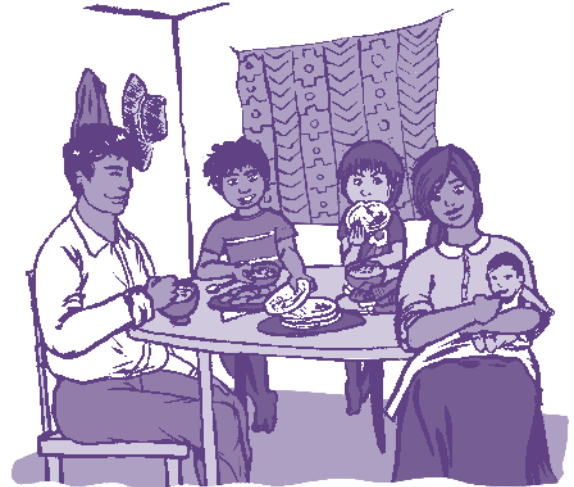




Poverty, Health, and Nutrition Division

The work of the Poverty, Health, and Nutrition Division (PHND) is organized around four pillars—poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and poor health. The division examines the interactions of these four pillars at the individual, household, community, and national levels. Within the framework of IFPRI’s strategy, the work of PHND focuses on access to food—that is, its main goal is to ensure that all people have access to the appropriate quantity and quality of foods and to foods that are safe and culturally acceptable in order to promote optimal health, nutrition, economic productivity, and well-being.

In particular, PHND examines the impacts of persistent poverty and shocks; explores the role of social protection in decreasing poverty, malnutrition, and poor health; and evaluates means of improving maternal and child nutrition on a large scale. Vital cross-cutting issues that shape the policy research carried out in the division are agriculture–health linkages and gender equity concerns. Also central to PHND’s work is action-oriented research using state-of-the-art tools and approaches to rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of programs implemented by governments, UN institutions, private voluntary organizations, and others. All this is done with the aim of reducing poverty, food insecurity, gender inequity, malnutrition, and poor health.



PHND’s research, outreach, and capacity-strengthening activities are organized into five research programs. The division also coordinates the Agriculture and Health Research Platform, a multi-organizational initiative.



RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Large-Scale Interventions to Enhance Human Capital

Social protection—often used to protect people from destitution in the short term—can also offer routes out of poverty over the long term. Recent approaches to social protection combine direct assistance, such as food or cash transfers, with interventions that promote human capital investment—usually health, education, and nutrition—to improve the future income-earning potential of the poor. Direct assistance can also be combined with skills training, organizational capacity building, and creation of physical assets, which contribute to long-term poverty reduction. Such programs can be designed to target specific groups such as poor and vulnerable children, women, the elderly, or households affected by HIV and AIDS. This research program, which uses mixed

methods and multidisciplinary teams and analytical tools, aims to

- improve the quality and impacts of interventions to reduce poverty in the short and long term;
- analyze social and institutional factors that affect the programs’ feasibility, performance, and outcomes; and
- build capacity for successful intervention design and implementation, rigorous monitoring, and evaluation.

The original focus was on Latin American countries, but research has since expanded to countries throughout the world, including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Mozambique, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Uganda.

Pathways from Poverty

This research program seeks to understand how policies, programs, and other factors can reduce poverty and hunger over time and to use this knowledge to develop more effective policies. The research program uses detailed information collected over a ten-to-forty-year interval

on the same individuals, households, and communities to better understand

- why some people and households get ahead while others fall further into poverty;
- to what extent we can identify policies and interventions that help people accumulate assets, acquire access to institutions, and minimize shocks; and
- how the global environment in which people live affects whether they become richer or poorer over time.

The program has been active in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guatemala, the Philippines, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

Diet Quality, Health, and Nutrition

Diets and lifestyles have been changing rapidly over the past few decades, both in urban and rural areas. While poor people are generally more likely to meet their energy (calorie) needs than before, the overall quality (micronutrient content) of their diet has not necessarily improved and may actually have deteriorated over time. Poor diet quality, related illnesses, and nutrition deficits have thus become the most pressing nutritional concerns among the poor today. This is particularly true given the changes in the global environment, including the food and fuel price crises, the global financial crisis, and climate-related changes.

High-quality diets are particularly important for women, especially when they are pregnant or lactating, and for children during the period of rapid physical growth and development. It is now well recognized that poor nutrition in the womb and during the first two years of life—especially deficiencies in calories and essential micronutrients—can have lifelong detrimental consequences for cognitive abilities, educational attainment, and economic productivity. This program thus focuses on preventing poor dietary quality and undernutrition among women, infants, and young children. The broad objectives of this program are to

- generate a global understanding of the main drivers of current trends in diet quality and
- identify, strengthen, and carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies to improve diet quality, nutrition, and health of mothers, infants, and young children, and develop lessons learned for successfully scaling up these programs.

Research in this program is implemented in Africa (Burkina Faso, Burundi, and Ethio-

pia), Asia (Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam), and Latin America (Guatemala).

HIV/AIDS and Food and Nutrition Security

The majority of people affected by HIV/AIDS worldwide work in agriculture. When farmers fall ill, the ability of households and communities to feed themselves is jeopardized, particularly if they are poor. People living with AIDS, however, need even more food and better nutrition than before: HIV infection raises an individual's energy requirements by up to 30 percent. This research program explores these and other complex links between HIV/AIDS and rural livelihoods, using an HIV/AIDS "lens" to see how we can best

- understand how food and nutrition policies and programs can contribute to the prevention, care, treatment, and mitigation of HIV/AIDS;
- strengthen research-policy networks on HIV/AIDS, rural livelihoods, and food security globally; and
- scale up policy and program successes in Africa.

To facilitate these activities, PHND manages the Regional Network on AIDS, Livelihoods, and Food Security (RENEWAL), which coordinates research, communications, and capacity strengthening in five hub countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia.

Strengthening Women's Control of Assets for Better Development Outcomes

Despite evidence that strengthening women's control of assets is critical to reducing poverty, a substantial gender gap remains in asset ownership. This research program, led jointly by PHND and IFPRI's Environment and Production Technology Division (EPTD), aims to

- identify policy interventions to increase women's control over resources;
- determine what combination of assets and support services will reduce poverty, malnutrition, and food insecurity;
- assess how trends such as migration, rural-urban linkages, and the changing landscape of financial services affect women's abilities to acquire and derive benefits from assets;
- develop methods for gathering information on tangible and intangible assets and women's empowerment; and
- evaluate program impacts on women's control of assets.

The geographical focus of this research program, which was initiated in 2008, will be Africa and Asia.

Agriculture and Health Research Platform

PHND also coordinates the Agriculture and Health Research Platform, which brings IFPRI and other centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) together with several health institutions to examine the challenges and synergies in agriculture and health linkages. The initiative is driven by the evidence that poor health can compromise the ability to reduce poverty and that agriculture can play a role in improving health globally.

Platform activities span various themes within IFPRI and its sister centers in the CGIAR. The initiative promotes and coordinates research, capacity strengthening, and communication on the following six key topics:

- HIV/AIDS and Agriculture
- Avian Flu and Other Zoonotic Diseases
- Nutrition, Diet, and Health
- Food Safety and Growing Food Supply Chains
- Water-Associated Disease and Water Management
- Occupational Health, including Child Labor

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