FOCUS Gender and Equity

Highlight 2: Setting Priorities for Equity Research in A4NH

What is equity?
Equity and equality are concepts based on the idea that all people should be treated as equals. Equality is when the outcome is the same for all groups, while equity refers to the fair distribution of resources or processes among groups. Inequities are differences that are unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, and unjust. Because inequities in the distribution of nutrition- and health-related resources and processes contribute to large disparities in nutrition and health outcomes across groups, we must consider equity in A4NH’s research.

Strengthening equity research in A4NH
In 2017, consultants from the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) carried out an external review of equity issues in A4NH research. They found that A4NH research investigated several areas of equity, including gender, income, poverty, life stage, youth, and geography, but only focused systematically on gender equity. Using the recommendations from this review and input from our management and advisory teams, A4NH is working to strengthen key areas of equity research during the rest of Phase II by identifying priorities for equity research, creating an equity research strategy, building capacity through equity research hubs, and developing research projects explicitly focused on equity.

In 2018, A4NH launched a set of formative and/or diagnostic research projects on equity in agriculture, nutrition, and health. IDS and A4NH’s flagship on Supporting Policies, Programs, and Enabling Action through Research (SPEAR) are leading a structured review of existing research on equity issues in agriculture, nutrition, and health to identify gaps and opportunities for equity research. IDS is also compiling a framing paper about youth and food systems transformation to guide A4NH’s work in this area. A4NH’s flagship on Food Systems for Healthier Diets is developing frameworks to understand how equity fits into the pathways between food system innovations and healthier diets to inform our theories of change. A4NH’s other flagships will be developing equity-related projects in 2019.

Identifying priorities for equity research
Before developing an equity strategy, A4NH held a series of consultations with stakeholders and partners to better understand what equity research is already happening; how partners integrate equity into their work; and what resources, knowledge, and tools are needed to better address equity in agriculture, nutrition, and health research. A consultation with the Rome-based United Nations agencies helped us understand how to better partner with these agencies on equity research. Consultations in Africa and South Asia helped us to connect with researchers and organizations addressing equity issues in A4NH’s target countries.

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