

Gender Differences in Diet Quality and Quantity in Rural Bangladesh. Are Men Still Favored?

Fiona Coleman,¹ Akhter Ahmed,² Shalini Roy,² and John Hoddinott¹

¹Cornell University and ²International Food Policy Research Institute

Objectives: Studies from Bangladesh have long documented pro-male biases in intrahousehold food allocation. However, many of these earlier studies were conducted against the backdrop of caloric scarcity and since then, food availability and affordability in the country have significantly improved. This study re-examines gender differences in diet quantity and quality in rural Bangladesh with 2012 data.

Methods: The study uses 24-hour dietary recall data collected in 2012 (12,970 individuals within 5,000 households, ages 15+) from ultra-poor rural Bangladeshi households and OLS regressions to test for gender differences in constructed diet measures. Measures include caloric intake, Caloric Adequacy Ratio (CAR: intake divided by estimated requirements based on sex, occupation, and life stage), Dietary Diversity Score (DDS; range 0–10), Global Dietary Quality Score (GDQS; range 0–49), food group intakes (intake per GDQS food group, grams), and ratios of food group intake to total intake. Between-

household differences are accounted for by adjusting for demographic and geographic factors.

Results: Preliminary results show that men consume more calories than women (mean kcal: male = 2217.99, female = 2022.25, $p < 0.001$), but women consume more in reference to their caloric needs (CAR: $m = 0.75$, $f = 0.90$, $p < 0.001$). Men also score higher on diet quality measures (DDS: $m = 3.43$, $f = 3.32$, $p < 0.001$; GDQS: $m = 8.27$, $f = 7.69$, $p < 0.001$) and have greater mean intakes in 18 of the 25 GDQS food groups, but the absolute magnitude of male-female differences is small (e.g., < 10 gr. differences in all animal sourced foods). Moreover, compared to women, men did not consume significantly higher proportions of nutrient-dense foods groups.

Conclusions: Results indicate that while men's intake quantities and diet quality scores are marginally higher, the slight male advantage disappears when energy requirements and food group proportions are accounted for. Accordingly, the study results do not provide evidence of male favoritism in household food allocation.

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