



Photo by David Snyder for ACDI/VOCA

# Gender Is Key to Smart Development and Empowering People

## Women and Men Central to Economic Growth in Emerging Markets

ACDI/VOCA works to empower farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, communities and individuals—both women and men—to succeed in the global economy. We do this by investing in people’s skills and knowledge, and finding ways to expand their access to resources and assets so they have more choices and opportunities.

We are committed to gender equity in all aspects of our programs and operations. Because many countries have socially ingrained gender inequities, we often must focus specific attention and resources on ensuring that women are fully able to engage in development activities and benefits.

We have also learned through more than 45 years of experience that using gender approaches and analysis is part of doing “smart” development. Gender approaches and tools allow us to bring an awareness of gender issues to our program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation activities.

The result: Our programs and interventions get better, more sustainable results toward fighting poverty and ending hunger.

### Community-Driven Gender Approaches

“Gender” refers to the roles, responsibilities, attributes and power relations that are socially constructed by and assigned to men and women of a given society or community. These constructs vary greatly by culture, geographic region, socio-economic status and context, and they change over time.

Because of gender’s localized nature, ACDI/VOCA prioritizes the engagement and leadership of local partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries in developing,

### Quick Facts:

- » Rural women produce half of the world’s food and, in developing countries, between 60 percent and 80 percent of food crops.

*Source: United Nations*

implementing and evaluating gender approaches. We also support local initiatives that promote gender equity.

### Women Key to Economic Growth

Women are essential to economic growth in developing countries. Moreover, investments in women often return multiple dividends in terms of helping to improve the well-being of their children, families and communities.

Women are central wage earners. Their earnings and productive activities provide vital income to many households.

Women also are vital food producers and preparers. Women in developing countries produce between 60 and 80 percent of food crops.

Yet women continue to face social barriers and inequities that prevent them from realizing their full economic potential.



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## Women and Gender Inequities

In both developed and developing countries, women face gender-based inequities that often impede their ability to earn a living and better their lives and those of their families.

- » Women worldwide typically earn less than men for the same work, and their jobs are concentrated in lower paying industries and the informal sector. In addition family labor is usually unpaid.
- » Women tend to work longer hours under the double burden of domestic and remunerative labor.
- » Women constitute the majority of the world's agricultural laborers, but receive only a small fraction of the available extension and support services.
- » Women have less access to and control over resources, benefits and opportunities, including land, assets, credit, training and household income.
- » Female-headed households are over-represented among the poor and food insecure, and women and their children are the majority of refugees and displaced populations.
- » Women are further disadvantaged economically and socially because they often receive approximately half the years of schooling of men, and have less access to health care services and fewer legal rights.

## Gender Includes Men and Boys

Men and boys can be disadvantaged due to socially defined gender roles, as is reflected in situations of mass male

### Results:

- » "All these enterprising women now see life with real optimism. They feel quite happy about working on their own business and helping their families to improve their income and entire future."

*Lucia Chocho  
Farmer Field School participant  
ACDI/VOCA Ecuador*

unemployment or the problematic reintegration of ex-combatants and efforts to control the spread of HIV. Because of this, gender approaches and analyses also strengthen ACDI/VOCA efforts to improve the economic status and well-being of men and boys.

Moreover, women's empowerment cannot be achieved without engaging men in the process.

## ACDI/VOCA Leads by Example

ACDI/VOCA promotes the equal participation of women at all levels of our own organization—in headquarters and field offices—through equal access to resources, opportunities and decision-making roles. We encourage all personnel to integrate ACDI/VOCA's commitment to gender equity into their work.

To facilitate progress toward gender equity, we encourage gender audits and gender awareness trainings in our programs and operations. In line with our core values, we respect diversity, emphasize a participatory culture and promote transparency.