



RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
Agriculture for  
Nutrition  
and Health

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## **A4NH Consultation on Equity Research Priorities**

CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)

June 27 & 28, 2019

The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, Hyderabad, India

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

A4NH	CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
ANH	Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIP	International Potato Center
GEE	Gender, Equity, and Empowerment
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGDR	Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
MSSRF	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSA	Nutrition-sensitive agriculture
PRADAN	Professional Assistance for Development Action
WUR	Wageningen University and Research

## Objectives

1. Learn about equity work at partner organizations in South Asia and globally.
2. Inform partner organizations in South Asia and globally about A4NH's equity work.
3. Identify priorities for equity research, resource and information needs related to equity, and recommendations for A4NH's equity strategy.

## Proceedings

The CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) held two 45-minute consultation sessions to learn about equity work at partner organizations in South Asia, inform partners about A4NH's equity work, and identify priorities for equity research to guide creation of an equity strategy for the research program. These sessions were side events to the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health (ANH) Academy Week conference at the Westin Hyderabad Mindspace in Hyderabad, India, on June 27 and 28, 2019. A4NH invited conference participants who were working on and/or interested in equity research to attend the consultations.

Before the consultations, attendees and A4NH representatives were sent three questions to guide the discussion:

1. In the near term, what equity areas and research questions are your organization or research group addressing?
2. How does your organization or research group integrate equity into its work?
3. What resources, knowledge, and tools does your organization or research group need to effectively address these priorities?

**John McDermott**, director of A4NH, opened each session with a short introduction to A4NH. **Agnes Quisumbing**, senior gender advisor to A4NH, then introduced A4NH's Gender, Equity, and Empowerment (GEE) unit. After these introductions, **Carly Nichols**, assistant professor at the University of Iowa, and **Jody Harris**, research fellow at the Institute for Development Studies, presented their current equity-focused research, which set the stage for open discussions about equity research, focusing on the guide questions.

## Spotlight on current equity research

On Thursday, June 27, Carly Nichols presented her research on "Equity concerns in nutrition-sensitive agriculture promotion: A case study from Central India." Nichols assessed a nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) project in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, India, run by Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN). In this project, PRADAN was focusing on getting people to grow home gardens, millets, and pulses in areas where they had previous trained farmers on techniques for transplanting rice paddy. Through 13 months of qualitative research and observations in the target villages, Nichols assessed how the project was being received in the villages and how people were interacting with the project.

People were enthusiastic to learn about homestead vegetable production. However, when the rains started, women focused on the time-consuming and time-sensitive tasks of transplanting rice paddies. One reason that the project was not very successful in getting people to grow kitchen gardens was that it lacked an equity focus and thus did not benefit marginalized people in the community. For example,

the “progressive” farmers who were transplanting rice paddies were often not interested in or did not have time for homestead gardens and millet production, which need attention at the same time of year. Lower-resourced or less entrepreneurial farmers who were not transplanting paddy may have been more interested in the project but were difficult to engage. For example, some people who were not fluent in Hindi also did not want to participate in the program because it was difficult for them to understand and engage. PRADAN’s staff were aware that that marginalized people were not benefitting from the project but did not have the resources or time to engage them. Equity-focused approaches and priorities must be built in from the beginning of a project to successfully engage marginalized groups.

On Friday, June 28, Jody Harris presented her team’s scoping review of equity in agriculture, nutrition, and health (ANH) research. The review looked at how ANH research addresses equity in low- and middle-income countries; how the focus on equity has changed over time; and how different disciplines research and understand equity. By searching terms related to core ANH research areas, the team screened 19,133 articles based on their titles and abstracts, identified 359 potentially relevant articles, and mapped 300 articles by equity, discipline, and year. Preliminary results indicate that research on equity in ANH focuses on a wide variety of topics and has increased over time. The full review, which will identify priority research areas to understand equity issues in ANH, will be available later in 2019. Harris’ team will also share their mapping and gap analyses in hopes that their work can spur future analyses of equity in ANH research.

## Equity work in A4NH and partner organizations

Participants shared examples of equity-related research projects that A4NH and its partner organizations are implementing. For example, the M S Swaminathan Research foundation is working with women and marginalized communities in selected areas in six states in India. They assess the problems people face in accessing government programs and how much they know about existing technologies, and work to facilitate access to government schemes and entitlements. A team from the University of Texas and the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) are developing the Women’s Empowerment in Nutrition Index (WENI) to measure nutritional empowerment, or the process by which individuals gain the capacity to be well fed and healthy. In this work, they compare women and men, and also look at position within the household, comparing mothers-in-law to daughters-in-law. The gender team at ACDI-VOCA is interested in technology adoption, access to resources, and time use. Their nutrition team also looks at intrahousehold food allocation. A team of economists at Wageningen University and Research is working to understand equity and social justice in relation to food systems, sustainable diets, and the environment.

## Priorities for equity research

As they discussed their research and experiences, participants identified priority areas for equity research, as well as relevant resource and information needs. These insights can be used to guide the creation of A4NH’s equity strategy.

In South Asia, language, caste/tribe, and positional status in the household are important aspects of equity.

- *Language:* For example, in some parts of India, people who speak Hindi fluently have better access to support from government and NGO programs.

- *Caste and tribe*: These categories are very diverse. For example, there are many layers within scheduled tribes, and some people are more marginalized than others in their access to land, technology, and other resources.
- *Positional status in the household*: For example, access to resources and agency can vary between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, and these relationships change over time as household structures shift.

Other aspects of equity, such as age and disability, are relevant in many different contexts.

- *Age*: Age can influence people’s diets and nutrition, but most nutrition studies focus on measuring only specific groups, such as mothers and young children.
- *Disability*: There is little existing research in this area.

## Resources and tools needed to address these equity issues

New resources and tools will be needed to understand and address these areas of equity. Participants highlighted the need for field-ready tools, tangible metrics, and additional funding to support high-quality equity-focused research and programs.

- *Field-ready tools*: Implementing organizations need analysis tools that have already been developed, validated, and adapted for use in the field.
- *Metrics*: Both research and implementing organizations need tangible metrics of equity and social justice in food systems so that they can track programs and policies over time.
- *Funding*: Additional funding is needed to address equity issues through existing or upcoming programs. For example, if a project wants to consider age and position in the household in relation to nutrition, they will need additional funding to measure the diets and nutritional status of multiple people in each household.

## Approaches for understanding and addressing inequities

The discussions brought out a variety of approaches for understanding and addressing inequities in agriculture, nutrition, and health research.

- *Incorporate equity into both program implementation and research from the start*. Equity considerations should be incorporated into program design and planning. If programs are not planned with an equity lens from the beginning, it is difficult to incorporate equity considerations during implementation. This includes building in funding to address equity. For example, a project could train field staff to engage people outside of their existing social networks. As a project progresses, continue to adapt implementation so that marginalized people can participate. For instance, allow resource-poor people to bring children to training sessions if needed.
- *Use a distributive equity approach to target marginalized people and groups*. This approach would require a cultural shift in how projects are implemented. It would also require careful community engagement, as progressive or “lead” farmers are accustomed to receiving NGO resources.
- *Recognize local hierarchies and power dynamics*. Research and implementing organizations must invest time and money at the beginning of a project to recognize and understand the

power dynamics in the community where they are working. One approach is to do a census to find marginalized people in a community. Then, build trust and confidence in the community to be able to reach marginalized groups without alienating higher resourced people.

- *Foster cooperation between research and implementing organizations.* Implementing organizations generate a lot of data, but often do not have the capacity or funding to analyze it, while research organizations have strong capacity for data analysis. Also, implementing organizations often generate grey literature that is never published but contains lessons that would be useful for researchers. Funders could foster collaboration between research and implementing organizations by funding both core research and program implementation.
- *Consider literature in multiple disciplines.* Much research on equity is qualitative because it can be difficult to turn equity issues into quantitative metrics. So, we will miss important insights if we look only at primarily quantitative disciplines.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Agenda

8:00 – 8:10 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome and introduction to A4NH: John McDermott, Director, A4NH

Gender and equity in A4NH: Agnes Quisumbing, Senior Advisor, Gender, Equity and Empowerment (GEE) Unit, A4NH

8:10 – 8:25 SPOTLIGHT ON CURRENT EQUITY RESEARCH

Thursday: Equity concerns in nutrition-sensitive agriculture promotion practices: A case from central India, Carly Nichols, PhD Candidate and Instructor, University of Arizona School of Geography and Development

Friday: Equity in agri-nutrition research: A literature review, Jody Harris, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies

8:25 – 8:45 PRIORITIES FOR EQUITY RESEARCH

Attendees and A4NH representatives discuss the following questions:

- In the near term, what equity areas and research questions is your organization or research group addressing?
- How does your organization or research group integrate equity into its work?
- What resources, knowledge, and tools does your organization or research group need to effectively address these priorities?

8:45 CLOSING



## Appendix 2: List of participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Thom Achterbosch	Wageningen University and Research (WUR)
Gianna Bonis-Profumo	Charles Darwin University
Inge Brouwer	Wageningen University and Research (WUR)
Mousumi Das	Xavier University Bhubaneswar
Paula Dominguez-Salas	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) & International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)
Alysa Grude	ACDI/VOCA
Jody Harris	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
Anna Herforth	Independent
Suneetha Kadiyala	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
Neha Kumar	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
Erin Lentz	University of Texas at Austin
Jan Low	International Potato Center (CIP)
Elena Martinez	CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)
John McDermott	CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)
Juliana Muriel	International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
Hung Nguyen	International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)
Carly Nichols	University of Iowa
Hayaan-Diriye Nur	Malawi Ministry of Finance
Simone Passarelli	Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Agnes Quisumbing	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
Gopinath Radhakrishnan	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)
Padmaja Ravula	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
Devesh Roy	CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)
Kate Schneider	Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University
Shelly Sundberg	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
Jennifer Twyman	International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)