

Men's Education Tied to Improved Household Nutrition

Research supports the inclusion of men in household nutrition programs

Study Overview

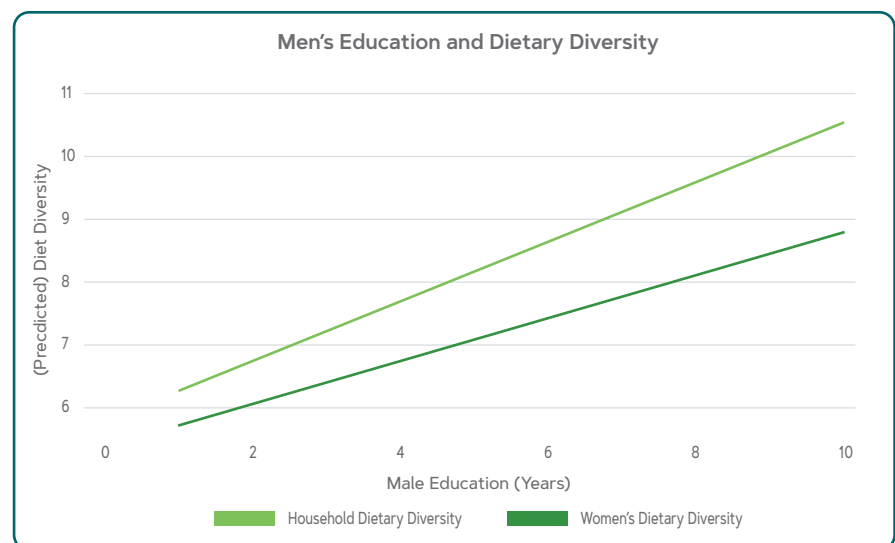
TCI researchers used survey data collected from 3,600 households in four districts in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha, India, to analyze the effect of men's education levels on the dietary diversity of their households and women members in particular. Dietary diversity is an indicator of nutrition, as a greater number of food groups eaten increases the likelihood of adequate nutrient consumption. The survey data was collected as part of a TCI project called Technical Assistance and Research for Indian Nutrition and Agriculture (TARINA).

Background

Among the many causes behind India's persistently high rates of malnutrition are socioeconomic factors like education. The role that education plays in malnutrition has been well-documented, but most of the evidence focuses on women's education. There is much less evidence related to men's education. As such, many nutrition education programs and behavior-change campaigns in India are directed towards women. Because men are the primary income earners and decisionmakers in many Indian households, they can play a major role in deciding what foods are grown or purchased and how that food is allocated among members of the household.

RESULTS

The TCI study establishes a causal link between men's education and dietary diversity for both households and women. For every additional year of men's schooling, household dietary diversity increases by 0.2 food groups, while women's dietary diversity increases by 0.16 food groups. The significance of men's education holds even with the inclusion of other factors in the analysis, including women's education.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policies and programs aimed at educating and empowering women to make better nutrition-related decisions for their household should include men as a way to amplify their impact.
- Behavior change communication campaigns focused on equitable food allocation within the household should account for the role that men play in household food security as fathers, husbands, income earners, and key decisionmakers.
- Design educational and awareness programs to inform both men and women about good nutrition practices, including healthy foods, breastfeeding, and complementary feeding.

Sunder, N., Gupta, S., and Pingali, P. Leveraging men's education as an effective pathway for improving diet quality: evidence from rural India. *PLOS ONE* (2023).

Visit tci.cornell.edu/publications to read the article in full