

Leveraging women's economic empowerment for nutrition in Senegal

GENDER EQUALITY GOOD PRACTICE NOTES

Through a situational analysis, which included several conversations with girls, women and community members, Nutrition International and partners came to understand how women from the regions of Kolda and Kédougou in Senegal experienced unequal gender relations with their male peers, as well as little access to finances and resources. Many women described how they had few life choices and limited access to basic services, credit, finances, training, and even employment. They had limited decision-making power outside the household because of lower social status compared to men. The women were under-recognized and over-burdened by reproductive and domestic duties, which in turn limited their ability to engage in income-earning work to purchase nutritious food for their families, leading to food insecurity.

Nutrition International's Integrated Nutrition Project in Kolda and Kédougou (PINKK) was a bold initiative which sought to improve food security for those regions of Senegal. The five-year, multisectoral project, funded by Global Affairs Canada, leveraged the intersection of several sectors and industries working directly or indirectly on nutrition—including health, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, community development, and early childhood development—to improve access to nutritious food for families.



In response to the findings of the situational analysis, PINKK's gender strategy combined women's empowerment, raising the profile of women's agricultural contribution, and promoting gender equality by giving women more opportunities through financial education trainings, credit groups, village-based savings and credit associations, and leadership clubs for girls. Due to increased access to finances, women were able to purchase more nutritious foods for their families, increasing their food security. Développement International Desjardins, one of Nutrition International's implementing partners, provided access to both financial and non-financial services for the businesses and women's groups involved in food production. PINKK worked with women producers and farmers to produce nutrient-dense and fortified foods as its main vector for improved nutrition. Due to better access to finances, women were able to purchase more nutritious foods for their families, increasing their food security.

According to Mr. Abdoulaye Ndiaye, PINKK's Project Director, there are numerous benefits to a strategy that simultaneously strengthens women's ability to earn a living and values their current household domestic contributions. PINKK's experience has allowed Nutrition International to gather key insights in how access to finance for women leads not only to women's economic empowerment, but also improves nutrition for the family.

"We know that a lack of control over resources, lack of decision-making power and low opportunity for literacy among women contributes to their malnutrition and that of their children. But we have also learned that strengthening the leadership of young women, particularly by fostering the development of their entrepreneurial spirit and business skills, truly has the potential to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition for entire families," said Ndiaye.

