

# Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services

# Reducing the gender gap in agricultural extension and advisory services

MEAS Global Learning Exchange  
on Best Fit Approaches in  
Extension and Advisory Services

Washington, D.C., June 7, 2012

**Cristina Manfre and Deborah Rubin**  
Cultural Practice LLC



This presentation is based on the paper that was a collective effort of the MEAS Gender Working Group:

- Deborah Rubin and Cristina Manfre (Cultural Practice LLC)
- Andrea Allen (Michigan State University)
- Gale Summerfield (University of Illinois)
- Kathy Colverson (University of Florida)
- Mercy Akeredolu (Winrock International)
- Sandra Russo (University of Florida)

# Overview



- Why does it matter?
- Factors that shape the gender gap in agricultural EAS
- Finding the “best fit” for men and women farmers
- Principles of gender-equitable EAS

# Why does the gender gap matter?

- Reducing gender inequalities in access to productive resources and services is important for agricultural growth and food security
  - Increase in yields on women's farms by 20-30%
  - Raise agricultural output by 2.5 – 4%
  - Reduce the number of hungry people by 12-17%
- Improving household nutrition, health and education

# The Gender Gap in EAS

- **Ethiopia:** Women's access to extension services is 20% versus men's at 27%
- **Malawi:** 19% of women versus 81% for men received visits by an extension officer
- **Ghana:** 2% of women headed households and 12% of men headed households
- **Tanzania:** 31% of women headed households versus 36% of men headed households

# Factors shaping the gender gap

- Notions about who is a farmer
- Narrow definition of women's roles in agriculture
- Gender differences in access to productive resources



# Finding the “Best Fit” for men and women

- Build institutions to meet the needs of men and women farmers
- Design services to reach men and women farmers equitably



# Building gender-responsive institutions

- Increase the number of women extension agents
  - Creating conditions for women who wish to enter EAS to do so
  - Necessary in certain contexts





# Women are underrepresented in the agricultural sciences around the world

- **Ghana:** Women account for less than 20 percent of the student populations in agricultural science
- **Kazakhstan :** Women are about 40-45 percent of students completing undergraduate degrees in the agricultural sciences. In 2008, only 7 women were granted Ph.D. degrees in the agricultural sciences, compared to 97 men
- **Senegal:** Ranks in second lowest position out of 12 countries in a recent global review of women's participation in higher education in the agricultural sciences
- **Tajikistan:** Women are only 7 percent of students studying agriculture.

# Building gender-responsive institutions

- Build the capacity of all staff to deliver services equitably
  - “Farmers often stated that what was important was an extension agent who would assist them and not the gender of the agent.” Due et al. 1996

# Designing services to reach women farmers

- Inclusive targeting and eligibility
- Equitable participation
  - Women's groups as a means for increasing women's participation
- ICTs
  - Overcome differences in numeracy and literacy



# Principles for Gender-Equitable EAS

1. Increase awareness of the benefits of gender-equitable EAS
2. Recruit women extension officers
3. Build the capacity of extension officers
4. Identify gender-sensitive eligibility criteria
5. Design strategies to specifically reach women farmers
6. Deliver cross-sector programming
7. Collect sex-disaggregated data
8. Evaluate gender differences in outcomes and impacts

# Design for the future

- Document the experience of **private sector** EAS in reaching women farmers
- Gender-responsive **climate smart** agriculture
- Equipping the **next generation** of farmers
- The potential of **ICTs** to capture and respond to women farmers



# This presentation was given:

By Cristina Manfre and Deborah Rubin  
(Cultural Practice LLC) on behalf of MEAS  
at the **Global Learning Exchange on Best Fit  
Approaches in Extension and Advisory Services**  
in Washington, D.C.  
on June 7, 2012



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