POLICY BRIEF

# Does Women's Time on the Farm Affect Children's Nutritional Status? Evidence from Tanzania

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## Context

Time allocation between reproductive and productive work in agriculture has implications for nutrition (Stevano et al., 2019). Women, especially of reproductive age, are always confronted with the inescapable reality of dual responsibility of nurturing and caring for their children and engaging in productive activities (Leslie, 1988; Rao et al., 2019). While both men and women face multiple roles and responsibilities, men's roles are performed sequentially while those of women are performed simultaneously, and this forces women

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to make difficult tradeoffs (Blackden and Wodon, 2006). Rural women in developing countries are especially more disadvantaged. The tasks they engage in mostly add up to 16 hours a day (World Bank, 2008).

# The problem

Spending many hours on the farm reduces the time for engaging in domestic nutrition-improving chores. Women may have less time to breastfeed the children, to purchase and prepare nutritious and healthy meals, to prepare food in hygienic environments, to boil water, to frequently clean children and their playing environments and to acquire water from the safest water source (Komatsu et al., 2018; Rao et al., 2019; Ruel et al., 2018). Malnutrition, especially stunting and underweight, is more prevalent in rural areas (Smith et al., 2004). Does women's time on the farm affect children's nutritional status?

# Research results

The study from which this policy brief is based on used regression analysis to analyze data from the first 3 waves of the Tanzania National Panel Survey (NPS 2008/9; NPS 2010/11; NPS 2012/13). The main findings are presented here below:

## Prevalence of malnutrition

- Data from the Tanzania National Panel Survey (NPS) (waves 1-3) indicated that prevalence of stunting declined only marginally from 41% in 2008/9 to 40% in 2012/13.
- Prevalence of underweight also declined from 19% to 12% during the same respective years.
- Malnutrition is more prevalent in rural areas.

## Women's time allocation affects children's nutritional status

- Women's time allocation is an important determinant of nutritional status of children.
- The longer the time women worked on the farm, the higher the chance of children being stunted and underweight.

### Income is an important determinant of children's nutritional status

- Income as proxied by wealth index reduces the likelihood of children being malnourished.
- Children from households with high income are less likely to be stunted and to be underweight.

### Female education is significantly associated with reduction in child malnutrition

## Implications for policy makers

- To promote child nutrition, it is essential to ensure women, especially those in the rural areas, do not spent too much time on the farm.
- Labour-saving technologies can reduce the time and effort required to undertake some activities (FAO, 2019).
- Partnerships involving making available labour-saving machinery such as tractors, shellers, and harvesters which women can hire at subsidized prices can go a long way in helping them reduce the hours they work on the farm.
- Women working together in work groups can reduce time per day that women work on the farm.

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