

GENDER NORMS, AGENCY AND INNOVATION in wheat based systems and livelihoods:

Synthesis report of four
community case-studies
in Afghanistan

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Cover photo: Adam Ferguson/The New York Times © 2016 showing Ethnic Hazara women, who are part of a farmers’ union, in a field in the Shibar Valley in Bamian province, Afghanistan, July 22, 2016.

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Executive summary

This report illuminates how gender norms and agency advance or impede capacity to innovate and adopt technology in agriculture in four wheat-growing villages from two provinces (Kabul and Nangarhar).¹ The report covers perspectives and experiences of 132 males and 128 females from wheat-growing households.² The norms surrounding agriculture provide women and men with different roles and opportunities in farming and often result in unequal access to and control over resources. This study is designed to show evidence-based relationships among gender norms, capacities for agricultural innovation and other key constraining and local opportunity structures that affect the achievement of the CGIAR's³ development objective to achieve equitable improvements in agricultural outcomes.

Gender segregation and strict gender roles exist although there are some variations in responses between males and females across the villages. It was noted that females are not expected to have productive roles on the farm, although many do especially if from a low socio-economic class. Females do all the household work and manage some post-harvest activities, such as cleaning wheat and vegetables inside the house, due to mobility restrictions. Women add value to agriculture products that men sell and yet, only men are identified as “farmers.”

The results show that men and women benefit from development innovations differently. Women's normative gender roles pose major barriers to their access to information that would help them contribute to agriculture. Women do not participate in agriculture meetings, training sessions and other public events that promote new technologies which limits their capacity to be good farmers. Whenever a husband is not around or is deceased, it would be the brother or oldest son who would then be responsible for all the farm work and for the family in general. Gender identity and social norms that govern this behavior result in whole communities policing women's behavior and mobility. This inhibits women's ability to access information and play more substantive roles in agricultural improvements.

This research illustrates that, in many cases, male and female farmers require different forms of assistance to be productive and to innovate. The two most important factors that support innovation for men are improvements in the economy and larger farm sizes. Many men identified the lack of provision of improved seeds as a barrier to improving wheat yields. Women ranked financial support, education, consultations with elders and workshops as the most important factors that support innovation. Financial problems and poverty hinder innovation for both women and men. Additionally, women cited the lack of agriculture information and training as a barrier to improving their economic situation and hinted at their lack of mobility as a barrier. Innovation and getting agriculture information is considered a man's role. Even though religious devotion is considered a contributing factor in poverty, barriers to innovation are associated with governance, gender norms and other cultural practices.

¹ All village names are pseudonyms to protect participants.

² A “wheat-growing household” is defined as a household where more than 50% of the household's income comes from wheat.

³ CGIAR refers to Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.

Responses vary greatly among research sites, suggesting extreme heterogeneity across the country. Some women are ready to take on work to improve their households, and some men would be supportive. However, there is a lack of opportunity in these communities to earn an income. The barriers facing rural Afghans is a combination of a lack of economic opportunity and the lack of willingness to change traditional gender norms. A better understanding of these issues could help identify opportunities for expanding the benefits of wheat-related innovations to many more female headed and poor households. The findings show that norms governing household relations are opening slightly with rising access to information, more education and awareness of women's rights. This is mainly attributed to improved governance and the Karzai government. However, these improvements aren't enough to achieve gender equality nor to improve household wellbeing.

Household decisions are mainly made by male elders, husbands, brothers or in-laws, depending on the issue. Female respondents generally emphasized that a woman's freedom to make important life decisions depends on whether her husband would allow her to do so. Therefore, some females can hold decision-making roles, particularly around how much of the wheat harvest to allocate for household consumption versus how much to sell, but others cannot. Females generally feel that they do not have the rights and the confidence to make decisions while males have the full entitlement to make decisions on any household matter. Young males have more power and freedom to exercise decision-making than their young female counterparts. Young females and girls are under full control of their parents and brothers when they are single and remain under full control of their husbands and in-laws after they get married.

If R4D programs continue to overlook gender norms then men will benefit more than women from innovations and thus, gender inequality will worsen. The findings indicate the need for creative solutions, collaboration with diverse groups of stakeholders and progressive opinion leaders to change women's positions in society. When combined with the lack of economic opportunity, the perpetuation of gender norms provide a barrier to increased agricultural productivity and growth in wheat production. Future R4D programs should consider the following points:

- Mechanization is well received in the study communities and should be accompanied with new opportunities for women. Harvesting equipment has replaced women's paid labor.
- Changes are observed in some communities highlighting the potential to change gender norms exists. Careful programming is needed, and this requires intensive male engagement strategies. Afghanistan's development challenges require all its citizens to engage in productive pursuits.
- There is value in collecting qualitative data. Data can show how the social, cultural, geographical, economic and historical aspects of a community affect men's and women's opportunities to advance and improve agriculture productivity. It reveals how this all interacts with other statuses (age, religion, class etc) which can help to highlight entry points for each community. More context-specific data on women's role in agriculture crops is needed to ensure tailored programming.

- Collect case studies of villages where women report enhanced rights and mobility. Study the history of gender programming in those areas. Identify the appropriate, safe pace of change for men and women and successful interventions, and then, replicate.
- Acknowledge that men and women have different preferences, needs and interests - ask women *and* men from the same household about their preferences and crop/livelihood choices.

List of acronyms

AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CPL	Community poverty line
CRP	CGIAR Research Program
FGD	Focus group discussion
FHH	Female-headed household
GENNOVATE	Enabling Gender Equality in Agricultural and Environmental Innovation
HH	Household
Km	Kilometers
LoL	Ladder of Life
LoPF	Ladder of Power and Freedom
MHH	Male-headed household
MoP	Movement out of poverty
NRM	Natural resource management
R&D	Research and development
R4D	Research for development

Table 1: Glossary of key terms and concepts

<i>Jerib</i> ⁴	“The jerib or djerib is a traditional unit of land measurement in the Middle East and southwestern Asia. It is a unit of area used to measure land holdings.”
<i>Hijab</i> ⁵	“Hijab (حجاب) is the Arabic word for “to cover” and, in general, means to be modest. The word is used in particular to mean clothing which covers a woman's chest, head and hair.”
<i>Quran</i> ⁶	“Qur'an or <i>Koran</i> is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God (Allah). It is widely regarded as the finest work in classical Arabic literature.”
<i>Malik</i> ⁷	“ <i>Malik</i> refers to a village or community chief in parts of South Asia and the Middle East.”

⁴ <http://www.justintools.com/unit-conversion/area.php?k1=jeribs&k2=hectares&q=1>.

⁵ <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hijab>

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran>

⁷ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/malik>

1. Introduction

Gender norms represent perspectives on what gender relations “should” be like and how individuals of particular genders “should” behave.⁸ While gender norms can be restrictive and limit social interaction, they are constantly challenged and negotiated.

Agency is the ability to make choices and act upon them.

This report presents the Afghanistan findings of the global qualitative comparative research initiative GENNOVATE - Enabling Gender Equality in Agricultural and Environmental Innovation. The key driver behind GENNOVATE is the notion that specific evidence from CGIAR research programs about how gender norms influence local-level development dynamics, including agricultural technology uptake processes, is relevant and useful for wheat research for development (R4D) decision-makers.⁹ With robust data about gender dynamics, agricultural development projects can better reach those who are meant to benefit from them and more effectively impact farming families.

The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) is a member of the CGIAR and implemented a BMZ funded research development project, “Understanding gender in wheat-based livelihoods for enhanced WHEAT R4D impact in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ethiopia.” The aim of this research project is to help take stock of the current situation regarding the integration of gender and social equity in WHEAT¹⁰ research for development (R4D) in Afghanistan, and to identify and conceptualize opportunities for strengthening this integration. This report is an output from the BMZ funded project.

Afghanistan has a long and complex history of economic, political and territorial expansion.¹¹ Major drought in recent years and conflict that destroyed irrigation systems needed for agriculture has pushed many farmers into new means of earning an income, including opium trading and weapons smuggling.¹² Malnutrition, family disintegration and persistent changes in weather patterns are breaking the link between livelihoods and agriculture.¹³ It is likely to become more difficult to achieve land-based food security in a country like Afghanistan, which has a recent history marked by extreme hardship and violence and the world's highest number

⁸ 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.

⁹ Badstue, L., Petesch, P., Williams, G., & Umantseva, A., with Daniela Moctezuma (2017). Gender and innovation processes in wheat-based systems. GENNOVATE Report to the CGIAR Research Program on Wheat. GENNOVATE Research Paper. Mexico City, Mexico: CIMMYT.

¹⁰ WHEAT is a CGIAR Research Program (CRP).

¹¹ Fluri, J. (2011). Capitalizing on Bare Life: Sovereignty, Exception, and Gender Politics. *Antipode*, 1-23

¹² Khattak, S.G. (2004). Adversarial Discourses, Analogous Objectives. *Afghan Women's Control. Cultural Dynamics*, 16 (2/3), 213-236

¹³ Mihran, R. (2011). Rural Community Vulnerability to Food Security Impacts of Climate Change in Afghanistan: Evidence from Balkh, Herat, and Nangarhar Provinces. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

of mines per capita.¹⁴ More than 85 percent of Afghanistan's population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods.¹⁵

Three farming systems can be identified in Afghanistan: mixed crop-livestock, agro-pastoral and pastoral or nomadic systems. Wheat is by far the major staple crop produced in Afghanistan, making up to 77 percent of the total crops produced on irrigated land and 94 percent of the total crops produced on rain-fed land. Generally smaller land plots, water shortages due to poor irrigation systems and lack of rainwater, insufficient access to credit, minimal mechanization, insufficient outreach in agricultural and veterinary extension services and poor accessibility to markets and other communities are the key challenges faced by the vast majority of Afghan farmers.¹⁶ Afghanistan is a data-poor country with many outdated statistics and literature. Hence the relevance of this research on gender norms in the wheat sector.

This report illuminates the way gender norms and agency work together to shape access to, adoption of, and benefits from agricultural innovation at the local level. The first section explains the study approach, which outlines the background to the study, its aims and its scope. This is followed by the methodology, which explains the seven data collection instruments employed. The findings are divided into five core areas:

- Community profile;
- Ladder of Life,
- Ladder of power and freedom for decision making
- Gender norms, roles and attitudes;
- Agriculture innovations and gender

The final section of the report concludes that gender norms influence agricultural innovation and opportunities. The ability to move out of poverty is frequently associated with intra-household relationships and gender norms that dictate coping strategies.

2. Study design

A. Study approach¹⁷

Innovation in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM) is vital to reducing rural poverty. Innovation processes that ignore gender inequality, however, are limited in their impact and risk worsening the poverty, workload and well-being of poor rural women and their families. Deep-seated gender norms cause inequalities in the capacities of men and women to contribute to, benefit from and manage risks stemming from agricultural innovation. Other formal and informal institutions drive gender differences in agricultural outcomes and may

¹⁴ Kantor, P., & Pain, A. (2011). Running Out of Options. Tracing Rural Afghan Livelihoods. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Synthesis Paper Series.

¹⁵ Tavva, S., Abdelali-Martini, M., Aw-Hassan, A., Rischkowsky, B., Tibbo, M., & Rizvi, J. (2013). Gender Roles in Agriculture: The Case of Afghanistan. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 20(1), 111-134.

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ Petesch, P. (2015). Gender Norms, Agency and Innovation in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Update Report. CGIAR Global Qualitative Comparative Research Initiative.

even disadvantage women outright. How and why agricultural innovations improve women's lives in some settings, but not in others, is not yet well understood. This knowledge gap limits our ability to design and scale out agricultural and NRM innovations that reduce gender inequality on the ground and contribute more effectively to poverty reduction and improved food security, nutrition and environmentally-sustainable livelihoods. GENNOVATE was designed to build greater knowledge of these fundamental connections between gender equality and agricultural development.

The global study's research design is informed by a gendered agency-opportunity structure conceptual framework. The analytic approach gives primacy to local men's and women's own understandings, interpretations and experiences with innovating in agriculture and NRM. The notion of opportunity structure recognizes that men's and women's agency is differentially constrained by gender norms and other institutions that shape social status, access to opportunities and the distribution of resources and technologies in their local settings. While opportunity structures can act as powerful constraining elements on human action, these forces are not fixed. Both poor women and men can find ways to maneuver, negotiate and innovate around these constraints to access new opportunities.

The report is framed to address the following research question:

- How do gender norms and agency advance or impede capacity to innovate and adopt technology in agriculture and NRM across different contexts?

B. Research methodology

The investigation builds on the "medium-*n*" comparative qualitative research design. The sample spans world regions and diverse agricultural systems as well as important cultural sub-regions (26 countries in total). Drawing on maximum diversity sampling principles, the individual village-level cases are selected purposively to ensure strong variance on two dimensions theorized to be important for outcomes: economic dynamism and gender gaps in assets and capacities.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Livestock (MAIL) was consulted for site selection information. The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) has provided a sub-grant to the AREU located in Kabul to conduct this research. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) Security Officers and Logistic Officers gave guidance on suitable areas for team members to conduct the fieldwork. A number of events prevented the team from immediately conducting the fieldwork, and security disruptions occurred between field visits. The field data collection started in November 2015 but wasn't completed until February 2016 due to security issues and personal problems of some field team members.

The study engaged 260 individuals (132 men and 128 women), out of which 68 were youth (35 girls and 33 boys), to reflect on questions such as:

- What are the most important new agricultural practices and technologies for the males of the village? And for the females?
- What qualities make a woman a good farmer? And a man a good farmer?

- Do young people in this village follow local customs of females doing certain agricultural activities and males others? Why or why not?
- Are there differences in the characteristics of a woman who is innovative compared to a man who is innovative?

Table 2 provides a summary of the sample size disaggregated by sex, age and village.

Table 2: Summary of sample size by sex taken out from the four villages (anonymous)

Village	Female	Male	Boys	Girls	Total
Panali	26	28	8	8	70
Tehsul	24	24	8	10	66
Lehsat	22	23	9	9	63
Katam	21	24	8	8	61
Total	93	99	33	35	260

The field team applied a standardized package of seven qualitative data collection instruments, which included a mix of focus groups, semi-structured individual interviews, key informant interviews and a literature review (see Table 3). This allows for cross-country comparisons. Table 3 briefly describes the list of activities, the purpose of each activity and respondents under each activity.¹⁸ The methodology guide was fully translated by the AREU team, including adaptation of the data collection instruments to local context.

Table 3: Overview of GENNOVATE sample and data collection instruments¹⁹

Tool	Purpose	Total number of Respondents
Activity A. Literature review	To provide a wider context for each case by providing general background information about the case study area and relevant findings from recent studies, particularly about the innovations of interest and their gender dimensions.	External consultant
Activity B. Community profile	To provide social, economic, agricultural, and political background information about the community.	7 male, 7 female key informants
Activity C. Focus group: Ladder of Life (with poor adults)	To understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender norms and household and agricultural roles – Labor market trends and gender dimensions – Enabling and constraining factors for innovation and their gender dimensions – The culture of inequality in the village, factors shaping socio-economic mobility, poverty trends and their gender dimensions, intimate partner violence 	4 male and 4 female FGDs (36 adult females and 41 adult males aged 30 to 55)
Activity D. Focus group: Capacities for innovation (with middle-class adults)	To understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agency – Community trends – Enabling and constraining factors for innovation and their gender dimensions 	4 male and 4 female FGDs (34 adult females and 35

¹⁸ Adopted from Petesch P., et.al. (2015). Innovation and Development through Transformation of Gender Norms in: Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, *Methodology Guide for Global Study*.

¹⁹ Adopted from Petesch P., et.al. (2015).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender norms surrounding household bargaining over livelihoods and assets – The local climate for agriculture and entrepreneurship and their gender dimensions, social cohesion and social capital 	adult males ages 25 to 55)
Activity E. Focus group: Aspirations of youth (with older adolescents and young adults)	To explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender norms, practices and aspirations surrounding education – Enabling and constraining factors for innovation and their gender dimensions – Female’s physical mobility and gender norms shaping access to economic opportunities and household bargaining – Family formation norms and practices 	4 male and 4 female FGDs (35 female youth and 33 male youth ages 18 to 24)
Activity F. Semi-structured interview: Innovation pathways	To explore in-depth the trajectory of individual experiences with new agricultural and NRM practices and the role of gender norms and capacities for innovation in these processes.	A total of 16 interviews (with 8 male and 8 female innovators)
Activity G. Semi-structured interview: Individual life stories	To understand the life stories of different male and female community members who have moved out of poverty, fallen into deeper poverty or remained trapped in poverty. To understand how gender norms, assets and capacities for innovation in agriculture/NRM and other assets and capacities shaped these different poverty dynamics.	A total of 16 interviews (with 8 male and 8 female participants)

This report does not present an in-depth analysis of all tools and data collected across tools. This type of coding and analysis is being done as part of the global program.²⁰ This report draws out points of interest from the immense dataset as it is relevant to understanding the country context and answering the key research question.

3. Community profile

This section covers results from activity B and provides social, economic, agricultural and political information about the communities. The names of the villages are anonymous (pseudonyms will be used) for confidentiality purposes but the district and general condition within each village is covered.

Table 4: Summary: Socio-demographic profile of the four villages

Village	Panali	Tehsul	Lehsat	Katam
District	Bagrami	Behsood	Dehsabz	Kama
Province	Kabul	Nangarhar	Kabul	Nangarhar
Population	~10,500	~22,500	1,500 -1,600	~10,000
Proximity to main road	½-1km	unknown	13km	unknown
Ethnic groups	Tajik (80%) Pashtun (20%)	Tajik (20%) Arab (10%) Mohmand (10%) Malikzai (10%)	Mullahkhil (10-15 families) Ahmadzai (20-25 families)	Mohmand (15%) Sabhiban (Sayeed) (50%) Pachayan (25%) Abdul rahimzai (8%)

²⁰ See: <https://gennovate.org/>

		Others (50% people from other provinces Laghman, Sameri, Khogyani, Kunar, Dara, etc)	Mosazai (10-15 families) Omarkhil (4-5 families) Qabul Bai (~20 families)	Kochi (20%) Pashaye (5%) Kunari (15%) Khogyane (5%) Wardak (5%)
Religion	Sunni Muslim (100%)	unknown	unknown	unknown
Household types	~10 polygamous hhs ~10 FHHs	~320 total HHs ~20 FHHs ~Respondents mentioned polygamy	~Very few FHHs ~Respondents mentioned polygamy	~Respondents mentioned polygamy
Main agricultural livelihood	Mostly wheat, tomatoes, alfalfa, peppers, eggplants and spinach as well as dairy products	Beans, tomato, eggplant, lady finger and, most importantly, wheat. In fall and winter rice, spinach, turnip and milk	Wheat, onion, grapes and tomato as well as dairy products	Rice, corn, wheat, ladyfinger, beans, tomato, potato and some other vegetables
Most important agriculture	Alfalfa	Wheat and rice	Grapes	Potato
Market	Almost no female vendors in the market	Almost no female vendors in the market	Almost no female vendors in the market	Almost no female vendors in the market
Irrigation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Communal²¹ (rivers, forests, etc.)	No	No	No	Yes (forest, water and mountain are a main source of stone)
Average land holding	2-5 jerib	5 jerib	10 jerib	5-10 jerib

Table 4 summarizes the socio-demographic profile of the four villages. Typical households in all villages are headed by men, although community informants have reported that there are a few female-headed and some polygamous households in their villages. Yet, their proportion is not clearly known in many villages. Activities in a woman's domain include processing dairy products and vegetable production, while men are mainly responsible for wheat cultivation, marking and off-farm activities.

There are polygamous families in diverse ethnic groups as well as household members with diverse ages. Many households live in joint family arrangements whereby the husband's parents live with the son and his wife. Not all women in polygamous marriages have the same rights, responsibilities and privileges. This emphasizes the importance of adopting an intersectional view of gender relations. A woman's position within a household and community depends on her *namus* (face/honor)²² and this can vary according to educational attainment, age, family status, ethnicity and other networks.

²¹ "Communal" refers to collective natural resources shared by the public.

²² Ibid.

New agricultural innovation includes improved seeds, green house technology, use of new pesticides, irrigation using water pump and solar panels, using wheat-reaping machines, using tractors and threshers as well as production of vegetables and fruits. Previously without greenhouse technology in Afghanistan, people weren't able to grow or buy vegetables during winter. In past years, water shortages used to be a source of conflict among community members and currently almost all communities have built water-wells for irrigating their land. For example, a female farmer in village Lehsat said,

In the past, there were water disputes among people and males used to fight with others because of water. Females were worried about their husbands and were afraid that maybe due to water disputes they would beat each other or go to prison. But now, females are relaxed because everyone has their own water-wells for irrigation and there are no water disputes. Irrigating the land is much easier for them now as compared to the past.

Similarly, respondents in Panali reported the security situation is better than compared to ten years ago, and farmers are adopting the technology of tube wells for irrigation. As a male farmer from this village said,

During the Taliban regime we didn't have water and due to drought, our lands were like deserts, and we were growing only rain-fed wheat here because we didn't have much irrigation in our area. But now, due to having tube-wells, we grow different types of crops and vegetables on our lands.

There are two types of laborers found in these communities; one regularly works as a farmer and the others are daily-wage workers for on and off farm roles. The regular workers have enough farming experience, but the daily workers have less experience due to the fact that they are assisting and not permanently available on the farms. There are different labor hiring arrangements found in the communities,

People work on others' land and earn a percentage of the outcome. This earning is based on the total produce of the land where the person has worked without his own investment. Sometimes there are also similar activities, such as taking care of someone else's livestock and earning a percentage of the revenue generated from the selling of milk, yogurt and cheese.

Respondents also emphasized that the use of agricultural machineries such as tractors and threshers made agricultural work much easier for their communities. Male and female respondents reported that before the introduction of machines, men used to hire women coming from other places for cleaning their wheat, as they don't allow their own wives to go out and work on the farm. As a woman respondent said, "previously, they were paying other females to come and clean or wash their wheat; but now they don't do that anymore and they can save their money." Another said, "there is less need of labor and time as the machines do most of the work." These remarks demonstrate the way machines reduce the workload of farmers and increase their profit but also have stopped paid work for women. Hiring labor costs approximately 400 or 500 AFN²³ per day. Hence, machines are the preferred way to farm.

²³ 1 AFN = 0.01317 USD. Source: <https://transferwise.com/gb/currency-converter/afn-to-usd-rate>

Enhanced infrastructure and improved economic opportunities following the collapse of the Taliban regime was emphasized by male and female respondents in all four villages as contributing to enhanced prosperity. The use of improved seeds and fertilizers have enabled farmers to produce more than in the past and earn better incomes. Farmers who were not able to grow anything other than wheat are now using the latest technology and anti-pest sprays, which enables them to grow more than two crops per season. Additionally, increased educational opportunities and diversifying income sources from solely producing crops to also selling vegetables and fruits has proved to be profitable. However, inheritance rights still disproportionately favor men.

4. Ladder of life results

This section covers the experiences of women and men in moving up, getting stuck or falling down into poverty. In the Ladder of Life (LoL) exercise (Activity C) participants were given 20 seeds to place on the ladder, representing the percentage of households on each step. This exercise is repeated to ascertain how many people lived below the poverty line ten years ago. Following this, the respondents are guided into a discussion about the assets and capacities of people on each step of the ladder.²⁴ In each of the four villages, one group of eight to 10 adult males (aged 30 to 55) and one group of eight to 10 adult females (aged 30 to 55) representing the poor socioeconomic group of their villages participated in these FGDs.

4.1 Community poverty line and wellbeing status

The question asked in this exercise was: What is the step or category of the ladder where people in this village are no longer considered poor? [Please note this on the ladder by drawing a line and labeling it as the "community poverty line."] Any household placed on or below the step labeled as the community poverty line (CPL) is considered poor while those placed above the poverty line are considered to be out of poverty as understood by the villagers (Table 5).

Table 5: Community poverty lines (CPL)

Sex	Villages			
	Panali	Tehsul	Lehsat	Katam
Male	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 2
Female	Step 2	Step 1	Step 1	Step 1

As shown in Table 5, Panali’s CPL is at step two as reported by male and female respondents. In Tehsul, male and female respondents reported step one as the CPL. This indicates a lower wellbeing status than Panali. In Lehsat and Katam, men reported a step two CPL while women reported step one as their village’s CPL. Hence poverty is experienced and understood differently according to gender and location.

²⁴ The numerical findings provide the basis for generating a summary statistic [Moving out of Poverty = (Share of poor 10 years ago – share of poor now) ÷ (share of poor 10 years ago)] for comparing perceptions of local poverty dynamics across the focus groups and case studies. While it is not possible to compare the ladders directly because they differ, it is possible to compare views about change on the Ladders of Life.

To put the ladder in perspective, a male LoL respondent from Panali said,

Those people at the bottom of the ladder are the worst-off in the community who can't meet the needs of their family and can't even send their children to school. They are daily wage workers who go to the city everyday looking for a daily wage job. One of the problems of these daily workers is that if a person needs to hire a daily laborer, he will give priority to those he knows. Those who don't know many landholders can face problems finding work.

Another male farmer from the same village described people at step two of the ladder as follows:

The people currently sitting in this gathering are those who are placed at step two of the ladder. People like me are performing our duties at the governmental office as civil servants, and we also work on our farms in order to support our families.

In Tehsul, male and female participants have described people who belong at step one as those who have low economic status, people whose children can't go to school, those who cannot afford daily living expenses, laborers, jobless people, farmers and widows who don't have their own house/shelter.

Meanwhile, those who belong at the top of the ladder are mostly *Maleks*, doctors, engineers, teachers, land owners, government officials, people who own several shops, businessmen such as car sellers, lawyers and judges who take bribes. There are also people who have businesses in Dubai, people who own a lot of land and lease the excess, parliament members and ministers.

4.2 Movement out of poverty

After participants defined the poverty line, they were asked to estimate the proportion of households on different steps of a ladder within their respective communities in both 2005 and 2015. Comparing those estimates showed the trend in wellbeing status of the communities over the last 10 years.

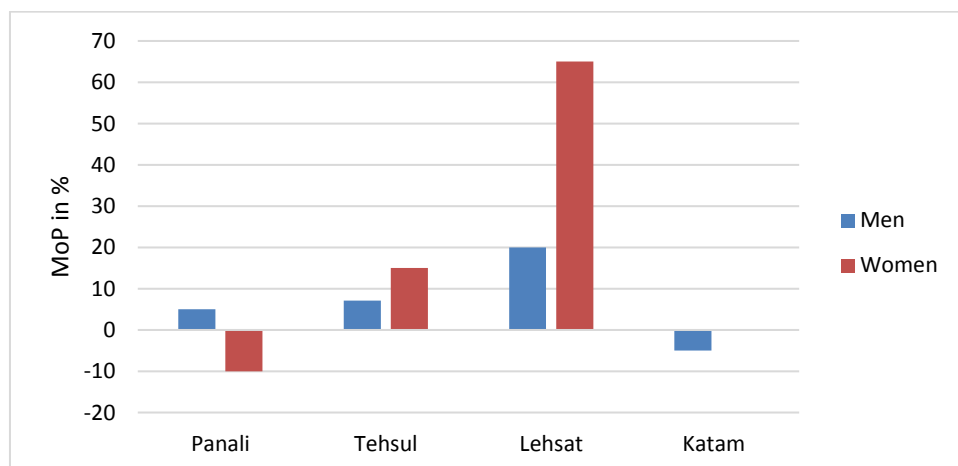


Figure 1: Movement out of poverty (MoP) (in %) by sex and village (2005-2015)

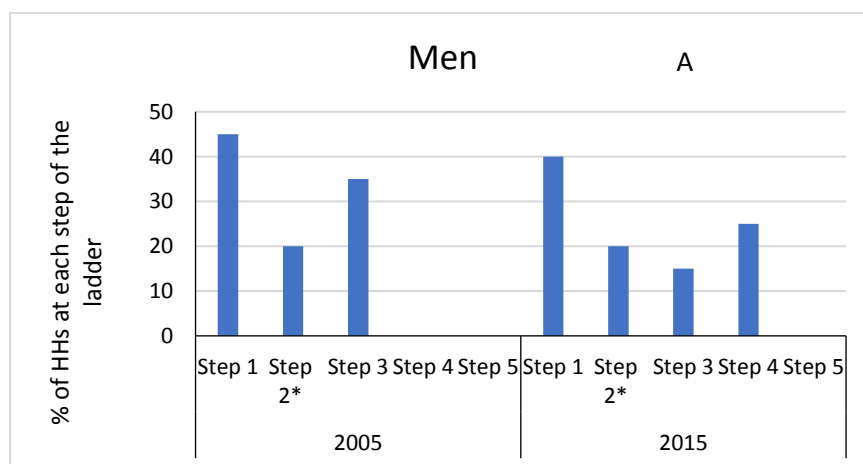
Lehsat shows a higher percentage of movement out of poverty compared to the other three villages (Fig. 1). Females in Lehsat reported 65 percent of households moved out of poverty while males reported a 20 percent MoP. The MoP result in Tehsul shows these perceptions are more similar among men and women with 5 to 15 percent of households moving out of poverty. In Panali, female and male respondents have different perceptions on MoP compared to other villages. Females reported a 10 percent increase in poverty in the last ten years while males reported a 5 percent decrease in poverty over the same time period. In Katam, men observed a 5 percent increase in poverty whereas women felt things had stayed the same.

When looking at this aggregated graph, female respondents generally reported a more positive MoP trend compared to males, except in Panali. This shows different understandings (definitions) of poverty and wellbeing status by female and male respondents. In Lehsat and Katam, women reported a lower CPL than men, which may have some bearing on the results. The next section explores the results from each village in depth and discusses the gender differences.

4.3 Village-by-village comparison of the LoL

A. Panali

In Panali, men and women ranked the CPL at step two. The proportion of poor households in the community increased by 10 percent in 2015. Men and women scored households the same in 2015 across wealth rankings. However, in 2005 men ranked more households at step 1 (45%) than women (25%). More women than men felt that more households in their community were better off in 2005 (Fig. 2A; Fig. 2B). Consequently, men reported improvement in wellbeing and reduced poverty in the community while females reported that more households have moved into poverty.



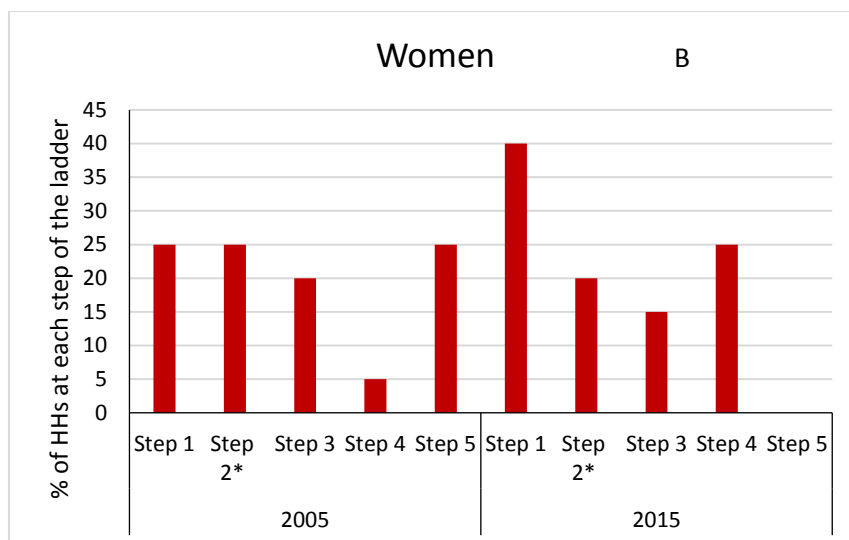


Figure 2: Proportions of households (in %) different steps of the LoL in Panali.²⁵

The reasons given as to why some households stay trapped in poverty include being jobless, having more children, sickness, addiction, lack of skill training opportunities, especially for women, husbands not allowing females to work and earn money and a lack of cooperation among co-wives. In addition, a lack of work opportunities for youth was highly cited in the discussion about poverty. The factors that contributed to a slight improvement in household wellbeing in their village include being educated and working in government offices, NGOs and private companies. Factors cited less frequently that contribute to improving a household's wellbeing include stealing public money, taking bribes, using their inheritance and working hard.

Lack of security and uncertainties are preventing people from moving freely and searching for work opportunities. They even prevent children from going to school. As a woman LoL participant in Panali said,

Now people are scared; my daughter is at the 8th grade in school. From the moment she leaves the house to go to school till she comes back, I worry about her safety, because of suicide attacks.

B. Tehsul

²⁵ Steps marked by star (*) show community poverty line.

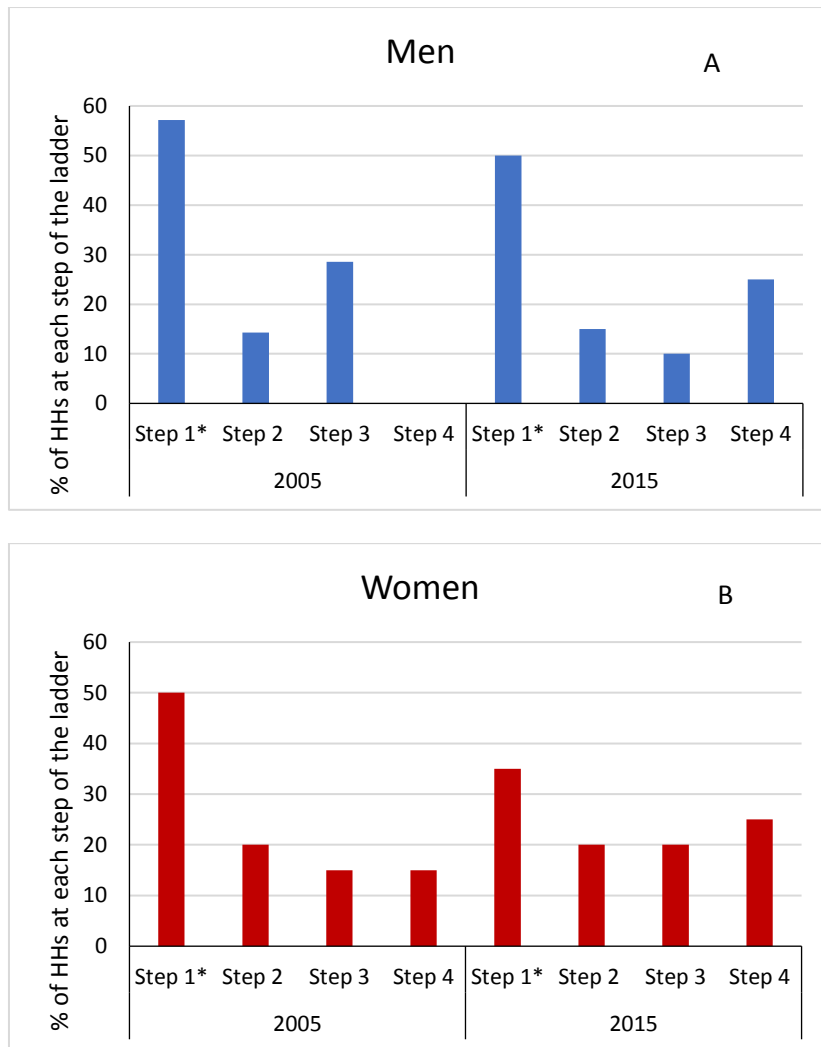


Figure 3: Proportions of households (in %) at different steps of the LoL in Tehsul.²⁶

In Tehsul, both male and female FGDs agreed that step one was the CPL. Men and women felt there were more households in poverty in 2005 than 2015 (Fig. 3A and 3B). Females reported higher proportion of households moving out of poverty in 2015 compared to men.

Respondents discussed a number of factors contributing toward improved wellbeing of households in the community with an emphasis on education for both males and females. According to respondents, education raised their commitment to work hard, learn skills such as tailoring and learning to operate various types of machines. Females play a major role in improving the wellbeing of their households, including working alongside their husbands, engaging in livestock production inside their houses and generating revenue from dairy products. Females also play a primary role in balancing household expenses and saving money to invest in other income-generating activities, such as opening a small shop.

According to female respondents, some of the factors that make households stay below the poverty line include lack of education, not working hard, especially for men, and conflicts between co-wives. Male respondents mentioned a different set of factors such as a lack of land

²⁶ Steps marked by star (*) show community poverty line.

and the deteriorating security situation that resulted in reduced work opportunities. For example, a male respondent from this village said:

The land which belonged to the government has been distributed among people who came from other districts. Anti-government elements have warned these people and threatened them, so they had to leave their houses and establish something for themselves here in our community. The increasing number of people from other districts and provinces has made the work limited.

Men and women had different reasons for why they thought people stayed under the CPL.

C. Lehsat

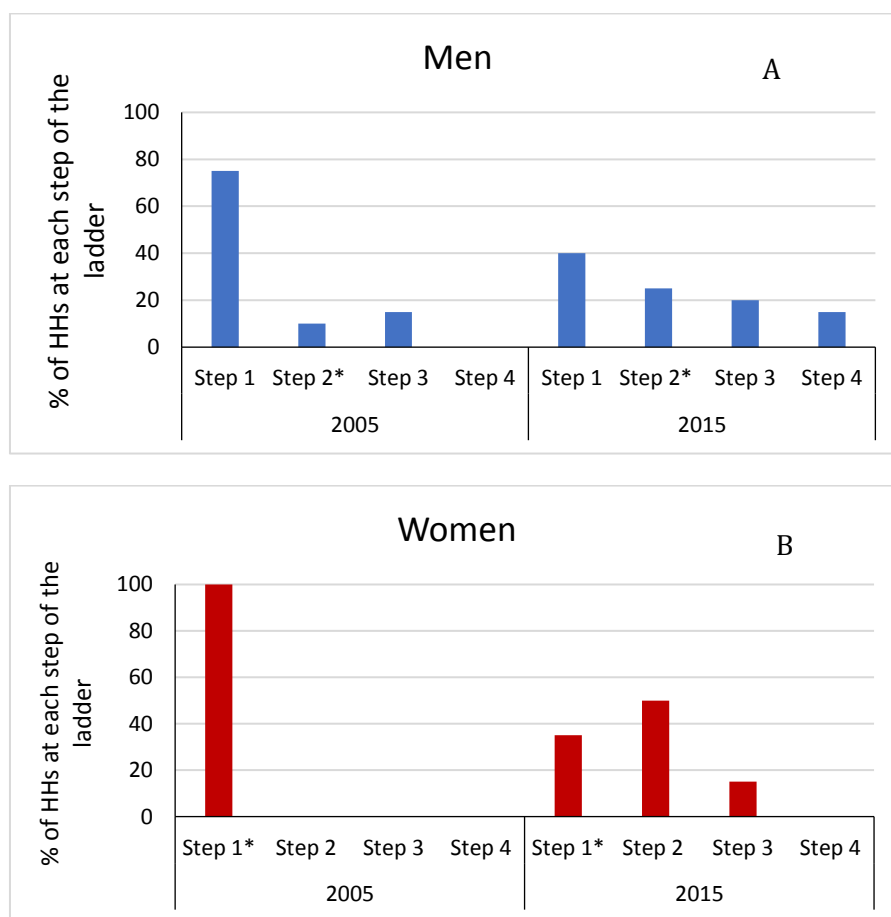


Figure 4: Proportions of households (in %) at different steps of the LoL in Lehsat.²⁷

In Lehsat, men ranked the CPL at step two and women placed it at step one. For women all villagers were in poverty in 2005 (Fig. 4B). In 2015 there have been improvements in MoP with

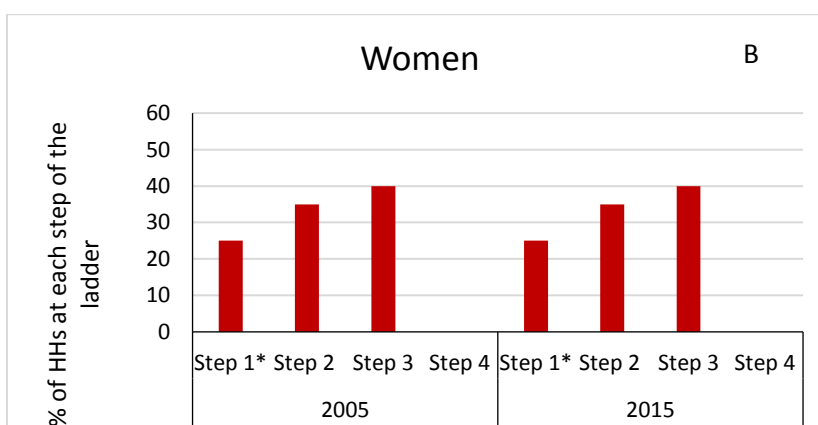
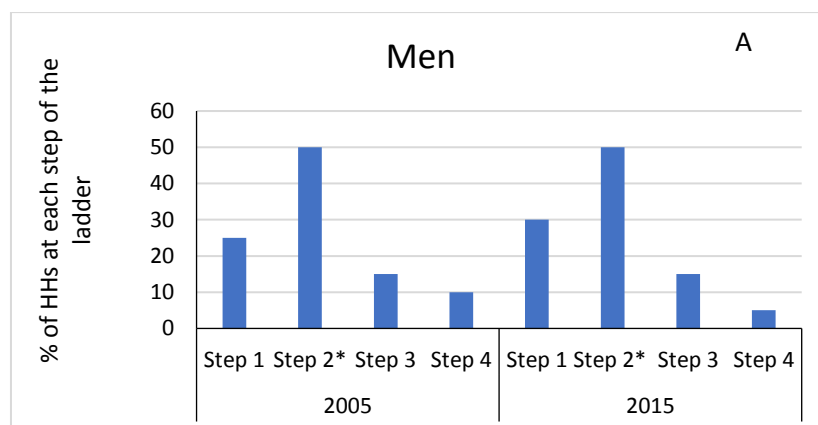
²⁷ Steps marked by star (*) show community poverty line.

men reporting 15 percent of households making it to level four. In general, females reported more progress in moving out of poverty between 2005 and 2015, than men.

According to female respondents, factors that help households move out of poverty include working hard, couples working collaboratively on farming and other income-generating activities and saving money for times of shortage. Men listed the following factors: support from children who graduate from school, working for the government, working on grape vines, working in vegetable and raisin production, importing goods from Pakistan and receiving remittances from family members who temporarily migrated for work to Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Europe.

Some of the reasons that trap a household in poverty include husbands being addicted to drugs and spending too much money, a woman’s lack of control over household income, violent husbands and conflicts between co-wives. Statements related to religious beliefs, particularly from female respondents, were cited as to why some people fall into poverty. For example, if someone engaged in an act that is Haram (forbidden under religious law) or accepted a bribe and earned money illegally, they would fall into poverty. Community members believed Allah takes wealth from such people as a consequence. Another female respondent explained, “Someone must have made some mistakes to come down from the step above, like not offering prayers or not fasting or he/she has remained proud of his/her own wealth.”

D. Katam



*Figure 5: Proportions of households (in %) at different steps of the LoL in Katam.*²⁸

In Katam, men ranked the CPL at step two and women put the CPL at step one. Women did not observe much difference in poverty reduction (or increases) in the past ten years. However, men observed a slight increase in poverty (Fig. 5 A and 5B). A young man in Katam articulated,

Almost 50 percent of the young boys from our village are high school graduates, but after graduation there is no job for them other than helping their families in the farms. The people who have money send their children to universities after high school graduation to become engineers and doctors and have a good future.

According to male and female respondents, some of the factors that trap households in poverty include sudden loss of job/unemployment, war, laziness/not working hard, high expenses and also religious beliefs such as “not fully thanking Allah for the things that had been given to them.”

Females in Katam cited a number of factors that contributed to increasing poverty in their village, including lack of employment opportunities, lack of skill training for females and lack of cooperation among co-wives that they said stress the husband financially.

Men said trade and owning one’s own business along with hard work and perseverance can help some households to move above the poverty line. Some farmers reported receiving financial support from their children working in Europe, which helped them improve their lives. Males listed the factors that contribute to decreasing poverty; engaging in trade, owning one’s own business, working hard and perseverance. A male respondent from this village gave a strong statement about the lack of agency to deliver change and his disappointment that the government is not doing enough to help them escape poverty. He said, “We want the government to provide job opportunities for us, or we want ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) to kill all of us [Laughing].”

4.4 Role of women in moving out of poverty

The previous section explained the way men and women conceptualize poverty differently. This section explores the role of women in moving a household out of poverty. A male farmer in Tehsul reflects that historically women have always played a role in lifting their households out of poverty,

The role of a woman in supporting her family to move over the poverty line is very vital. Some men were working either at their work place or in the farms; their wives also supported them in terms of providing tailoring services to the females in the village. Some of them were teachers, some of them established tuition centers inside their homes and some of them taught others’ children. Females in our community have worked with their husbands and played a very critical and important role to support their families moving to a better living level. If I tell you about our lives many years ago, you wouldn’t believe how much hard work our mothers did in order to financially support their families.

²⁸ Steps marked by star (*) show community poverty line.

They were making handicraft things and we would take them to the city and sell them.

In Panali, the major role females can play to help their household move out of poverty is supporting their husbands through providing constructive advice as well as effectively managing their household budget. A male respondent from Panali said,

The main actor of a house's economy is the woman. She is the best source to understand the betterment of a home's economy. Consultation from females should always be considered. If males think the comments of their wives are not appropriate, they should still listen to their comments and act in the most appropriate ways.

Another male farmer in Panali said, "My wife has always given me advice and every time I consult with my wife it has had positive impact on the income."

Meanwhile in Katam, a female respondent explained her ability to contribute to moving out of poverty was dependent on men, "Men should provide poultry for their wives and buy cows for them to raise at home so that women can earn money from selling their products to help her husband to get ahead." A woman respondent from Panali said,

Had there been any work females can do in our village, we could have helped our family progress. For example, there was a separate training program for females provided by NGOs with daily wages which helped us to have a source of income and make our lives better. There was Bagrami NASAJI (textile mill) where females were working but it is no longer active due to the civil war. Previously, females were working in the farms but after the civil war they are no longer allowed to work.

In some villages, women are in a position to improve their households' wellbeing if there are economic activities for them that men support. In other villages, women have always played a role in income generation and offering advice.

4.5 Conclusion

The LoL focus group discussions provide meaningful insight into how adult female and male respondents perceive poverty in their villages, movement out of poverty and what factors contribute to this movement, including the role of women. By allowing each female and male focus group to define its own community poverty line, the understanding of poverty is locally created and not imposed, with poorer households typically not owning land or having a small plot of land. Females consistently reported movement out of poverty at higher rates than males except in Panali. In Tehsul and Lehsat, men and women reported similar trends out of poverty reduction, while opinions between men and women in Panali diverged. When reviewing the data by village, sex and ladder step, more variance is observed. More research is needed on why males and females rate movement out of poverty differently and what the variance in declining poverty means for gender relations.

5. Ladder of power and freedom for decision making

This section presents data on a respondent's power and freedom for decision making from middle-class adults as well as youth. In each village, data collection was conducted in two focus groups. One group included eight to ten adult men (aged 25 to 55) and another group included eight to ten adult women (aged 25 to 55) in the middle socioeconomic group of their respective villages. Two FGDs were conducted with a group of eight to ten young females and a group of young males aged 16 to 24 in each village.

Participants helped by facilitators were asked to construct a five-step ladder and rank their degree of power and freedom to make decisions on a scale of one to five. The steps are as follows:

- Step 1: Almost no power or freedom to make decisions
- Step 2: Only a small amount of power and freedom
- Step 3: Power and freedom to make some major life decisions
- Step 4: Power and freedom to make many major life decisions
- Step 5: Power and freedom to make most major life decisions

Questions asked under this activity include:

- On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of (sex of FGD) in the village today? Why?
- On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of (sex of FGD) ten years ago? Why?
- What has (or has not) changed for FGD participants in this community?
- How do families here make decisions about how much wheat to sell and how much to keep for use in the home for food?
- How are females usually involved in these decisions? And males?
- What factors influence this decision for females? And for males?
- What local norms shape household decision-making about female's earnings from agriculture/NRM and their marketing activities?

5.1 Intra-household decision making

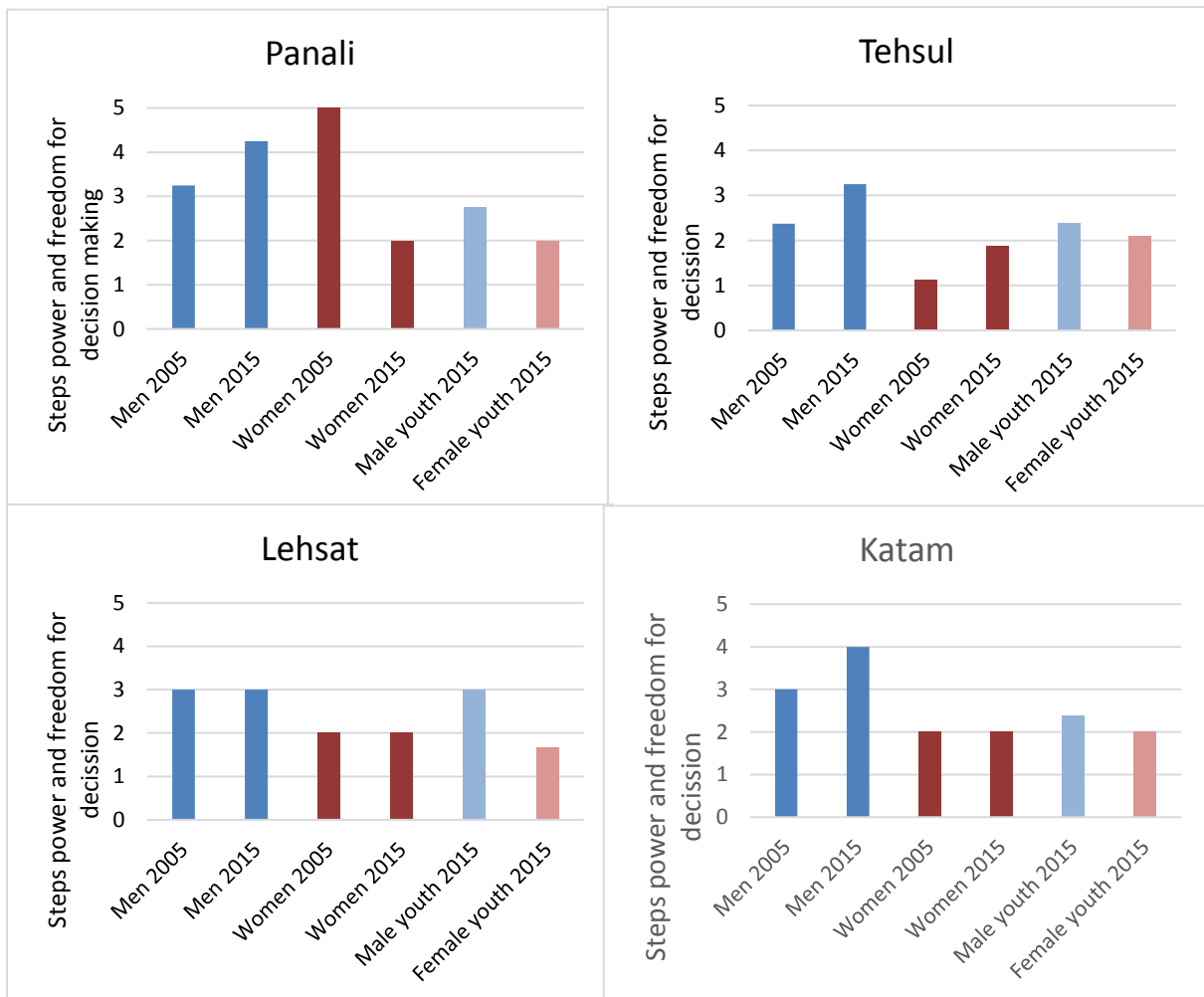
Men and women in all villages stressed that decisions concerning household matters including what happens on the farm are mainly made by males and with in-laws. In addition to the gender norms and stereotypes in the community, security issues in the past 10 years contributed to limited mobility for women. However, there were differences in the responses around decision-making (Table 6).

Table 6: Differing perceptions of who holds decision-making power (summary)

Females	Males	Youth
Feel they have little decision-making power and influence and lack confidence. (Placed themselves at step 2)	Are confident in their general ability to make decisions. They mainly depend on consultations with male elders and farmers with more farming and innovation experience. (Placed themselves between steps 3 and 4)	Young men have less power than their fathers but more than their mothers. Young women have less power than their father and young men. (They placed themselves on a similar step as their mothers.)

Fig. 6 summarizes the mean steps on the LoPF for FGD participants in their respective villages. Looking at the trend in ratings, men generally reported an increase in power and freedom to make decisions over the last ten years in all the villages except in Katam. In Lehsat (Fig. 6), both male and female respondents reported no change in their respective decision-making power and freedom over the last ten years. In Panali, women reported a significant decrease in their power and freedom to make decisions compared to where they were placed ten years ago, while women in Tehsul reported only a slight increase in power and freedom in the last ten years. Findings across the four villages indicate that household decisions are mainly made by men including elders, husbands, brothers or in-laws, depending on the issue.

Figure 6: Decision-making ladder steps for adults by sex and village



Married women face intense mobility restrictions, including for travel to work or the market, which seem particularly entrenched and enforced through violence. The main reason men resist allowing women and girls to leave the house is because of fear of gossip. Males will lose their honor if their wife is the subject of gossip. Gender identity and social norms that govern this behavior mean whole communities' police the behavior of women.

Female respondents in general emphasized the fact that a woman's freedom to make important decisions in her life depends on whether her husband allows her to do so.

Females are dependent on their husbands; if their husbands have good manners and if they give freedom to their wives, then they can make decisions about everything. (Female FGD, Panali)

One-woman shared her own life experience,

People here are not so open minded. Only a few families allow their wives to make decisions, not all. I am one of the examples, I got a job in Kama and when I asked my husband, he said no, you don't need a job and he told me you are not allowed. So, if I had permission, now I would have that job. I am educated and so is my husband but still he doesn't allow me to work. It is because people are talking and gossiping about females who go out.

Females listed factors that contribute toward their limited decision-making power including a lack of confidence and male dominance in all types of life decisions. The following direct quotes by females explain the situation:

- *Females have no confidence; they have no right to say anything.*
- *All authority concerning land that belongs either to the husband or wife is a man's. Females don't have the right to sell their crops without the authority of their husbands.*
- *She can't go alone. First of all, she has to get permission from her husband and take his son with her when she wants to go to market.*

Females' restricted mobility and lack of permission from their husbands are the key factors in the freedom of women to make their life choices. However, some females reported that their power and freedom has slightly increased compared to where they were ten years ago. Some of the reasons for their improved decision-making power include improved access to education and better societal respect for females.

The idea of a hierarchy within joint-families was raised many times across villages when discussing women's power,

The majority of the people in our community are in joint families. When their parents are alive, they must respect the decisions of their elders; I think the majority of people are in the level which I selected. Sometimes when the head of the family knows that one of his sons has experience and knowledge, he delegates the authority. (male)

Women concurred with these statements, “if a woman is living with her husband alone, she can make the decisions and help her husband but if her in-laws are alive, she can’t make any decision.” In line with this, a woman respondent said, “Some females can do whatever she wants only if her family members agree. If she has her family’s support, she can do everything, and she doesn’t have to care about people’s bad ideas.”

Some male respondents reported that females have decision-making roles, particularly around how much of the wheat harvest to allocate for household consumption versus how much to sell. As a male respondent in Panali said, “Females are part of the decision on the quantity to be used for the house and for the next year.” Another male respondent from Katam also emphasized a female’s role in household decisions, saying, “Females are 100 percent involved in such decisions, because they do the cooking and they know how much wheat their family consumes in a month. They keep that much wheat and sell the rest.” From these discussions, it can be inferred that females contribute to productive as well as reproductive decisions. This result suggests the economic unit of the household works relatively collaboratively on some issues, even though women appear to have less decision-making authority than men.

While gender norms around decision making are evident, they vary by household type, age and intra household relationships. This emphasizes the need to collect more data on male and female farmer realities and livelihood perceptions and that an emic view is needed to ensure western notions of equality, agency and decision making are not projected onto rural Afghanistan.

5.2 Youth decision-making issues

Since the youth focus group participants are young, they were not asked to recall their power and freedom from ten years prior. Rather, youth were asked to focus on their sense of power and freedom on the day they were asked in 2015. Unlike many of the adult focus groups, youth were asked only to comment on their own decision-making status within their communities. Concerning youth, young males have more power and freedom to make decisions than young females. Young females and girls are under the full control of their parents and brothers when they are single.

In Panali, young males reported a slightly higher level of power and freedom to make decisions compared to their young female counterparts (Fig. 6). All young male respondents discussed the following factors that affect their power and freedom:

- *Many of the boys got married and they became fathers, so their power of making decisions has increased.*
- *The level of making decisions increases with male age.*
- *I am married but still living together with my parents so I cannot make all the decisions of my life by myself. I need to consult most of the things with my father.*
- *The biggest wish we have is existence of security in our country. This will enable chances for both boys and girls to go to school and get educated. Economy is also very essential in life; if the economy is good, children can go to school and have bright futures.*

Young males more consistently expressed a greater sense of agency and autonomy, than young

women:

- *I can make decisions to buy a cell phone, bike or clothes.*
- *I can make decisions to go to the courses of my own choice, I can also decide on purchasing small things for myself, but it is very good if we consult with our parents on doing big things because they have experience and guide us properly.*
- *Before, we were children and now we are adults; so now we can make some major decisions in our life.*

Young females listed factors to explain their lower decision-making power:

- *Restricted to the home: "Mostly boys are doing outside tasks, as females are always at home and they aren't permitted to work outside. They can do whatever they want, but inside their houses; they aren't permitted to go out."*
 - *"Boys are stricter and more nervous, and they won't permit their mothers, sisters or sisters-in-law to go out of the house."*
 - *"A woman should get permission from her husband and get properly dressed before going to market. If she is old, she can go but young females can't go."*
- *Roles: "Girls are only doing house chores, and they cannot work outside without their parent's permission. Some families allow their daughters to go to school but there are some families who don't allow their daughters to go to school."*
- *Danger: "My father says that you are alone on the way, school is far away from our house and also there are many boys on my way, so he says don't go to school."*
- *Destiny: "We can't get married by our own choice; we get married by our father and mother's choice".*

Most of the young female respondents showed that girls do not have power to make many decisions. However, there were some anomalies:

- *Yes, we do have authority, our family lets us work, they do let us go to school also, and currently we are going to madrasa (Holy Quran Courses). We are going to school and madrasa and they let us in everywhere; they don't prevent us from doing anything.*

5.3 Conclusion

Strict gendered division of labor together with highly-restricted female mobility limit a female's contribution to the productive sphere. As a result, some women are left out of major household decisions and their production roles are undervalued. Findings across the four villages indicate that household decisions are mainly made by males, elders, husbands, brothers or in-laws, depending on the issue. Males in the four villages, being almost the sole decision makers, reported that decisions on whether or not to adopt improved wheat seed and which variety are taken after a series of consultations with elders and other family members, as well as farmers who have previous experience with adoption. They examine the costs and

resources required to cultivate against the advantages they expect before making adoption decisions.

The decision-making results reveal that adult men and young boys learn to control females (their sisters, sisters-in-law, wives and mothers) from an early age. This is an expression of “masculinity” reinforced by society and social institutions, especially religious institutions. Young females neither have the power to make decisions as single females nor after they get married, as they still remain under the full control of their husbands and in-laws.

6. Gender norms, roles and attitudes

In this section, gender norms around household and agricultural roles were explored to understand gender expectations.

6.1 Qualities of a “Good Wife” and “Good Husband”

In Activity D, male and female adults were asked about what qualities make a good wife or husband. There were four focus groups with females and four focus groups with males for a total of eight FGDs about qualities of a good wife and a good husband. Focus groups began by FGD participants listing the qualities. Qualities would be removed from the list if there was disagreement among the group.

Women expect many of the same qualities of their husbands as they expect of themselves. Themes of good behavior and respect came up repeatedly in their responses, for instance, “he respects his wife and listens to her” and he “lives in harmony with his family and community.” Further, women want their husbands to be respected by all family members as well as have a good reputation in their respective communities. They stressed that it is important for him to not spend money on alcohol or substance abuse and that he fulfills his family's needs. Additional qualities of a good husband listed by women include one who works to earn for the family, is not violent at home, and helps at home and who is a good father to his children (Table 7).

Table 7: Qualities of a Good Wife and Good Husband

What makes a good wife?	What makes a good husband?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes good care of her husband and children (male FGD, Tehsul) • Respects her husband and his family (male and female FGDs, Panali) • Has good knowledge of Islam/Quran and performs prayers accordingly (male FGD Tehsul and Panali) • She should be clean (female FGD, Panali) • She should teach her children to behave well (female FGD, Panali) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is responsible for his family (male and female FGDs, Panali) • Aware of Sharia, has good manners and behavior, does good deeds, does not create conflict (male FGD, Panali) • He should have good behavior and respect others (female FGD, Panali) • He should help at home (female FGD, Panali) • He should encourage the children and be a good father (female FGD, Panali) • A person who has a job and supports his family (male FGD, Tehsul)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sends her children to school, and takes good care of her children’s education (male FGD, Tehsul) • A good wife shouldn’t argue with her husband (male FGD, Tehsul) • She should do the house work (female FGD Tehsul) • She should tolerate the hardships of life (female FGDs Tehsul) • A good wife is the one who obeys her husband, acts according to Islam and is honest (male FGDs, Lehsat and Katam) • Assists her husband when faced with problems (female FGD, Lehsat) • She should not be violent at home or with her neighbors, she should take good care of her in-laws and other family members (female FGD Katam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is educated so he knows all the rights of a woman. He has a job, supports his family, sends his children to school and does not use drugs (male FGD, Tehsul) • Prays five times a day (male FGD, Tehsul) • Respects his family and wife and loves his family (female FGD, Katam) • He works hard to earn something for his family. He should be the breadwinner for his family (female FGD, Katam) • He should control his family and help his children get an education (female FGD Katam) • He should be happy and peaceful at home (female FGD, Katam) • He should not act violently at home with his wife and family members (female FGD, Katam) • He should take good care of his children (female FGD, Katam)
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The sexes have a consistent understanding of a “good wife” as a woman who takes good care of her husband and children, sends her children to school, obeys her husband according to Islam, has good knowledge of the Quran and performs prayers accordingly. Meanwhile, being a good husband means being a man who is responsible, educated, has a job and sends his children to school. He is aware of Sharia, prays five times a day and respects his family and others. Characteristics emphasized in discussions include being helpful and peaceful at home and being a role model to his children. There was a clear demarcation in the roles that males and females should have in the household to be considered a good wife or husband. These were mainly related to community perceptions of female’s roles, which are confined to the daily routine of household chores and family care roles.

6.2 Attitudes toward gender equality

The data presented in this section is a mix of responses from men and women and the CPL youth. The question asked was: “In your own words, please share what you understand by equality between a man and a woman. Is this kind of equality a good or bad thing?”

Adult males: Adult men consistently commented across FGDs that men and women were not equal and could not be equal. Adult male respondents included:

- *God says that males and females are not the same, so they can’t be equal. Even if we see that a man can lift 50 KGs, it doesn’t mean that a female should also lift the same weight. There could be equality between males and females among a few things such as purchasing clothes, shoes or some other goods for both female and male household members. (Male FGD, Tehsul)*
- *In accordance with the law of our religion, the rights for males and females can’t be equal because males have more work than females. The responsibility of the entire*

family is upon the shoulders of males. He goes and works either out or at the farms and meets the needs of his family. (Male FGD, Panali)

Adult females: Adult women agreed that gender equality is necessary and explained that it relates to working equally with men and being aware of one's own rights, equal education opportunities for young boys and girls as well as equal inheritance rights. Opinions from female FGDs on gender equality are summarized as follows:

- *For me, like others, they should send both their daughters and sons to school. Now look at us, our parents did not send us to schools and now we are illiterate. (Female FGD, Panali)*
- *Males and females should have the same rights; you see if we had education, now, we would have work. (Female FGD, Panali)*
- *If the girl is getting education, the boy should get education too. If the boy is eating, the girl should eat too. Equality is good. People see their daughters and sons equally. (Female FGD, Tehsul)*
- *Girls and boys should receive inheritance. Equality is good. (Female FGD, Tehsul)*

Youth attitude: Some young male and female respondents have a more liberal understanding of gender equality compared to their fathers and mothers, that includes sharing household responsibilities and respecting the rights of one another:

- *Equality is having equal responsibility in life between a husband and wife; both husband and wife have equal rights and responsibilities. (Male FGD, Tehsul)*
- *They should help each other in all types of work. They should not complain about each other; hence their rights will be equal. (Male FGD, Lehsat)*
- *Equality between males and females is good. Islam has shown us the rights of men and women. In Islam, they are not as equal as stipulated by the human rights advocates and from what people from NGOs are talking about nowadays. But their rights are clearly mentioned in the Quran. (Male FGD, Katam)*

However, some youth talked like the adult men in terms of physical differences that would prevent men and women from being equal:

- *A man and a woman are not equal physically. In the holy Quran their rights are mentioned; a man works outside the house and a woman works inside. (Male FGD, Lehsat)*

However, this attitude was not as prevalent among the male youth as among adult men.

Women's lack of mobility was accepted by the youth as a necessity. A young female from Panali explained that the security situation poses risks and some parents don't allow their daughters to study. Male youth explained that if their sister, mother or daughter went out of the house then people would say bad things about her, and men will lose their honor. Because of this, they don't permit women in their family to go out and work on the field.

In summary, some men feel there cannot be equality because of dangers, physical and religious differences. Women want equality in education and inheritance. The responses from youth

vary from being the same as their fathers to a more liberal understanding of equal contributions to the household.

6.3 What makes a “Good Farmer”?

Male and female respondents were asked about the qualities of a good male and female farmer (Table 8). The list of qualities of a “good female/male farmer” seem to contradict some of the qualities of a “good wife.” Almost all of the characteristics of a good wife relate to a female’s household and care roles, which are mainly confined to the house. On the other hand, the qualities of a “good female farmer” demand females play other roles, including being able to cultivate well and have experience in farm work, being able to take care of her farm and being able to earn money.

Table 8: Commonly-heard qualities of a good female and male farmer

A female who is a good farmer	A male who is a good farmer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should take care of her farm and have a good harvest • Has good behavior towards neighbors • Should work with good behavior • Should work well and not earn illegally • Knows how to cultivate well and is experienced • Should work in consultation and cooperation with her husband • Knows how to clean wheat and sort onions and tomatoes • Should help her husband in farming • Should be physically strong and know about agricultural activities • Should obey her husband while working on the farm • Should provide food and tea on time to her husband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should work as a good farmer and should sell agricultural products daily • Should work on the farm and should not steal anything • Should use the money in the right way • Should do good things such as cultivate on time, irrigate, use fertilize and reap on time • Has good relations with his neighbors and shares expertise • Should be knowledgeable about his farm, pay attention to it and use seeds properly • Waters his farm in a timely manner • Is physically strong and hard working • Consults other farmers and has information • Should have better outcomes with lower expenses • Should have good farming experience and follow Islamic rules • Should help the community

While fixed gender roles exist publicly, these roles seem to blur in terms of farming. A young woman respondent from Panali explained,

Our males are cultivating wheat, they water their crops, they use chemicals (i.e. fertilizer) on their crops and when wheat is totally grown then they harvest it and they bring it home. After that we clean, and we store wheat in the hives. We also cultivate tomato and eggplant; when it grows, we weed and then we wait for the products of our hard work; and then we sell them in the bazaar.

However, other respondents explained there is a gender-based division of labor even when it comes to crop cultivation and post-harvest activities. Women participate in weeding and do all the household work. This includes post-harvest management activities such as cleaning wheat and vegetables inside their house. As one woman said, “Our men cultivate tomato and potato

and bring them home for washing and packing; they bring wheat and we clean it too. Then our men sell it outside.”

Another male farmer said, “A woman farmer should have knowledge and experience to perform watering and cleaning activities. But females can’t work alone, a woman can’t be a farmer if she is not with her husband.” If a husband is not around or if he died, his brother or oldest son is responsible for all the farm work and for the family in general. This leads some men to conclude “I don’t think a female can be a farmer because I haven’t seen any woman as a farmer.” This narrow understanding of a farmer as one who tills the soil should be reframed.

When female FGD participants were asked where they go for agriculture information, the typical response from all female respondents was,

- *No! Females are not allowed. It is a male’s job; females don’t go anywhere to get information.*
- *Females are not allowed to go out of the home and consequently are not considered to be farmers.*

Another woman FGD respondent said, “...if she has a good husband, then she can be a farmer. Today I went and asked many females to join us in this interview, but they told me that their husbands won’t allow them to come.” The statement below by a woman respondent from this village summarizes the situation of women:

It is common in our village that males don’t let females go out and work; males prevent females from working outside and say, “When everybody sees you, it is shame for us if you work outside.” Because of this shame, the males don’t let their females work outside and they mainly stay at home; that is the reason why they [females] are very backward in their thinking as they have no information about anything. Females can cultivate vegetables inside their yard, but they can’t cultivate wheat. (Female FGD, Panali)

In general, villages differ in attitude toward women who work outside the house to earn an income. Panali and Katam tend to show more positive attitudes while Tehsul and Lehsat reported more discouraging comments.

There is a clear demarcation of roles among men and women; however, there seems to be an exception for certain types of women to work outside the home for pay or on their own farms. This includes women coming from other countries to Afghanistan and female household heads with no access to male labor. These opinions varied by village:

A. Women and men in Panali explained what people would say about females who work outside the house:

- *It is good not bad; she is a good woman, not a bad one.*
- *She is a good woman; let people say whatever they want, she needs to work, and she does.*
- *She is forced, that is why she goes (for work); people would say so many things. But it does not matter.*

- *She is a good woman and people would say she is good too.*
- B. According to the female comments in Tehsul, there was uncertainty about women working outside:
- *The people would start talking behind her and her husband's backs that her man cannot control the female. For example, if they leave and go anywhere for learning, people would say, Allah knows what this woman will do now that she has left her house.*
 - *Some would say bad things behind her back and some people would appreciate her hard work for the family.*
 - *Here people are doing things that they want.*
 - *People would talk, you cannot stop their talking. The females are obliged to work; that is why they put their children at home and go to work. If she works outside of the village, this is even worse. But inside the village, it is bearable.*
- C. In Lehsat, both male and female respondents gave negative responses on people's attitudes toward females who work outside the house to earn income and explained that community gossip and rumors prevent women from working outside:
- *They won't think well about them. They will talk behind her back and they will taunt her. It is not good at all.*
 - *Mostly in villages, if a woman with children is working outside, her neighbors and relatives would talk behind her back and taunt her husband that he could not bring food for his wife and that is why she is working outside.*
- D. Katam was an exception where both male and female respondents had positive feedback on attitudes toward females working outside the house. Some of the comments include:
- *Providing support is the responsibility of females, because people are poor, and they have to work along with their husband. That is why no one will think badly about such females.*
 - *People are poor, females have to work along with their husband, and otherwise no one wants their female to do hard work like farming. Because people are poor, their females have to work as well.*

Despite community sanctions about women working outside the house, more women work outside the house compared to ten years ago. In Panali, where sympathy for women working outside the house was found, there was also a belief that things had improved for women:

- *Everyone has authority over his own family. People in the past had negative mentality about the female working for a salary at the office. This trend has changed, and females are going to school, colleges and universities; and females are also working at the offices. (Male FGD, Panali)*
- *The situation has gone good year by year. In the past, during the Taliban regime and civil war, there were a lot of restrictions on females, but now it is good; it's better than the past. (Female FGD, Panali)*

In Tehsul and Lehsat, where working outside the house was associated with negative perceptions, respondents had mixed views about changes for women over the past ten years:

- *There isn't much of a difference compared to ten years back; there are only a few activities that have changed, such as the establishment of schools for girls. (Male FGD, Tehsul)*
- *Because 10 years ago females were not even counted as community members but now females are given a bit of value and rights. Those who are educated, they give their wife rights; they don't do anything without their wife's input. (Male FGD, Tehsul)*

In Katam, where positive attitudes to women working outside the house prevailed, there was also belief that some things had improved for women:

- *Ten years ago, women were not even allowed to go to the hospital or to the market alone. Women couldn't do anything without the permission of their man. I think the majority of females in this community were on step one 10 years ago. (Female FGD, Katam)*
- *I think in the past girls were not allowed to go to school but now their situation has changed. The majority of girls can go to school in our community. That is the only thing that has changed for females in here. (Female FGD, Katam)*

This data suggests a correlation between women's mobility, women's empowerment and the education of men and women that enables households to move out of poverty. Respondents had fixed ideas about whether women did or should farm based upon what they saw and experienced. When women work outside the house men witness the family's improved circumstances which opens up the possibility of more women being permitted out.

6.4 Domestic violence – an inhibitor to improving life style

This study asked respondents about domestic violence in their villages. The question was: Is domestic violence a concern for the community? Female respondents across villages suggested that violence towards wives was normalized, saying, "Most females would be beaten by their husbands, but it is like slapping, or beating with a belt. My brother-in-law used to beat his wife with a belt and also wood." There is a level of acceptance of wife beating by females themselves. As one respondent said, "She is not beaten so hard; she is just boxed or slapped." Women are beaten when they behave "badly," which according to females justifies the act of violence.

Some women explained extreme forms of violence, saying, "Males will beat females; they will break their wife's hands and head." Another respondent tells a story of the harm domestic violence can cause:

I don't have any other problem except that my husband is addicted to wine. When I used to go to my other cousin's home, my husband would come for me and take me home. There he would start beating me for going to my cousin's house. I tolerated all his violence, but when he started his violence over my daughter, I could not tolerate it. He used to call my parents to take me home

and say, "Your daughter [she means herself] is just an extra person at my house, she could not be pregnant, and she could not give birth to a child."
(Female, Panali)

According to respondents, violence happens in polygamous and non-polygamous households but is more frequent in polygamous households. As explained by a male respondent in Panali,

The violence in polygamous families have very negative effects on the community. Females in other families will eventually get aware of the mentioned conflicts and they also create conflicts.

Participants also explained that when a conflict arises between two female co-wives in a polygamous family, the perpetrator faces violence from the husband or the other wife. Female respondents associated direct harm to the woman and her well-being with a ripple effect on her family, the community and even the nation.

According to the respondents, other reasons that cause violence and factors affecting it include:

- Young couples fight more because they do not know each other before they marry.
- Unemployment and lack of income to fulfill family needs. A woman respondent gave a typical example of how domestic violence usually starts to happen in a household due to economic reasons saying, "It is because of unemployment that females ask their males to bring food for home and then the man starts beating his wife and then the woman will go to the doctor for healing."
- Violence is more common in a *Baadal* (exchange) practice. A girl from one house is married to a boy in another house; and then the boy's sister is married with his wife's brother. This practice means that when one family is having problems, the other family will have problems too.

Both male and female respondents in all four villages agreed that domestic violence continues, but its prevalence is declining compared to ten years ago. As one respondent explains,

In the past, when the Taliban had just left, the beating and hitting of wives by husbands was normal. The human rights people had many workshops here for both males and females and they had training and courses for us. They always talked about the female's rights, children's rights and especially about violence. Now beating and hitting happens much less here. (Female FGD, Katam)

Another participant said,

Actually, during the Taliban regime people were unable to go to school and get educated. During Karzai's regime, lots of new school buildings were constructed in almost every village. Now people have become educated and more knowledgeable. Now people watch TV and they know that violence at home is not good and it has a bad impact on children. Life is much better now than before.

A number of factors have contributed to the decline in domestic violence, including interventions by NGOs that create awareness among the communities, improved access to education and information through public media such as TV. Nevertheless, violence is a serious risk for women who decide to deviate from gender norms and maintain their powerlessness.

6.5 Conclusion to gender norms and agriculture roles

Despite evidence of strict gender norms, there are examples of change reflected in participants' anecdotes. Household relations are becoming more cooperative compared to ten years ago due to rising access to information, education and awareness of female's rights. Economic reasons, such as the need for every household member to work and contribute to the household economy also creates change. In communities like Panali and Katam women's mobility has improved, along with more positive community perceptions of these women.

Nevertheless, deep-rooted gender norms backed by strong religious beliefs are working together to dictate what male and female roles should be in a very traditional sense. Male and female study participants in the four villages refer to very strong normative and religious associations of good husbands with the productive sphere and economic provision and good wives with the reproductive sphere. These normative associations are reflected again in the local expectations for male and female roles in farming. As a productive and economic activity, farming fits under the male domain. This means that most of the technical agriculture information is passed onto men, even though more men are engaging in off-farm work and leaving women to take care of farms. Without an agriculture extension out-reach program for women, some households (e.g. with migrant or sick husbands) will encounter a deteriorating will to produce agriculture. This could have a negative effect on the nation's food security.

The stories of violence indicate how difficult it may be to change some of these behavioral norms, especially if women are beaten for working outside the house and for travelling without male permission. Gender inequality in the agriculture sector requires careful programming, more data and considerable thought.

7. Agricultural innovations and gender

7.1 Male and female experiences with agricultural innovations

The aim of this section is to explore in-depth the trajectory of individual experiences with new agricultural and NRM practices. It seeks to understand the life stories of different male and female residents in the villages who have moved out of poverty, fallen into deeper poverty or remained trapped in poverty and the role gender norms and capacities for innovation played in these processes. Semi-structured individual interviews held with adult male and female innovators under activity F provided this information.

Male and female respondents mentioned several times that they have benefited greatly from adopting improved wheat varieties and they were clear that adoption could transform lives. One of the respondents summarized the benefits to men and women as follows:

The family who cultivates new seed varieties has more benefits as it is clean, there are no weeds and its harvest is much more than the old seeds. The new improved seeds require less effort and at the end it is profitable. But the other seeds require more effort but with less profit. The females have better health, as they do not need to work hard.

According to male and female respondents, agricultural machineries such as tractors and threshers have made their lives much easier. In the past, women had to clean wheat because the harvest was not clean and had too many weeds in it; now farmers use thresher machines to separate the wheat grains and straws. Respondents have also reported that certain NGOs distribute improved seeds to farmers and teach them about the cultivation practices. Farmers then sell their harvest back to these NGOs.

7.2 Important innovations for females

Data for this section comes from the 24 different focus groups: poor adults completing the Ladder of Life activity (8), middle-class adults describing capacities for innovation, and (8) youth completing the aspirations of youth (8). Each focus group was asked to name the top two innovations for men and the top two innovations for women, resulting in a list of 48 possible mentions of an innovation.²⁹

Across all of the focus group discussions, which ranged in age, economic status, gender and village, most people believe that females are in need of improved seed and machinery, such as threshers, tractors, electric mills and water pumps. More men felt the thresher would be the most important machinery for women. Some respondents felt that any kind of machine would be helpful. Men also thought women needed electric mills and solar power but women themselves did not voice an interest in electric mills and solar power.

Table 9: Important innovations for females by sex

What Males Believe Females Need		What Females Believe Females Need	
<i>Reported by males only</i>	<i>Shared interest in innovations (number of mentions)</i>		<i>Reported by females only</i>
Electric mills (3)	New improved seeds (4)	New improved seeds (8)	Refined wheat seeds (1)
Solar power system (1)	Water pump (1)	Water pump (2)	
	Chemical fertilizers (2)	Chemical fertilizers (1)	
	Agricultural machineries (support agriculture) (2)	Agricultural machineries (support agriculture) (4)	
	Combined harvester (1)	Tractor and thresher (4)	
	Thresher (8)	Thresher (2)	
	Tractor (2)	Tractor (1)	

²⁹ When only male or female focus groups are discussed, the maximum number of mentions is 24; however, some focus groups mentioned only one, so there are fewer innovations listed than expected.

Table 9 reveals that there are some gender differences in preferences, whether this relates to difference in information about availability, cost and desire or some other unknown attribute is unclear.

7.3 Important innovations for males

Males reported a strong interest in tractors and threshers, while females felt men needed new seed varieties and mechanization (Table 10). Given women are responsible for fuel and water collection, it is logical that females are eager for their male counterparts to implement new irrigation systems, solar panels and electricity.

Table 10: Important innovations for males by sex

What Males Believe Males Need		What Females Believe Males Need	
<i>Reported by only men</i>	<i>Shared interest in innovations (number of mentions)</i>		<i>Reported by only women</i>
Tomato cultivation (1)	Water pumps (1)	Water pumps (1)	New irrigation system (1) Water pumps and solar panels (1)
	New improved seeds (4)	New seed varieties (9)	Electricity (1)
	Fertilizers (1)	Fertilizer (1)	
	Agriculture machineries (2) Tractor and thresher (1) Thresher (7) Tractor (6)	Agricultural Machinery (5) Tractor and thresher (3) Thresher (1)	
	Solar power system (1)	Solar power system (1)	

Project designers should consider innovations that appear in the middle two columns of Table 10 and 9, as they have the support of men *and* women. When reviewing Table 9 and 10, gender preferences are seen. This emphasizes the importance of disaggregating results to determine gender differences in opinions and needs. It also stresses the relevance of collecting data from both men and women. The women seem to know about more advanced technologies which the men do not seem to acknowledge.

7.4 Supporting and hindering factors for agricultural innovations

The two most important factors that support innovation for males are improved economic condition and adequate farm land size to test new innovations (Fig. 7). Government support and machine technology were also mentioned as important by males. For women, financial support and education (including consultations with elders and workshops) are the most important factors that support innovation, followed by farming experience (Fig. 7).

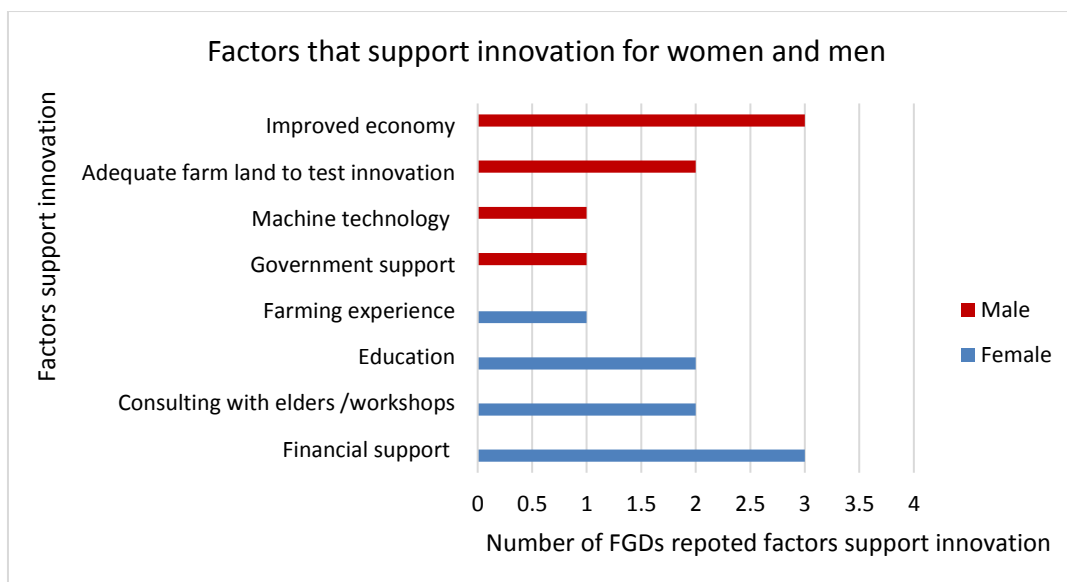


Figure 7: Factors that hinder innovation by female and male FGDs

Male and female respondents highlighted that increased levels of production and reduced post-harvest labor costs associated with post-harvest management are the two most important results achieved with adoption of new wheat varieties and the use of machinery.

As shown in Fig. 8, the three most important factors that hinder innovation for males are financial problems, lack of courage and relations with the community tied with lack of knowledge and education. Females also rated financial problems/poverty as the number one factor hindering innovation, followed by a lack of information and then distrust and insecurity.

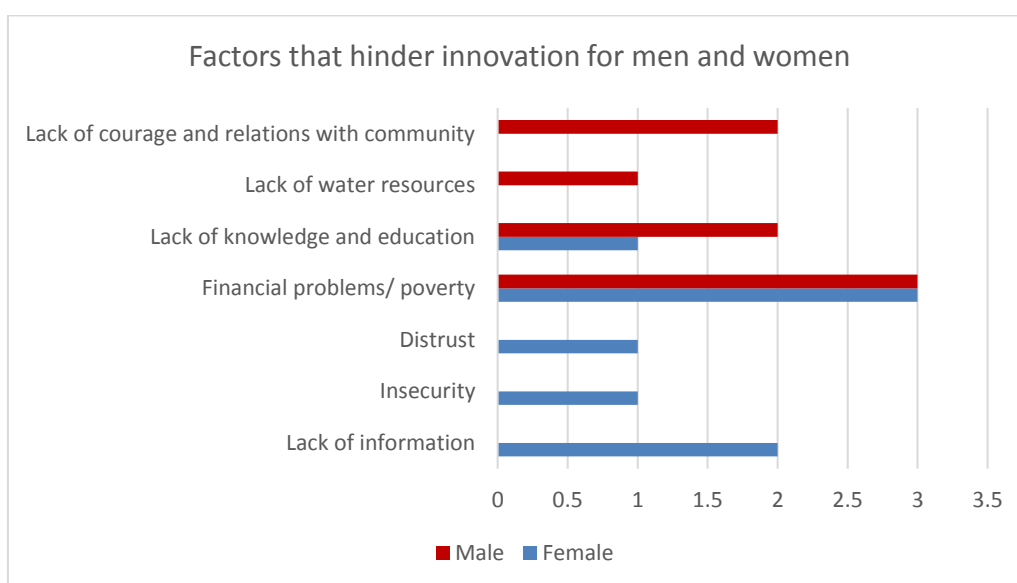


Figure 8: Factors that hinder innovation by female and male FGDs

Men's and women's ability to innovate is supported and hindered by different factors. For women insecurity, fear and distrust restrict their mobility around the community and restrict their access to information and training. Thus, gender norms and cultural practices can hinder a male and a female farmer's ability to innovate. Those limitations affect their participation in agriculture and limit their contribution to household food security and nutrition. Agricultural program design should take these dynamics into account and develop programs that have additional support to enable woman to innovate.

8. Overall conclusion

Women's normative gender roles pose major barriers to their access to information that would help them contribute to agriculture or innovation. Women respondents from all four villages reported that women do not participate in agriculture meetings, training sessions and other public events that promote new technologies which limits their capacity to be good farmers. Whenever a husband is not around or is deceased, it would be the brother or oldest son who would then be responsible for all the farm work and for the family in general. Gender identity and social norms that govern this behavior result in whole communities policing women's behavior and mobility. That inhibits women's ability to access information and play more substantive roles in agricultural improvements.

The research found tension between the normative notion of a "good wife" and a "good female farmer." Almost all characteristics of a "good wife" relate to women's household and care roles, which are mainly confined to the house. On the other hand, the qualities of a "good female farmer" demand that women play another set of roles, including being able to cultivate well, have experience in farm work, be able to take care of the farm and earn money. Some women are ready to take on work to improve their households, and some men would be supportive. However, there is a lack of opportunity in these communities to earn an income. The barriers facing rural Afghans is a combination of a lack of economic opportunity and the lack of willingness to change traditional gender norms.

There are different views between men and women on why households moved out of poverty but there is agreement on the barriers that trap households in poverty. Factors that help households move out of poverty for women include working hard, couples working collaboratively in farming and other income-generating activities and saving money for times of shortage. Men list the following factors: children who graduate from school, working for the government, working on grape vines, vegetable and raisin production, importing goods from Pakistan and receiving remittances from members who temporarily migrate to Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Europe for work. Some of the reasons that trap households in poverty include unemployment or job loss, war, laziness and not working hard, high expenses, husbands being addicted to drugs, women's lack of control over household income, spending too much, violent husbands and conflicts between co-wives. Thus, the ability to move out of poverty is frequently associated with intra-household relationships and gender norms that dictate coping strategies. In addition, men and women agreed that a lack of religious devotion could also cause poverty.

Even though religious devotion is considered a contributing factor in poverty, barriers to innovation are associated with governance, gender norms and other cultural practices. The two most important factors that support innovation for men are improvements in the economy and larger farm sizes. Many men identified the lack of provision of improved seeds as a barrier to improving wheat yields. Women ranked financial support, education, consultations with elders and workshops as the most important factors that support innovation. Financial problems and poverty hinder innovation for both women and men. Additionally, women cited the lack of agriculture information and training as a barrier to improving their economic situation which is linked to their lack of mobility.

Given that agency is defined as the ability to make choices and act upon them, the data show that men have more agency than women across all ages. Female respondents generally emphasized that a woman's freedom to make important life decisions depends on whether her husband would allow her to do so. Some participants explained that young men have more power and freedom to make decisions than their young women counterparts. Young women and girls are under the full control of their parents and brothers when they are single and then remain under the full control of their husbands and in-laws after they get married.

However, some respondents portrayed a greater sense of intra-household collaboration than others. According to male and female respondents, the major role women can play to help their households move out of poverty is supporting their husbands through providing constructive advice as well as effectively managing their household budget. Others reported that women have decision-making roles around how much of the wheat harvest to allocate to household consumption compared with how much the household should sell. Moreover, women do have negotiation skills, but the research did not uncover women's unique form of agency. This emphasizes the need to collect more data on male and female farmer realities and livelihood strategies.

There is evidence that females want more agriculture information and training, which highlights the need for female extension service providers who can target and reach females. If extension arrangements were able to accommodate female farmers (in this case FHHs and daily laborers), more females, even in restrictive contexts, would be able to learn about and use new practices in agriculture which could make their livelihoods more effective and efficient. This also paves the way for agricultural, particularly wheat, researchers to work collaboratively with local stakeholders toward increased community engagement for enhanced R4D results. This includes government agricultural offices, NGOs, private companies as well as religious institutions.

Overall, the research finds that men are generalized as "farmers." Women add value to agriculture products that men sell. Meanwhile, women's role in agriculture awaits categorization because they are not considered farmers, nor are they seen as playing a major role in a household's livelihood, even though they do. When combined with the lack of economic opportunity, the perpetuation of gender norms provides a barrier to increased agricultural productivity and growth in wheat production. Women have a different type of agency than men and lack access to opportunities that require mobility. Consequently, male and female farmers will require different forms of assistance to be productive, especially to innovate. A better understanding of these issues could help identify opportunities for

expanding the benefits of wheat-related innovations to many more women and heterogenous poor households.

8.1 Final remarks

Merits of the study: The GENNOVATE methodology is unique in the sense that uses multi-site qualitative comparative research designs. The methodology has involved several data-collection instruments, which enabled triangulation of data. The data shows that there are rules that completely restrict women from undertaking roles that could help the family and the community because that is the way it has always been done. In general, the GENNOVATE study has conceived of agricultural innovation as a social process. The study thus provided robust empirical evidence on the relationships among gender norms, capacities for agricultural innovation and other key constraining and enabling elements of local opportunity structures that affect the success of development interventions.

Limitations: The fact that the data-collection instruments were pre-tested in only one of the four villages in Afghanistan is a limitation. This might also have impacted the quality of data collected in the other three villages mainly due to lack of using practical and contextualized approaches in the data-collection process. Female-headed households were not deeply studied and discussed except for very brief information obtained through key informant interviews. It's unclear the proportion of such households in each village, their unique experiences and the challenges they face.

Research lessons: Collecting data on norms is immensely challenging. This resonates with recent literature³⁰ and suggests that further data collection that breaks norms into their components (Personal normative beliefs – what do you think; Behaviors – what do you do; Empirical expectations – what do others do; Normative expectations – what do you think others think you should do; Policing – how are norms enforced) is required to more deeply penetrate social norms. Given the literature on norms, people will be more comfortable talking about how their behavior may or may not be the same as their beliefs and discussing their neighbor's behavior in a private setting.

Given the strict gender roles around what makes a good husband and good wife, it will be difficult for a married woman to speak openly about marital problems and inequality to an enumerator. The domestic violence data illustrates this because females tended to discuss the violence of other people, with a few exceptions associated with extreme violence.

It is always hard to know whose network, and thus influences, are present in interviews. This matters because it may bias what people are willing to discuss, even with the best facilitator trying to level power inequities. This is further verified through the methodology. In some cases, KIIs (one-on-one) were very open about behavior and nuances or degrees of acceptance, compared to FGDs.

Issues for further research: Based on the overall findings in the four villages, much remains to be done to create a more gender-equitable environment for enhanced agricultural

³⁰ Bicchieri, C. (2016). Diagnosing norms. In *Norms in the wild* (1st ed.). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. pp. 6-9

development. Future R4D programs need to address very strict gender norms, perhaps through working closely with local government offices as well as other stakeholders such as religious institutions. Further research is also needed to explore concerns around such issues as why males and females rate the wealth of their respective villages so differently. Research should also look at the proxies of gender equality in each village and specific issues related to female-headed households. We assume that the range and inconsistencies in the responses are mainly attributed to the information gap among female respondents, stemming from gender roles. Further research on gender and social differentiation in wheat-based livelihoods is needed, including on labor and household economics, the experiences of male and female innovators and institutional innovations for agricultural development. A better understanding of these issues could help identify opportunities for scaling the benefits of wheat-related innovations to many more female and poor households. Case studies of villages where females are reporting enhanced rights would be particularly useful, as would understanding the gender programming in those areas.

An in-depth understanding of all the issues discussed above will positively contribute to future wheat R4D interventions in addressing gender disparities, enabling inclusive change toward equality of opportunity and outcomes for both males and females in wheat-based livelihoods.

Word of caution: agriculture R4D programs require gender experts to change gender norms for the betterment of women, households and communities. Care must be taken not to increase violence against women and not to increase gender inequality.