

Women and Gender in International Development

A program at the Center for International Research, Education, and Development





"We are poor, nobody comes to visit us but now due to our work with the IPM Innovation Lab some people come to visit our house to see the Tricho-compost and I feel good."

- Woman farmer working with the IPM Innovation Lab



"They [men] have just one task: farming. For me, I could not do that one task only. Because we could not survive. Only to sit and wait for the husbands and for the weeds to grow..."

- Woman Farmer, the Philippines

ENGAGING THE GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

The gendered dimensions of our lives are sometimes clear and easily discovered. Obstacles and gaps can be revealed and even vanquished. In other spaces they are inconspicuous, difficult to see and even more difficult to change. Worldwide, gender inequality is persistent, and like roots that grow deeply, the obstacles are hard to remove. While gender inequalities persist and continue to undermine the benefits from investments to improve the lives of women, men, girls, and boys, inequitable gender norms, relations, attitudes, and beliefs are socially defined and thus can be challenged, renegotiated, and changed.

Virginia Tech's Women and Gender in International Development (WGD) program works collaboratively with universities, non-governmental, and governmental organizations around the work towards gender equality by ensuring gender roles, relations, and norms are factored into the design, implementation, and evaluation of every CIRED (Center for International Research, Education, and Development) project. A development project is truly successful when it is inclusive, equitable, and based on the priorities of local groups.

APPLYING A GENDER LENS TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY, HEALTH, NUTRITION, LIVELIHOODS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The WGD program promotes a gender-responsive research approach in every CIRED project, ensuring that research and outreach activities are adapted to the needs and priorities of women and men and that supported activities reduce gender-based inequalities and facilitate the development of more inclusive and vibrant households and communities. Broadly, the WGD program's approach to gender-responsive research for development centers around two questions:

- How do gender relations, norms, and attitudes affect the impact and outcomes of development projects and policies?
- How do development projects and policies affect gender relations, norms, and attitudes at the household and community levels?

With these two broad questions as a framework, the WGD has developed an approach to gender-responsive research that centers around four priorities.

1. Account for the responsibilities, priorities, needs, and concerns of women and men so that they are at the forefront in designing development solutions.
2. Facilitate the inclusion of women and men in projects whether as students, entrepreneurs, scientists, teachers, extension professionals, or community partners.
3. Promote inclusive development solutions, documenting how women, men, and households benefit (or do not benefit) from promoted technologies, management practices, or interventions.
4. Produce and share knowledge on the gendered dimensions of development.

APPROACHES, METHODS, AND TOOLS

The WGD program uses established and innovative gender integration approaches, methods, and tools during initial gender assessments, long-term gender research, and gender-focused evaluations to generate rigorous quantitative and qualitative evidence on gender-based constraints and opportunities.



ASSESSMENTS

- Technology Assessments
- Value Chain Analysis
- Barrier Analysis
- Gender Audits
- Risk Analysis



EVALUATION

- Feminist Evaluation
- Most Significant Change
- Outcome Harvesting
- Participatory Photography
- Economic Impact Assessment



RESEARCH

- Participatory Action Research
- Mixed-Methods Approach
- Household Surveys
- Participatory Mapping
- Focus Group Discussions



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHTS

Promoting Inclusive Pest Management Solutions

The development of pest management technologies and practices is shaped by gender norms, relations, and attitudes. Men's and women's roles in rural livelihood activities, access to resources, and decision-making power can constrain or facilitate the application of IPM practices. Since 1993, the WGD program has supported the USAID-funded Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab (IPM IL) to engage the gendered dimensions of pest management to ensure that practices and technologies provide long-term social, economic, and environmental benefits to the communities. In Nepal, the WGD team documented how increased opportunities to participate in community IPM activities can help women take on new agricultural and leadership roles. In Ghana, research

conducted by the team determined that women face more constraints than men in tomato production and may be less likely to adopt labor-intensive IPM practices.

In Bangladesh and Indonesia the team's research outlined how cultural limitations on women's mobility affect their participation in IPM research and outreach activities. In Ethiopia, the WGD program has documented that women are more impacted by the direct and indirect effects of the invasive weed *Parthenium hysterophorus*. Research indicates gender norms and attitudes are influential in framing who within the household is involved in decisions linked to cash-crop fruit production and applying innovative pest management technologies and management practices.

Gendered Perspectives for Conservation Agriculture

In coordination with the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Innovation Lab (SANREM IL), the WGD program applied a common methodology to identify gender-related factors that contribute to the successful dissemination of conservation agriculture production systems. In the Philippines, men and women have different access to assets, gender roles, and soil perceptions that could have implications for whether farmers adopt conservation agriculture. In Cambodia, farmers perceived the practices and technologies of conservation agriculture as labor-saving, with the potential to reduce men's and women's labor burden in land-preparation activities. However, when considered in relation to the full array of productive and reproductive livelihood activities, conservation agriculture differently affects women's labor burden.



Improving the Health and Livelihood of the people of East Africa: Addressing Aflatoxin and Gender-related Constraints in Peanut Production, Processing, and Marketing

As part of the USAID-funded Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Peanut Productivity and Mycotoxin Control, the WGD program led a multi-disciplinary research program in East Africa aiming to improve the health and livelihood of smallholder farmers by addressing aflatoxin and gender-related constraints in peanut production, processing, and marketing. By working through local women's associations in Uganda and including women's recipes and illustrations of the use of peanuts in their everyday lives, the research team was able to engage women as co-researchers and enable the distribution of information to people and places not normally reached by regular (male-dominated) extension services.

Gender Issues in Agricultural Higher Education Programs

Supported by the USAID-funded InnovATE and Rebuilding Higher Education in Agriculture (RHEA) projects, the WGD team investigated the socio-cultural norms and attitudes that undermine women's pursuit of agricultural higher education opportunities in Mozambique and South Sudan.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF SCIENTISTS, STUDENTS, AND ORGANIZATIONS TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Since its inception, Virginia Tech's Women and Gender in International Development program has worked collaboratively with research scientists and implementing partners to ensure that programs are gender responsive and aligned with broader ongoing initiatives and efforts that promote inclusive development.

We are committed to enhancing the capacity of our research partners and stakeholders to develop and implement gender responsive research for development activities. We have developed numerous toolkits, methodologies, and training guides to support our partners with developing and executing gender integration plans that are appropriate to the organization and research context. At the institutions we work with, we promote gender equity in leadership and management positions. In the communities we work with, we support women's groups to provide a safe spaces for open dialogue on priority issues. We strengthen institutions so that they can support women, increase their autonomy, expand their access to resources, and enhance their own capacity.

Helping Scientists, Researchers, and Extension Professionals to Incorporate Gender Into Integrated Pest Management Research

Through the IPM IL, the WGD program has conducted multiple workshops focused on gender integration and participatory methodologies with research partners in Mali, Uganda, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam. These workshops raise awareness of gender issues among researchers and other stakeholders, providing tools for increasing women's participation, and helping researchers understand the links between gender and pest management in their own research and outreach activities.

Kamuli Stories – A Unique Partnership Among Universities, Women's organizations, and Farmers

In Kamuli District, Uganda, peanuts are very important to local culture and tradition and an important source of protein, especially for those who cannot afford animal protein. However, they carry a hidden health risk: aflatoxins, which cause



IPM Innovation Lab researcher discusses the ways gender issues affect the application of IPM in Ecuador.

cancer and other diseases. Working with women's associations and local women leaders, women farmers participated in a project that raised their awareness and helped change their post-harvest practices to improve family health and nutrition. By using drawings as well as written entries in journals—and by asking the women to write their recipes and illustrate how peanuts are used in their lives—women were able to contribute as co-researchers and author a booklet with university scientists. They enthusiastically shared lessons learned with people and places not reached by male-dominated extension services. The booklet was being widely distributed to women's organizations in other districts in Uganda and to women's groups in the neighboring countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda.



Women farmers in Kamuli District, Uganda present the "Path of the Peanut" in the community.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

A core dimension of this collaboration has been fostering the capabilities of the next generation of scientists, researchers, and professionals.



Laura Zselezcky

Graduate Research Assistant, Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab

While pursuing a Master's degree in Public Policy and International Affairs at Virginia Tech, Laura Zselezcky was funded by the IPM IL's Gender, Equity, and Knowledge project. Laura's research in Ghana documented gender-based constraints and opportunities linked to the development and dissemination of IPM practices for tomato production. Since graduating, Laura has been working with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

"My experience with the WGD program exposed me to so many fascinating aspects of gender and international development. I gained a deeper understanding of, and interest in, how gender relations affect and are affected by development programs through my work with many of the WGD projects. These opportunities helped me realize that I want to continue working with issues of gender and development throughout my career, and I think I've developed many of the skills to do so by working with the WGD program."

Sel Rechaney

Undergraduate Research Assistant, Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Innovation Lab

In 2013, while an undergraduate student at the University of Battambang, Sel Rechaney worked alongside the WGD team to investigate gender-based constraints to the dissemination of conservation agriculture in northwestern Cambodia. After working with the WGD program, Rechaney worked with development organizations promoting gender-sensitive sustainable intensification technologies and practices in rice and horticulture value chains in Cambodia. She also obtained a Master's degree in Community Development from the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

"Because of my experience working with the WGD program and Dr. Christie, I have been able to pursue professional and personnel development opportunities that would not otherwise have been possible."





A RESOURCE FOR THE VIRGINIA TECH COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

As a learning community and academic resource, the WGD program is actively involved in building the capacity of Virginia Tech students and faculty members to address gender disparities in agriculture, natural resource management, higher education, and other disciplines.

WGD Discussion Series

For over a decade, the WGD program has organized a monthly discussion series where students, faculty, and staff from Virginia Tech can come together and learn from scholars and development practitioners. In the past, the discussion series has included renowned experts such as Waniru Kamau-Rutenberg, director of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), Basundhara

Bhattarai, senior gender and development specialist at the Institute for Studies and Development Worldwide, Batamaka Somé, West Africa Regional Representative for the McKnight Foundations' Collaborative Crop Research Program, and Deborah Rubin, Co-Director of Cultural Practice, LLC. The Discussion Series has also facilitated opportunities for Virginia Tech students and faculty members to present their research on gender and international development.

Hosting Opportunities for Virginia Tech Students

The WGD program offers opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students from Virginia Tech to support the WGD program's mission through internships and graduate assistantships. Since the establishment of the program, 10 graduate students have been supported by WGD graduate assistantships.

Women and Gender in Development Conference: Out of the Theory and Into the Field

In 2019, Virginia Tech hosted the Women and Gender in Development (WGD) Conference: Out of the Theory and Into the Field, with an emphasis on discussing issues linked to nutrition, gender, agricultural extension, and value chain development. The event was the first of its kind and focused on developing a new generation of leaders with gender and development expertise. Grounded in academic scholarship and development practice, the conference provided learning, and capacity-building opportunities for students from Virginia Tech and other universities, as well as early career faculty, and encouraged the inclusion of gender in research and international development applications. The conference provided opportunities for participants to engage with invited speakers and colleagues through multiple interactive knowledge-sharing and networking events.

"Grad school has a lot of highs and lows, but seeing the amazing presentations by some of the top gender and development scholars and engaging with them at the WGD conference was most certainly a high. I feel reinvigorated after getting out of the office and #intothefield"

Emily Southard
Graduate Student, Penn State University

"The conference was AMAZING! This was a transformational experience for me. I was able to meet incredible people doing research I would not have heard about at other conferences. I am telling everyone in my department about the conference and hope to see this conference happen again!"

Anonymous
Graduate student from Texas A&M University, attending WGD conference



Exploring the Relationship between Gender and International Development in the Classroom

The WGD program contributes to the learning mission of the university through several invited guest lecture opportunities and by the Gender, Environment, and International Development course offered through the Urban Affairs and Planning Program, the Women and Gender Studies program, and the Department of Geography. The course provides an opportunity for students to increase their awareness of the ways gender and other social factors can facilitate or constrain development.

HISTORY OF WGD PROGRAM

For over 30 years, Virginia Tech's WGD program has supported the university's international development programs by conducting interdisciplinary research on gender issues, and ensuring that gender equity, inclusive development, and women's empowerment are at the fore-front of CIRED's research and outreach activities aimed at reducing poverty in developing contexts. In 1980, the Women in World Development Committee was formed by a group of women faculty members. Although teaching and research activities on women in international development had many leaders across campus, Mary Hill Rojas soon became the pivotal coordinator. When funding was secured in 1982 to establish a full-time position for the Women in Development (WID) Program, she became its first director. In 2006, Maria Elisa Christie became the director of the WGD program. Since then, the WGD program has implemented research activities and gender assessments for donor-funded development projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, West Africa, East Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia.



Mary Hill Rojas



Maria Elisa Christie

WGD AT A GLANCE



30 institutions

Number of collaborative partnerships with different institutions



20 countries

Number of countries where WGD has conducted research



\$1.9 million

Value of grants since 2007



397 people

Number of people trained on ways to incorporate gender into development projects globally



64 speakers

Number of WGD Discussion Series speakers since 2007



10 students

Number of students supported by WGD graduate assistantships since 2008



22%

Average increase in attendance at WGD Discussion Series over the past 10 years



14 graduate students

Number of graduate students that received support to conduct gender-focused research since 2009



101 presentations

Number of research presentations/publications since 2005



OUTREACH & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH.

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH,
EDUCATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

526 PRICES FORK RD
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 24061
540-231-6338

 @WGD