



Dialogue on Improving Nutrition Through Recognising, Protecting and Promoting the Rights and Wellbeing of Women Agricultural Workers in South Asian countries
Plenary Session
at 2nd Annual Agriculture, Nutrition & Health (ANH) Academy Week & 5th Annual Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition Agriculture-Nutrition Scientific Symposium
Wednesday, 12 July 2017

Concept Note from LANS

Brief description and aim

LANS is organising a plenary session at the ANH Academy Week and Feed the Future Nutrition Innovation Lab Scientific Symposium to conduct a dialogue on policies and laws for the rights and wellbeing of women agricultural workers in South Asia as an effective way of improving nutrition. The aim of the session is to use evidence generated by LANS research to highlight the critical role of women in South Asian agriculture in improving nutrition and to help foster a region-wide debate on ways in which this evidence might influence laws, policies, programmes and initiatives.

Background

Some of the key pathways linking agriculture and nutrition run through women's work in agriculture. Agriculture accounts for a high proportion of all women who are recorded as working, and there is growing acknowledgment of the feminisation of agricultural work in the region. Women's agricultural work could, in principle, have positive as well as negative implications for nutrition. On the plus side, if women working in agriculture have control over their incomes, their consumption choices for the household are likely to be more pro-nutrition than those of male earners. On the negative side, however, women's work can represent a double burden on them as they must continue to fulfil their care roles even when much of their time and physical energy is consumed by agricultural work.

LANS research on women's agricultural work and nutrition

Investigating the relationship between women's agricultural work and their own health, and the health and nutrition of their children emerged as a major theme in the research conducted by LANS. A number of studies have looked at this question in detail, and asked what could be done to leverage the positive and mitigate the negative impacts of women's agricultural work on nutrition. These studies are now beginning to yield insightful findings, some of which are being shared at the ANH conference.

LANS researchers have also been active in using their research to articulate demands for changes in policies, programmes and laws, which will lead to the acknowledgement of the significance of women's work in agriculture, and the recognition of the rights and wellbeing of women working in agriculture.

Target areas of evidence-based change

There are several areas of legislation and policy that are of interest:

- Legal recognition of women's work in agriculture and rights of women agricultural workers
- Gender sensitisation of agricultural policies and programmes, and initiatives
- Making health and nutrition policies and programmes, and initiatives responsive to needs of women workers
- Proactive role of government with respect to child care and nutrition, particularly for children of women agricultural workers
- Attitudinal changes around care, with families and communities playing a more supportive role
- Tailoring social protection programmes to respond to specific needs of women agricultural workers and their children

Proposed format

A plenary session is being organised at the ANH Academy Week and Feed the Future Nutrition Innovation Lab Scientific Symposium in Kathmandu to bring together researchers, policymakers and policy influencers to make the recognition of women agricultural workers and the impact of their work on nutrition a higher priority issue.

The session will open with a synthesis of LANSAs findings on the linkages between women's agricultural work and nutrition. Policy-makers representing LANSAs countries (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) plus Nepal will be asked to respond to the findings and share their experiences and lessons from addressing the rights and wellbeing of women agricultural workers through policies, programmes, initiatives and laws. It is expected that panel will include senior policy-makers such as legislators or senior government officials engaged with the issue. The session will be moderated by a senior policymaker engaged in agriculture for nutrition.

Introduction by moderator: 2 minutes

Synthesis of findings: 15 minutes

Responses from policymakers/key stakeholders from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan:
40 minutes (10 minutes each)

Open discussion: 30 minutes

Wrapping up by moderator: 3 minutes

Expected outcome

The session will raise the profile of a crucial but neglected issue and bring discussion on women's role in agriculture and its implications for nutrition into clearer focus. It will provide an opportunity to potential champions from the various countries to interact and generate the possibility of a campaign in the future. The report of the deliberations can be used for policy advocacy by organisations and networks working in the region, and may serve as the basis for a policy brief.