

**WOMEN
IN
DEVELOPMENT**

**Bean/Cowpea
Collaborative
Research
Support Program**



**THE BEAN/COWPEA
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SUPPORT PROGRAM (CRSP)
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

COVER:

**Hired laborer returning from cowpea field. Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. Photo:
Roberts**

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

The Bean/Cowpea CRSP is a program of coordinated projects in Africa and Latin America that focuses on removing constraints to the production and utilization of beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) and cowpeas (*Vigna unguiculata*). Funded by a Title XII grant from USAID/BIFAD, the goal of the program is to support research and training which will ultimately result in a reduction of hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.

In many of these areas, beans and cowpeas are staple foods that provide the major source of protein and an important source of B vitamins in family diets. Usually produced on small farms for household consumption and

Four family members. Two oldest pounding grain for family consumption. East Africa. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.





Filling vessels with water from local reservoir to carry on shoulders up the mountain to home site. Cameroon. Photo: Chalfant.

Carrying wood for cooking fuel. Tanzania. Photo: Silbernagel.



sale, these basic food crops have not benefited from the kinds of research and extension efforts accorded to crops grown for export purposes. Consequently, yields tend to be low due to high insect and disease infestation, depleted soils and drought. Oftentimes much of the meager harvest is lost during storage.

In many parts of the world the primary responsibility for the production of beans, cowpeas and other crops grown for family consumption rests with women and children. While women's roles in agriculture vary by country and region, it is not unusual for them to play a major role in seed selection, planting, weeding, harvesting,

storing, processing and preparing of food crops. These factors combine to pose a special challenge to development efforts suggesting both a need to direct attention to the constraints faced by small farmers and at the same time to recognize that in many contexts a majority of these farmers are likely to be women.

Bean/Cowpea CRSP projects involve collaborative research efforts between investigators located at Host Country (HC) institutions and investigators at US universities and institutes. A wide range of research interests is reflected in the program. All address the small farm context and many focus on



Family of seven. Preparing hillside field for planting of maize and beans. East Africa. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.



Harvesting beans, East Africa. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.

agricultural and food preparation tasks usually carried out by women. Included in the program are projects designed to:

- 1) Increase bean and cowpea yields through developing disease and insect resistant, drought tolerant or high nitrogen fixing varieties which incorporate locally desirable traits (color, texture, taste and cooking characteristics).

- 2) Facilitate the processing of beans and cowpeas through the development of technologies that are suitable for use at the household and village level.

- 3) Investigate and where possible remove the anti-nutritional factors and increase the protein content

and digestibility of beans and cowpeas.

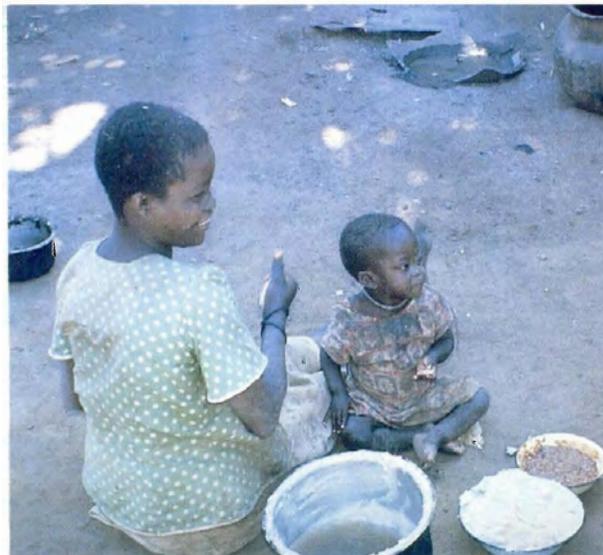
4) Address storage losses and preparation constraints such as the hard-to-cook phenomena in beans.

In addition to the research objectives each project has a training component tailored to HC bean and/or cowpea research needs. This includes opportunities to participate in formal degree programs and in short-term training courses. Interactions among researchers from the various projects in the CRSP have resulted in an integrated approach which promises to yield realistic and viable solutions to the problems confronting small farmers.



Two family members. Transporting harvested whole bean plants from the field. East Africa. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.

Family eating maize porridge with beans as relish. East Africa. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.



Bean farmer (right) talking with Bean/Cowpea CRSP Director, Pat Barnes-McConnell (left). Malawi. Photo: Adams.



Since its inception, the Bean/Cowpea CRSP has incorporated a strong Women-in-Development (WID) focus and has included a WID Specialist on its Management Office staff. While specific objectives vary by project, certain WID concerns are of program-wide significance. These include:

- 1) Assuring that gender issues are taken into account in information gathering. This requires an awareness of the ways in which this variable influences resource allocation, decision-making processes and the division of labor within farming households. Such a focus is important in Latin American contexts where women's participation in agriculture

has often gone unrecorded and is especially significant in many African areas where women have access to their own fields and are responsible for providing for their family's sustenance. In both situations data gathering must encompass male and female work roles if viable solutions to the problems confronting small farmers are to be devised.

2) Ascertaining that innovations (i.e., improved seed varieties, new techniques or technologies) are appropriate to the small farm context and that these innovations do not lead to the progressive marginalization of women in the agricultural sector or increase their already heavy work loads.



Betty Gondwe, Plant Protection Officer, TARO, and Bean/Cowpea CRSP Tanzania project researcher, inoculating beans with halo blight inoculum. CIAT. Photo: Silbernagel.

Participants and professors in course on microbial control of cowpea insects. Goiania, Brazil. Photo: Roberts.





Student weeding Bean/Cowpea CRSP Honduras/University of Puerto Rico bean trials at the Escuela Agricola Panamericana (EAP). Honduras. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.

Dr. Julia Miller of Virginia State University (kneeling) supervising village survey techniques of Bunda College of Agriculture students Caroline Mhango (left) and Filly Kamanga (right). Malawi. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.



3) Encouraging the participation of women in the projects as researchers, technicians and students. Over the long run such efforts are likely to result in the diminution of male biases in research and hence to contribute to more equitable and successful development efforts.

Overall, the perspective is one which situates small producers within the wider social-cultural and economic context and draws attention to how a consideration of gender differences within the household and the society will result in achievement of project objectives and ultimately in improved nutrition and health status.

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Ellen Bortei-Doku, Sociologist, talking with CRSP Women-in-Development Specialist, Anne Ferguson. East Lansing. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.

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Dr. Maria José Zimmerman, Head of Plant Breeding at CNPAF and bean breeder for the Bean/Cowpea CRSP Wisconsin/Brazil multi-disease resistance project. Brazil. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.

#16

Dr. Anne Vidaver, Head of the Department of Plant Pathology, University of Nebraska, and Co-US Investigator Bean/Cowpea CRSP Dominican Republic/Nebraska project. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.

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Dr. Barbara Webster (left), Principal Investigator of the Bean/Cowpea CRSP Kenya project, discussing CRSP research with professional women contributors to a prominent women's agricultural organization. Kenya. Photo: Barnes-McConnell.



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**THE BEAN/COWPEA
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SUPPORT PROGRAM (CRSP)**

**An international community of persons, institutions,
agencies and governments committed to collectively
strengthening health and nutrition in developing
countries by improving the availability
and utilization of beans and cowpeas**



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