



India

Background

Everything we do in life, whether we are aware of it or not, is gendered. The classical distinction between sex and gender is that while sex refers to male/female bodies, gender refers to learned characteristics inculcated in members of communities according to their particular culture and at a particular time. Together with ethnicity, race, class, age, educational level, and other cultural and social attributes, gender shapes the human experience. This is important to consider in poverty reduction efforts in developing countries as access to resources such as land, labor, education, and credit are governed by gender considerations and because women's priorities and responsibilities often differ from those of men.

In many countries, the "farmer" is thought of as male even though in practice, a majority of women work the land. Moreover, the large share of food production credited to women makes them principal agents in food security and the well-being of rural households. Without ensuring that women participate in research and capacity building efforts, and have access to information, research for development can reinforce the marginalization of women. For example, a focus on men's crops in agricultural programs may inadvertently create livelihood hardships for women by forcing them out of productive spaces or market niches. Gendered research must make a concerted effort to include women in all steps of the project cycle and take women's concerns and knowledge into account if it is to help increase agricultural productivity and the sustainable management of natural resources, governance systems, cultures, and stakeholder groups.

Virginia Tech's Approach

For over 30 years, Virginia Tech has had a state-funded position to support gender equity in its international development research programs. This reflects Virginia Tech's commitment to taking gender and women's issues seriously in research aimed at reducing poverty in the developing world. All major donors now require projects to include gender as an integral part of the project. USAID, which funds most of Virginia Tech's poverty reduction research, targets half of project beneficiaries to be women. OIRED ensures that gender is a component in all of its externally-funded projects and also hosts a campus-based discussion series aimed at educating the Virginia Tech community on gender and development issues.



What is Virginia Tech Doing?

Virginia Tech seeks to incorporate gender in all stages of the program cycle:

Uganda

- Development of objectives
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Project implementation
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
- Project activities.

Gender equity is addressed through long and short-term training as well, targeting equal numbers of women and men for funding and supporting students specifically studying gender.

As a learning community and academic resource, we seek to build capacity to address gender disparities in the areas of agriculture, natural resource management, education, food security, health and nutrition, and water.



Bolivia

The WGD program works collaboratively with VT faculty and students, partner organizations around the world, and other stakeholders, conducting interdisciplinary research on gender issues to increase opportunities for women while achieving the technical goals of our projects.

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