PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

Following the first workshop in Nairobi, each country team organized national stakeholder meetings to present and discuss its draft action plan to promote policies and programs that linked agriculture and nutrition, with attention to gender. The plans were modified based on the stakeholders' input, and participants were invited to join the country teams. This section provides an overview of each country's plan of action and activities.[5] Results from the teams' interventions are presented in the next section.

Ghana

Although Ghana has the highest per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of the five project countries and is meeting its food supply needs, malnutrition persists and nearly four in 10 people live below the poverty line. Eleven percent of women have low body mass, and about a quarter of children are stunted or underweight (Ghana Statistical Service and Macro International 1999; Bread for the World Institute 2002; United Nations Development Program 2003; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2004).

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* Ghana team established a National Coordinating Committee and organized its activities around the country's National Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition. The committee included team members and 18 representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Science, Education, and Environment; universities; research organizations; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); and donor agencies such as the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. This network met on a regular basis and provided technical guidance and support while learning from the project.

The Ghana team also analyzed seven projects and identified best practices for linking agriculture and nutrition, and addressing gender. It then developed a planning manual for project design and implementation. Nine districts – representing the range of agro-ecological zones from north to south – were selected as pilot sites to test the project's approach to reduce micronutrient deficiencies. Four of the districts received support from the *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* project; the others were supported by UNICEF and the World Bank. Forty communities implemented the *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* approach. Sixty nutrition and agricultural officers in the four districts were trained to use gender methodologies and the planning tools. The team gave presentations on the important contributions that nutrition makes to economic development to 18 principals and deans of agriculture in universities and colleges, and tutors in health schools. In addition, 16 persons from agricultural institutions participated in 10 days of gender training.

Kenya

Despite sufficient economic and agricultural resources, 87 percent of Kenyans consume fewer calories than the recommended adult equivalent daily allowance, and half of rural households cannot meet their minimum calorie requirement. Previous declines in infant and childhood mortality rates are reversing, and nutritional status, including stunting for children under 5 and undernutrition for women, has deteriorated (National Council for Population and Development and Macro International 1999; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2004).

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* Kenya team organized an advisory group as a means to expand the network of advocates promoting the project's linked, gender-informed approach to fighting hunger. This group included representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Development, Health, Gender, Education, Planning and National Development,

[5] For more information about country-specific interventions and communications and planning tools, contact the country teams directly. See the project Web site, www.agnutritionadvantage.org, for contact information.

and Sports, Culture and Social Services; and donor agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development. The team also forged an ongoing working relationship with chief executive officers in influential institutions such as the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute.

Based on an analysis of national development policies and two community-based projects, the Kenya team developed messages about gender-informed linkages tailored for key audiences. For example, parliamentarians were encouraged to support the cultivation of indigenous crops – typically grown and marketed by women – because this would contribute significantly to improving food security and rural livelihoods. The team developed written materials, which were used in a meeting with six parliamentarians to generate discussion on actions they could take to reduce undernutrition in a timely manner. In addition, the team capitalized on media coverage in newspapers, television, and radio to inform the general public about hunger in Kenya and build political support for interventions.

Mozambique

Mozambique is not meeting its food supply needs, as indicated by a per capita calorie supply of only 83 percent. Nearly 70 percent of people in Mozambique are living in poverty, and the country is vulnerable to recurrent natural disasters that affect agricultural production. Thirty-six percent of children are stunted; 26 percent are underweight; about 11 percent of women have low body mass; and the number of AIDS orphans is increasing at an alarming rate (Insitituto Nacional de Estatistica and Macro International 1998; Bread for the World Institute 2002; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2004).

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* Mozambique team worked primarily with the Inter-sectoral Technical Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security (SETSAN) (the national government's food and nutrition security committee), the National Agricultural Research Institution (INIA), the Ministry of Health, and NGOs. The team's nutritionist from the Ministry of Health, who was seconded to SETSAN, helped raise

How Country Teams Used Gender to Add Value

Members of the *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* leadership networks found that linking agriculture and nutrition was sometimes enough to improve the effectiveness of an intervention to reduce hunger or undernutrition. However, a gender focus often could make the link between agriculture and nutrition, and add substantial value to what agriculture-nutrition linkages could achieve. How did the teams use gender to inform or strengthen their linked approach? Their efforts took a variety of forms, including:

Gender Capacity Building

- Creating gender awareness among senior level staff in educational and training institutions through presentations and group discussions.
- Building capacity in the use of gender methodologies through trainings for and sharing evidence of a linked, gender-informed approach with agricultural researchers, extension agents, and health and nutrition specialists.

Education and Advocacy

- Identifying ways to address gender-related issues, such as men's and women's time and labor burdens, access to resources, and decision-making power, in policies and programs.
- Using media, brochures, and direct dialogues to educate the general public and key decision makers about opportunities to improve food availability by addressing gender-related constraints to production and access.
- Leveraging relationships with government ministries and other institutions to integrate gender into policies. In one case, efforts to mainstream gender provided an entrée for introducing health and nutrition into Ministry of Agriculture planning and field-based activities.

Community Interventions

- Developing planning manuals that included gender analysis and other gender-sensitive methodologies.
- Involving all community members – women, men, girls, and boys – in community-based activities.
- Facilitating women's access to (in some cases, providing women with) labor-enhancing technologies, extension services, and learning opportunities.

awareness of the links between agriculture and nutrition, and integrated nutrition into SETSAN's activities. SETSAN, with assistance from the team, selected four districts to implement linked, gender-informed interventions, using maps that overlaid agricultural commodities with nutritional deficiencies. The team made presentations to agricultural researchers, providing reasons and opportunities for integrating nutrition into their research protocols, and published a one-page informational bulletin to raise awareness among technical specialists and policymakers of the value of the project's approach.

Nigeria

Nigeria is meeting its per capita food supply needs; however, it has a high level of poverty, with 70 percent of people living below the international poverty line. Rates of malnutrition for women and children are the highest of all project countries, and women's economic activity as a percentage of men's is the lowest among the project countries (National Population Commission and Macro International 2000; Bread for the World Institute 2002; United Nations Development Program 2003; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2004).

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* Nigeria team members worked closely with the Nutrition Partners' Forum, a national body of diverse stakeholders interested in nutrition. They focused on supporting the launch of the National Food and Nutrition Policy by providing input to the National Plan of Action for Nutrition and advocating for the secondment of a nutritionist to strengthen the National Committee of Food and Nutrition. They gave presentations to raise awareness among national and state policymakers of the contributions nutrition makes to economic and human development, and what is needed to reduce hunger and undernutrition in Nigeria. The team assessed the status of the Technical Committees of Food and Nutrition in 12 states and made recommendations for its revitalization. The team also produced a brochure about the need for using a linked approach, analyzed sector policies, and developed two manuals to train sector specialists in how to develop and implement gender-informed agriculture and nutrition interventions.

Uganda

Of the five project countries, Uganda has the second highest per capita GDP. Yet more than a third of the Ugandan population remains below the international poverty line. Although Uganda is meeting its food supply needs (101 percent per capita calorie supply), 10 percent of women have a low body mass, about 40 percent of children experience stunting, and 23 percent are underweight. Rates of child malnutrition are higher in rural areas and slightly higher among boys than girls (Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ORC Macro 2001; Bread for the World Institute 2002; United Nations Development Program 2003; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2004).

The *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* Uganda team chose to strategically link their activities to the country's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and the Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) – key poverty reduction and agricultural development policies. It organized an advisory committee as an expanded group of advocates, which included members from government, research, and program institutions. The team worked with the PMA Secretariat on policies, participated on the PMA Food Security Subcommittee (later renamed the Food and Nutrition Subcommittee), organized stakeholder meetings, and provided input to the revision of the PEAP and the Food and Nutrition Security Strategy and Investment Plan.

To promote greater investment in gender informed, nutrition-agriculture interventions, the Uganda team published a brochure, provided information to the media, and made a variety of presentations to key policymakers (such as selected PMA subcommittees) on the importance of a linked, gender-informed approach and how to use it. The team implemented community-based activities in Kabale and Wakiso districts, including the following: visioning exercises – a problem-solving strategy – and nutrition education with farmers' groups; trainings for farmers in nutrition-linked, production-oriented technologies and practices; and exchanges between the two districts for women farmers to share different techniques for implementing nutrition-oriented, food-based agricultural activities. The team also encouraged the government to support community-based projects for improving nutritional outcomes by educating local government leaders about the important role nutrition plays in health and agricultural development.

United States

The U.S. team of ICRW and IFPRI worked closely with the five African country teams and other partners to build leadership for the *Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage* approach. The team also worked to influence the U.S. political and policymaking environment, as well as international bodies that deal with hunger and poverty reduction, such as the U.N. Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN).

Like the five African teams, the U.S. team organized a Technical Advisory Committee to advise the project team and provide entrée to groups that could use the project's approach and findings to influence key actors. The 12 members represented NGOs, development agencies, the U.S. government, institutions of higher learning, and research institutions.

The U.S. team compiled evidence showing the value of a linked, gender-informed approach and implemented an institutional study in partnership with project teams in Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda[6] (see box). ICRW and IFPRI team members presented existing and emerging evidence to key audiences; developed communication tools, including a brochure and a project Web site (www.agnutritionadvantage.org); and wrote articles for development journals to educate and raise awareness of the project and its approach and findings. The U.S. team also organized the annual project workshops, provided ongoing technical support, and identified opportunities and supported participation of the teams in key international forums.

[6] Because the four countries represented the range of issues and geographic locations, valid generalizations and conclusions can be drawn from the study, even though the study was not implemented in Kenya.

Institutional Barriers to a Linked, Gender-informed Approach: Findings from a Four-country Study

The institutional study included a review of literature and key informant interviews to identify barriers to, opportunities for, and potential gains from increased collaboration among agriculture, nutrition, and gender specialists in Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda. Many of the study's findings mirrored what was learned from the Q-survey, but provided greater specificity. For example, the study found that, while leaders in each country valued the use of gender methods and a linked approach to reduce hunger and poverty, the leaders' influence primarily rests on personal relationships and informal communications – a foundation subject to change. Other findings include:

- ***Nutrition is invisible in political decision making:*** The study found that political interests trump technical input, minimizing investments in nutrition-relevant actions. Capital projects, such as schools or health centers, are more likely to get the support of politicians because they are tangible successes that politicians can show their constituents. Nutrition is not so tangible and has less political relevance. Moreover, a persistent belief that production and income gains are sufficient to reduce hunger and undernutrition undermines political will to address other factors that contribute to improved nutrition. This misconception is exacerbated by the fact that nutritionists (or others with nutrition knowledge) are seldom at the policymaking table.
- ***Nutrition is everyone's problem but no one's responsibility:*** No single sector or agency takes full responsibility for improving nutrition. While all sectors may state their commitment to reducing malnutrition, few use their resources to that specific end. Nutrition also sits in a range of places within the public sector, resulting in scattered influence and no common voice. Further, the vertical organization of government institutions and budgetary allocations makes it difficult for sector specialists to come together and pool their resources to promote sustainable improvements in nutrition.
- ***Nutrition capacity and influence varies:*** Despite the tradition in many countries of relying on technical input for policymaking, this practice has not extended to nutrition specialists. Even where a relatively large number of nutrition specialists exist, as in Nigeria, their role in influencing policymaking has been marginal. Where nutritionists are scarce, such as in Mozambique, they are even more limited in what they can do and the influence they have.
- ***Participatory processes create opportunities:*** Participatory processes that bring community members together with policymakers are key to relevant decision making. Involving community members provides an opportunity for them to express their concerns – some of which might not be obvious to policymakers. Uganda has significant experience with decentralization and devolution of decision making, but with varied degrees of success. Nigeria lacks a formal structure to bring communities into the policymaking process; Ghana and Mozambique fall between the two extremes.
- ***Creation of new organizational structures may provide entry:*** Governments and other organizations may bring nutritionists to the policy table by creating multi-sectoral structures. SETSAN in Mozambique reflects the government's multi-sectoral approach to improving food security, bringing together agriculture, nutrition, and gender specialists to design and implement a linked approach. Similarly, the Food and Nutrition Committees in Nigeria are designed to bring different sectors together to discuss how each contributes to achieving the government's nutritional objectives.
- ***Everyone "knows" gender, but they don't know what to do with it:*** Respondents in all four countries know the word "gender" but have varied opinions as to what it means and limited experience using gender methodologies. As long as gender remains a somewhat politicized term that is removed from daily work, development planners and practitioners will not be able to fully use gender methodologies to strengthen the links between agriculture and nutrition.

Sources: Benson, Palmer et al., 2004; Benson and Satcher, 2004