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The Integrated Framework for Gender Analysis of Nutrition Policy

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Introduction

Several tools exist for mainstreaming gender in policy. However, no tools exist for integrating gender in nutrition policy, with specific focus on policymaker biases and ideologies. An innovative analytical framework for gender analysis in nutrition policy was developed in order to fill this gap. Gender and nutrition are interlinked because gender inequalities have significant implications for nutrition and gender inequalities are exacerbated by malnutrition. While nutrition is a priority for many developing countries, progress toward reducing malnutrition could be accelerated if gender is adequately integrated in policy. For example, undernutrition in Malawi was reduced from 47% in 2010 (NSO and Macro, 2010) to 37% in 2015 (NSO and Macro, 2015). While this progress is significant, it is not sufficient to meet the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Growth and Agriculture Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods target of reducing undernutrition to 10% by 2025 (AUC, 2014). Closer attention to the integration of gender in nutrition policy could not only result in meeting such targets, it could also accelerate progress toward meeting gender targets.

Background

Countries committed to integrating gender in all policies and programmes in 1995 at the Fourth Beijing Conference on Women (UN, 1995). Prior to this conference, development was focused on women. However, the shift of focus from women to gender was made because it was recognised that focusing on women alone was not sufficient for achieving equality. The power relations between men and women, which had been systematically entrenched in society needed to be confronted and addressed (Levy, 2000). However, gender initiatives continue to be primarily focused on women (van Eerdewijk, 2015).

Key Outcomes

- The Integrated Framework for Gender Analysis of Nutrition Policy was developed as a tool for influencing gendered policy change
- An analysis of Malawi's National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012 was conducted
- A policy dialogue was conducted to pilot and validate the Integrated Framework for Gender Analysis of Nutrition Policy
- Malawi's forthcoming National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy 2016-2020 was assessed.
- Recommendations from the policy dialogue were shared with key stakeholders
- Two of the recommendations were integrated in the forthcoming National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy 2016 – 2020.

Nutrition policies in particular are concerned with women because of the fundamental role women play in providing food for children in utero and after they are born. The supportive role men can play in nutrition is often ignored because of institutionalised assumptions around gender roles. Men are often excluded from nutrition because it has more commonly been perceived as women's work. Similarly, policymakers have focused on women not only because of their reproductive capacities, but also because it is considered natural for women to perform nutrition related work (Benson et al., 2006). These assumptions have permeated policy and prevented the fostering of partnerships between men and women.

Methodology

The Integrated Framework for Gender Analysis of Nutrition Policy integrates three existing tools. The first tool is the WHO gender assessment tool (WHO, 2011) that was designed to rapidly assess gender-responsiveness in policies and programmes. While this tool has a health focus and can stimulate analysis, it is broad and does not highlight key gender issues related to nutrition. The second tool is the FAO gender mainstreaming in nutrition framework (FAO, 2012). This framework highlights seven key areas for mainstreaming gender in nutrition focusing not only on health, but agriculture and other related sectors. Although these key areas are not exhaustive, they foreground some areas which policymakers might consider integrating when mainstreaming gender in nutrition policy. The final tool is the policy chronology, which was borrowed from Resnick et al.'s (2015) Kaleidoscope Model for Policy Change. The policy chronology is applied as a tool for identifying key gender and nutrition events and commitments. The chronology can be used to identify key

international, Africa, regional and national legally binding obligations as well as non-binding commitments that countries are signatory to. This tool is particularly useful for reminding policymakers of obligations and commitments.

Applications of the tool

The Integrated Framework for Gender Analysis of Nutrition Policy was applied in a desk review of Malawi's first National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012 (GoM, 2007). It was thereafter piloted during a policy dialogue in Malawi, with a number of stakeholders, including nutrition and gender experts, civil society, media and local communities. The tool was used to assess Malawi's forthcoming National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy 2016 – 2020 (GoM, 2016). While it was recognised that the tool had some weaknesses, it provided a strong foundation for analysis and participants were able to provide concrete recommendations to policymakers. Some of the recommendations have been integrated in the most recent draft of the National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy.

Policy instruments (may not be exhaustive)	Do the vision, goals or principles have an explicit commitment to promoting or achieving gender equality?	Does the policy consider and include men and women's practical needs?	Does the policy consider and include men and women's strategic needs?	Does the policy consider gender norms, roles and relations?	Does the policy avoid considering men and women as homogenous groups?	Does the policy clearly differentiate between sex and gender?
Agriculture extension and nutrition						
Local food culture and gender						
Nutrition and the life cycle						
Gender and obesity						
Spending income on nutrition						
Rights based approach to nutrition						
Targeting in nutrition policy						
Gender and nutrition in emergency situations						
Gender and nutrition M&E						



Participants also made comments on how the tool could be improved. The tool was revised and participant comments were integrated.

What is it for and who can use it?

The primary function of the Integrated Framework for Gender Analysis of Nutrition Policy is to determine the extent to which a policy is gender-responsive. The tool can also assist in highlighting gender biases and ideologies that may have influenced decisions made. It points to how these biases and ideologies can be addressed by ensuring that men's role in nutrition is considered.

While the tool can be used by policymakers and researchers, it can also be used by several other stakeholders. The tool, particularly, the policy chronology can be used for reminding policymakers of their commitments and obligations and persuading them to better integrate gender and nutrition. Therefore, the tool can also be used by advocates, donors, civil society and NGOs who are interested in influencing policy change.

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