Successful programs train female participants in how to form and be a member of community groups (e.g. social mobilization) and then use these groups to teach women skills and empower them as a group.

42 Baluchistan Agriculture Project (2016). *Final Evaluation*.

- Researchers and implementers need to document their own learning (strengths and weaknesses) regarding the methods employed as part of the project and their effectiveness in creating normative changes. This will help future evaluators and project designs avoid similar mistakes.
- It is essential to develop initiatives to overcome women's low participation:
  - In successful evaluations, men and families were counseled regarding the benefits of increased participation and empowerment of women (e.g. through door-to-door awareness campaigns, training men and their families together and seeking male permission for female participation).
  - They also adapted training to women's literacy and skill capacity and facilitated mobility by providing transport, organizing trainings at convenient and safe venues and offering childcare.<sup>43</sup>

Longer project timelines and more time spent with communities results in greater impact and gender-norm change. For example, Baluchistan Agriculture Project (BAP) was part of the third phase of a ten-year agricultural development project and had a greater impact in terms of increasing women's incomes, their involvement in decisions about household expenditures and decisions about household assets, than projects that did not have sustained community engagement.<sup>44</sup> The longer duration of the project and its phased implementation allowed project stakeholders and staff to develop an understanding of the community and its needs and learn from previous phases.



Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2018

<sup>43</sup> See BAP 2016 for good examples.

<sup>44</sup> BAP 2016:25.

## Conclusion

Wheat cultivation is part of Pakistan's long history and culture. Agriculture plays an important role in food security and poverty reduction, especially for Pakistani women. Despite a favorable policy environment with the national plan, Vision 2025, our research reveals that restrictive gender norms are one of the largest barriers facing effective innovation and engagement by women in the agricultural sector. This affects the nation's productivity and economic growth. Moreover, Pakistan ranks second-to-last out of all countries on the Global Gender Gap, highlighting the magnitude of the challenge.

Masculinity and gender norms limit women's opportunities. The ability to work outside of the house and physical mobility put men in a more advantageous position than women when it comes to learning about, trying and adopting new agricultural innovations. The lack of decision-making power also contributes to women's absence in agricultural innovation, along with their class and level of education. Women-only vocational training centers are crucial for women to learn and try new agriculture innovations, but they are rare. The overall dynamics around innovation prove that gender norms inform opportunity structures for men and women differently.



A farmer's socio-economic position, age, location and gender are important determinants for men and women in terms of their freedom to make decisions and innovate. This emphasizes the relevance of the SDGs which aim "to leave no one behind." Achieving these goals will require a new and inclusive approach to agricultural research for development.

Many knowledge gaps remain about the politics of gender and the livelihood choices of Pakistani farmers. Food items, food preferences and preparation and women's control and influence over resources are rarely mentioned, in wheat related literature. The available literature about rural men and women does not venture into the realm of crop choices or livelihood strategies, seasonality or intra-household decision-making. Much of the available gender-related data relates to particular villages or areas and highlights the heterogeneity of Pakistan. This explains why generic agriculture packages may not be relevant or optimal across the country.

A number of assumptions about women's role in agriculture are made in the literature, which prevents the development of solutions. The agricultural literature reviewed tends to accept cultural norms and gender roles rather than question their persistence or attempt to examine them. Frequently, agricultural literature blames "culture" or "gender" for the failure of projects to reach women, when in reality the failure stems from the absence of gender analysis and gender-focused designs. In contrast, the anthropological literature reviewed questions the traditional view of gender and the nature of Purdah, highlighting the need for further feminist anthropological research in the agriculture sector.

Women should be involved in agricultural research as principal investigators, designers, analysts, scientists and authors. While women do not automatically represent and focus on women, the evidence from this review and elsewhere<sup>45</sup> suggests that women leaders, researchers and extension agents are more likely to identify with and lobby for women's issues. Moreover, given the male gaze and the practice of Purdah, the only way to understand women's role in the wheat sector is to employ more female researchers.

Fortunately, the research has uncovered successful features that enable gender norms to change. To successfully reach women in equal numbers to men through R4D projects,

certain design features must be present. Some of these features could also be used by extension workers to ensure women can access agriculture innovations and information to improve their productivity and household food security. Employing more female extension workers would send a message that agriculture involves women and men and that the government supports women's mobility. Policy initiatives that raise awareness of gender inequality and emphasize female-headed household participation and husband and wife co-participation in extension activities can help reduce the inequality.

This R4D project collated evidence on women's role in the wheat sector and examined effective ways to change gender norms. Not enough is known about women in Pakistan's agricultural sector, especially for male-dominated crops such as wheat. Rural livelihoods are changing in Pakistan and more knowledge about how male and female farmers are coping with these changes is needed to ensure food security for new types of households. While gender norms are frequently cited as barriers to change, they can be harnessed to deliver positive change for women, men, families and communities. Further scholarship on gender norms and how they change or are reinforced is needed to help Pakistan meet its own development challenges.



Photo: Awais Yaqub © 2017

45 Dodson, D. & Carroll, S. (1991). *Reshaping the Agenda: Women in State Legislatures*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for American Women and Politics; Thomas, S. (1994). *How Women Legislate?* New York: Oxford University Press.

## Recommendations for strengthening gender and social equity integration in wheat R4D

The following is a list of recommendations for researchers and for donors that fund agriculture research for development to strengthen women's role in the agriculture sector. Achieving gender equality in Pakistan's agriculture sector will take considerable effort and investment; yet the return on this investment has been empirically documented. The time to start reforming gender norms that affect Pakistan's agriculture sector is overdue.



### For researchers:

- Collate culturally and agro-ecologically specific data on wheat and gender roles (especially in low-productivity areas).
- Explore where, why and in what types of households gender roles become more fluid and can lead to improved agricultural outcomes.
- Develop multi-intervention designs that account for women's lower literacy, lack of access to credit and mobility restrictions.
- Work with women in groups and work with whole families, especially men and boys.
- Employ more female scientists.
- Involve gender experts in all R4D project designs and in training project teams to ensure equitable benefits.
- Consider intra-household resource allocation during research and ask women and men from the same household about their food preferences and crop/livelihood choices.
- Understand which research methodologies best capture gender norms and what is required to change these norms

### For donors:

- Fund more feminist and anthropological agriculture research to collect evidence about intra-household heterogeneity to help avoid an over-reliance on household surveys.
- Place gender researchers in country to build the capacity of the national agriculture research system to collect and analyze data on women and gender roles.
- Fund research on gender in agriculture and the kinds of extension activities that deliver the most equitable results and identify cost (e.g. female-only farmer schools).
- Improve the quality of the training agriculture extension workers receive in terms of gender and reach female farmers by revising the curriculum taught and hiring more female extension agents.
- Fund gender and crop-specific research by geographical area and class, for example, explore the role of Pakistani women in producing wheat and the way they use, value and share wheat and wheat's contribution to household food and nutrition security.
- Commission studies on masculinity in agriculture and food preferences by sex to inform future projects and policies on food security and gender impacts on nutrition.
- Invest in multi-phase R4D programs that have strong gender components.



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