

Cheryl Morden
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Panel Discussion Response

1. How much progress has been made on integrating gender perspectives into agricultural development policies, programs, and practices? What are some of the major challenges for achieving greater progress?

Women are central to overcoming rural poverty because of their roles in productive activities and in the household economy.

In low income countries, in which agriculture accounts for some 30 percent of GDP, and 70 percent of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, women make up a substantial majority of the agricultural workforce and produce most of the food that is consumed locally. Despite this, rural women are generally poorer than men and have less chance of escaping poverty. On the other hand, when women are empowered and gender inequalities are addressed development interventions are more effective. IFAD has often found that women can be agents of change and play critical roles in overcoming rural poverty.

The different roles, rights, and responsibilities of women and men in agriculture and rural development are significant in determining the allocation of time, labor, and resources. Yet, this factor has often been ignored or overlooked. According to a study cited in the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, gender issues are explicitly incorporated into less than 10 percent of official development assistance that is directed toward agriculture.

At present, the most significant progress is on the level of increased awareness of the critical importance of gender in agriculture. Progress in translating this awareness into results on the ground has been much slower.

This is more worrisome because the situation on the ground in rural areas is in the midst of rapid change: for example, global markets are penetrating rural countrysides, new technologies are transforming social and economic relationships, and – without rapid and far-reaching action -- climate change is expected to dramatically undermine agricultural production in some regions. These changes

can spell opportunities, but may also threaten once again to bypass or even worsen the situation of women without specific attention to the ways these changes affect women.

In addition, new aid modalities are being spawned by the global focus on improving development results. Additional efforts are needed to ensure that these modalities also take gender into account – that they pay attention to the extent to which benefits accrues equitably to women and men.

All of this means that the renewed global attention to agriculture requires a redoubling of attention to gender issues in this highly segmented sector.

Achieving results on the ground requires operational integration of gender analysis in program assessments and the incorporation of gender perspectives in program, project, and policy design. It also means training and capacity building and the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators in monitoring and evaluation to avoid “gender evaporation” – the process in which strong gender analysis in assessments gradually disappears as the project moves toward implementation and the potential gender impact is lost or diminished.

Our efforts in this area are bolstered by the availability of a tremendous new resource: ***The Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook***. The Sourcebook was a collaborative effort of the World Bank, IFAD, and the Food and Agriculture Organization. It is a compilation of experiences in which agricultural projects have incorporated gender-related components or adapted operations to allow for gender variables. It captures innovations and key lessons, along with cautionary experiences. As such, it provides practical, operational guidance on how to incorporate gender variables into planning and decision making.

Among the key challenges in addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment looking ahead are the need to:

- Enable women to realize their agricultural productivity potential as part of overall efforts to expand food production;
- Strengthen women’s capacity to manage natural resources and natural disasters;
- Strengthen women’s access to markets, and financial services, and promote their equitable participation in value chains; and

- Promote women’s leadership and foster processes that strengthen women’s voice and the accountability of public officials to address women’s interest and rights.

2. What is the distinctive role of international organizations in a coordinated response to growing global food insecurity? How should U.S. programs and policies dovetail with those of international organizations?

Renewed attention to agriculture and the global response to growing food insecurity is being played out against the backdrop of concerted efforts to improve development effectiveness.

We might ask, therefore, not just about the role of international organizations, but -- more broadly -- about the role of multilateralism in a coordinated response to growing global food insecurity.

Multilateralism has a key role to play in two dimensions: its contribution to on-the-ground operations and its role in the establishment of global consensus, norms, and standards.

With respect to **on-the-ground operations**, international organizations bring:

Momentum – which results from the organizations’ continuous engagement over the period of time when the priorities of most bilateral agencies were not focus on agriculture and rural development. (IFAD has operations in 115 countries and territories, for example.) This momentum is based on established relationships of confidence, on the knowledge and insights gained from recent and ongoing program experience, and, in particular, awareness and understanding of the nature and impact of current changes affecting rural societies.

Resources – both human and financial. Specialized international organizations can count on a full complement of experienced staff, whereas most of the bilateral agencies currently lack sufficient qualified human resources for priority attention to agriculture. FAO, for example, is a reservoir of tremendous breadth and depth of expertise. International organizations have been able to mobilize financial resources to

respond to growing global food insecurity. IFAD member countries have approved a target program of \$3 billion in loans and grants for 2010 – 12 and the World Bank reports that it has already disbursed \$700 million of the \$1.2 billion it designated for its rapid response to food crisis. The Bank also plans to double its agricultural investment in Africa.

Multilateral processes are also instrumental for facilitating agreement on policies, norms, and standards that affect global food security. They often play an agenda-setting function, which has contributed to the neglect of agricultural development over the past number of years, but now may help to firmly reestablish this as a global priority. Multilateral processes are also critical for resource mobilization, building consensus about the scale of resources needed and the appropriate burden sharing among key stakeholders.

I'd like to highlight three processes that are especially noteworthy at present. The first is **the Secretary General's High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis**. The Task Force has produced a Comprehensive Framework for Action, which will provide a key reference for coordinated action at the country level and may help to mobilize the additional funds needed to respond more fully to growing food insecurity.

The second multilateral process to note is the **proposed establishment of a global partnership on agriculture and food security**. Consultations are underway regarding the most appropriate institutional venue, configuration, purpose and scope for such a partnership. This is an area where the new U.S. administration may have an opportunity to use its good offices to help forge agreement among the diverse set of stakeholders whose involvement is essential, but who may have difficulty coming together as needed to work in concert for greater food security.

The third process that merits further support is the **Global Donor Platform for Rural Development**. The Platform provides a meeting space for some 31 bilateral and multilateral development organizations plus 8 research and regional networks partners to improve the effectiveness of investment in rural development and agriculture. The U.S. is a member of the Global Donor Platform and their continued or expanded involvement would be warmly welcomed by other members.