



# Intra-household dynamics and dietary diversity

Insights from Sustainable Nutrition for All in Uganda and Zambia

## TECHNICAL PAPER NO. 3 - SUMMARY

**SNV**

**WAGENINGEN**  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC



**KIT** | The Royal Tropical Institute

Although food security has been a dominant focus in rural development, the gender pathways to be improved are receiving increased attention. In parallel, there has been a growth in knowledge on the inter-linkages between agriculture, nutrition and health. However, there are still many questions concerning the complex interplay of these fields and the roles that women and men respectively play in these contexts. At an intra-household level, there are gaps in understanding how gendered relations mediate processes of production and consumption and how these dynamics affect the nutritional status of different members within the household (Malapit & Quisumbing, 2016).

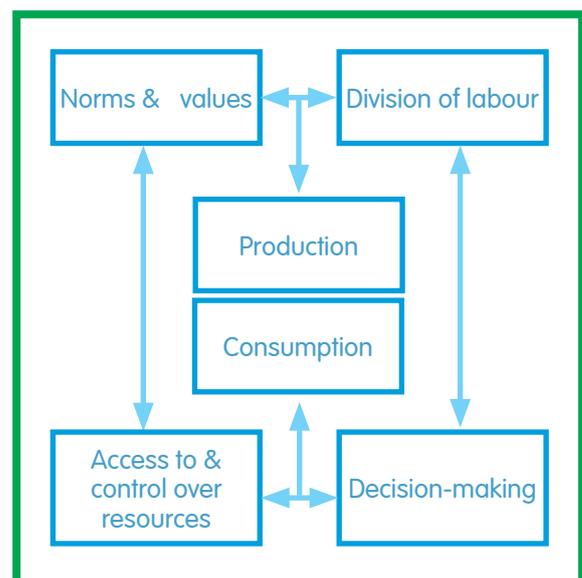
Addressing intra-household dynamics was recognised as a cross-cutting issue in Sustainable Nutrition for All (SN4A) programme affecting the links between production and consumption. The SN4A programme in Zambia and Uganda used an intra-household dynamics lens to design, implement and monitor the programme.

The third technical paper from the SN4A programme summarises key findings and lessons learnt from applying an intra-household dynamics lens to nutrition. It aims to assist policymakers, practitioners and researchers in understanding the approaches and tools used and to guide their investments in integrating an intra-household perspective to understand the links between food security and nutrition. The paper focuses on unpacking how intra-household dynamics shape the links between production and consumption, and uses lessons learnt from SN4A programme outcomes and interventions in Phase 1 of the programme.

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### Intra-household dynamics



Intra-household dynamics in the SN4A approach

## Policy Recommendations

Based on the initial findings from Phase 1, SNV and SN4A partners recommend that policymakers and governments:

- **Ensure that gender analysis informs the scope of nutrition programming within a given context.**

At the programme design stage, it is important to conduct an in-depth gender analysis in the communities, before programme implementation. Doing this in a participatory way with community members is important to: (1) assess the context and current situation of a community in relation to the links between nutrition, gender and agriculture; (2) understand community perceptions about under-nutrition and its probable reasons; and (3) collectively think through locally appropriate solutions. This analysis can then be used to inform the extent to which a programme will adopt a gender accommodative versus gender transformative approach to nutrition programming.

- **Invest in testing and piloting of what Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) messages and implementation modalities work best with different household members to motivate positive change**

Phase 1 has identified that norms around the gender division of labour and intra-household food distribution required more time and possibly different approaches. Moving forward, priority could be given to deepening the approaches with schools to engage both young girls and boys about IHHD and nutrition in their communities. Efforts to enhance joint budgeting and planning around household resources for household nutrition needs is also an important area to invest in as the programme expands in the agriculture to income pathways.

- **Invest in strategies to reach and motivate men**

Whilst it is increasingly recognised that it is important to reach both women and men in nutrition programming, engaging men in practice is a challenge. There is much to learn from other sectors such as reproductive health and family planning which could also be used in nutrition programming. Experience shows the value of engaging support from local political leaders, such as spiritual leaders and opinion leaders who could serve as male role models.

- **Invest in more research and learning in nutrition programmes to better understand the gender dynamics around the agriculture nutrition pathways**

It remains a challenge to link programme interventions to changes in IHHD and attribute these to nutrition outcomes. Further investment in distilling how IHHD operate along the different agriculture nutrition pathways would support the design of more effective and gender transformative programming. For example, follow up areas include: how the benefits (food, income) of home gardens are distributed within the household and how changes in workload affect care practices.

- **Ensure routine M&E includes a component promoting regular learning and reflection on changing intra-household dynamics:**

It is important to encourage an environment for learning about the influence of intra-household dynamics and how it changes project outcomes throughout the duration of the project, open for reflection and adaptation. This is crucial for adaptive programming to both challenge and reconsider interventions that seemed to be a good idea in the beginning, but turn out not to be as successful.

- **Support capacity building of front-line staff on addressing intra-household dynamics**

Phase 1 highlighted challenges around how difficult it is for staff to discuss intra-household issues, and the need to adopt different approaches to highlight these issues in relation to nutrition during household visits. This suggested the need for more sharing of experiences and learning amongst practitioners of which approaches and messages work best with front-line staff. This should be matched with sufficient time and resources to train and coach programme staff on intra-household dynamics and invite them to share their successes and their challenges. This is vital to ensure no harm is caused to practitioners and household members when discussing intra-household dynamics. This may require efforts to identify appropriate individuals as nutrition champions and spend time on building their capacity to be role models on addressing the links between gender and nutrition for others in the community.

photo front page: A household having lunch, Uganda © SNV/Denis Onyodi

photo back page: A training session on triggering and intra-household dynamic with Uganda Sub County and District staff. © SNV/Denis Onyodi

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