

Gender and Agriculture: Promoting Equality in Agricultural Extension Services

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Abstract

The provision of extension services to women farmers in the developing countries depends on the degree of gender equality as a factor in improving women farmers' capacity as well as productivity in agriculture. This paper discusses the need to embrace gender sensitive Agriculture Extension Intervention for purposes of bridging the gender divide in farming, education, access to resources and decision making among women. Some of the gender gaps that impede women's contribution in agriculture include; lack of training, processing and financial power and lack of technology in agriculture (FAO, 2011). These disparities can be mitigated through the services of agricultural extension since it has been highlighted to provide inclusive training, innovative information communications technologies for extension, and policy enabling for gender mainstreaming (World Bank, 2016 probation). This article presents approaches to address barriers to gender in agricultural extension services the provision of training for female farmers, use of technology, and effective institutional support. For example, Uganda has got it right in implementing gender inclusive programs such as Barefoot College that has empowered women and increased productivity (Khan, 2017 UN Women 2018).

Introduction

Cultivation practices or farming is one of the largest contributors to the economy in the world today and women are reaching the world and families and communities and nations with food. While women have contributed to agriculture, they still experience challenges that slow them down and also are restricted from whom and what they can get. It is a common phenomenon that women perform most of the agricultural works in many parts of the world but they can hardly get



trained, mechanized and financed to enhance their productivity and income (FAO, 2011). It is important to address this because of the need for woman's rights as well as in order to boost the yields of agriculture as well as food security. Therefore, agricultural extension services which attempt to pass on agricultural knowledge and technologies deliberately have a great relevance in the exposition. However, for such services to be effective, these services must include a gender aspect that ensures that both boy and girls benefit from the Laureates' inventions in agriculture, and knowledge alike. Gender sensitive extension recognizes bar that women can encounter in addressing Extension message for instance, power, and authority to own land, decision making power and access to resources among others as listed by year World Bank (World Bank, 2014). It is therefore possible to enhance a positive impact on the lives of the women farmers and enhance their productivity and bring about positive impact on the sustainable extension services. However, there are still a number of limitations in relation to gender-sensitive extension services with numerous prospects. Lack of appropriate support from the society, few facilities for women and extension workers and lack of required training are among the few challenges that limit women's engagement in agricultural extension programs (Miller & Jones, 2016). Also, women are in minority and or low positions in leadership within agricultural extension contributing to the existing gender divide. Solving these problems can be achieved provided governments, NGOs, and communities open to supporting frameworks that call for changing this position by providing women equal opportunities in accessing the extension services (FAO, 2013).



The Gender Gap in Agriculture

There is an existing gender disparity in agriculture with huge implications on the output of the agricultural enterprise as well as the social and economic growth of many countries. Across the world, about half of all farm workers are female and while women can be more productive in many aspects of life they are restricted by barriers that hinder effective farm work. The above difference is Peggy's social, historical and economic analysis of gender stereotyping that that hinders women from accessing land, credit, technology, training and markets. The biggest

challenge that women experience, is restricted land ownership or right to land. Rights to use and own land remains concentrated in male across many regions leaving women locked out of legal and economic use of land despite playing key roles in farming. From FAO 2011, women are reluctant to own or receive land through inheritance which hampers their capacity to invest in food production in the long-run. This lack of control over land translates to other aspects such as credit control since most documents used for mortgage are in land hence exercises a narrower gender gap.

Not only do the women in agriculture struggle for land access but also have minimal access to other aspects of modern mechanized farming. The study done also establishes that women have poor access to the extension services, which are central to relaying information to farmers on new methods of farming, crop and pest management. According to the World Bank (2014), women comprise of either marginalized or inadequately served through agricultural extension services because of policy discrimination based on their gender, limited access to transport or early-stage marriage that confines them to their homes. Such a deficit of information and training decreases their ability to apply innovation in the farming and increases their inefficiency and low income. In addition, women in agricultural activities are never given due recognition and their contribution is marginalized as the work done by women is often remarked as unfunded family bulk. This leads to the trivialization of woman's contribution towards farming in addition to the fact that most of the time they do not make decisions about the farming matters thus are frozen out of the agriculture policy making. Consequently, measures regarding agriculture politics are developed without considering the conditions which face women farmers. This calls for systemic solutions to the gender problem in agriculture, which involve working on the availability, access, use of and rights in land, training, technologies and finance for women in agriculture, and engaging with the social norms that exclude women from agricultural decision making. It also means that female employees should be employed within extension services' leadership to guarantee that their input and needs will influence policies. If the gender disparity in agriculture is addressed competent, productivity in the sector can be improved, food security initiated and concrete steps towards development can be made. Introducing equity in participation in

agriculture benefits ladies as well as makes strong and economically stable communities.

Gender Sensitive Extension Education, Communication and Information Delivery (Agricultural Extension Services)

Since women farmers are equally involved in agricultural production, gender sensitive agriculture extension services are appropriate to enhance their contribution to agricultural development. Besides, these services support women to gain knowledge, skills, as well as resources; they close the gap of the gender for agriculture and productivity as well as promote economic development. Gender sensitive extension services for instance involves extending services and programs based on the issues that female farmers face. Due to these constrains, women experience social, cultural and economic constraints hindering their chances of undertaking agricultural training, technologies and markets (FAO, 2011). Application of gender in the dissemination of knowledge in agriculture grants women the same opportunities as men's. For instance, the training sessions can be planned to fit the women's timetable since they are most likely to be tied to homes. Also, women's involvement in extension service delivery in the agricultural sector should be promoted by ensuring women-friendly environment through shedding immobilizing fear of expressing themselves on matters that is affecting their productivity (FAO, 2013).

Aside from access, gender responsive extension services should also consider the gender necessities in terms of input and output spaces such as land, credit and technology. For instance, to buy inputs for better technologies in the use of fertilizers, other financial inputs are needed by women to be used on agricultural improvement. Incorporation of an understanding of these barriers and more by delivery of appropriate financial training and support through extension services, women can be financially empowered (World Bank, 2014). Likewise, supply of application appropriate technologies which may include small-scale tools and inexpensive technologies can greatly enhance the productivity rates of women (Doss, 2018). Furthermore, the gender sensitive agricultural extension means that the women have to be involved in the decision making processes at different tiers. This will ensure that proposed and implemented policies and programmes in agriculture address the needs of women farmers and that these women participate



fully in decentralised, national and global policy formulation processes. Fostering women as leaders in extension services is promoting gender equity for sustainable changes within the large rural population (Miller & Jones, 2016). In the end, gender-sensitive agricultural services for extension are ending up tailor made and encouraging a setting at par with the women with the inputs and knowledge that they require to enterprise in agriculture. Because the services target women and address gender issues, these services foster sustainable development, growth, and production in the agricultural sector.

Aspects of Gender Relations in Agricultural Extension Services

In this context there is need to improve on the gender dimensions in extension services because this would encourage both male and female farmers to access inputs, information and technology that can enable improvement of production in agricultural sector. Extension services that take into consideration gender issues that exist within society can eliminate Seksamogrooie inequalities, women and overall organizational success of agriculture programs of development. Several strategies can be employed to foster gender equality in extension services: Tailoring Programs to Women's Needs: For effective delivery of agricultural extension programs, these programs have to be oriented within the context of operation in regard to the challenges that women farmers face. This also means occasionally, training should be done when it is convenient and easily accessible by poor smallholder farmers in particular women through provision of child care services and programmes that respond to the need in balancing between farming and caring for farm and children (FAO, 2011). Training of the extension workers is also needed to cling to the gender relations issues of the rural area and the roles of male and female farmers in the farming.

Inclusive Participation and Leadership: Promoting the involvement of women in decision making for the outcome of agricultural extension services is one of the most impactful over the cause of gender equality. This may be realised through promotion of leadership in extension services as well as in the agricultural sector for women. The author argues that giving women a voice can contribute to increased relevance to policy-making and planning when designing extension programs (Miller and Jones, 2016). Leadership by women in other local groups such as

agricultural based groups can also compel other women to be more involved in the agriculture extension activities. Access to Resources and Training: Gender-friendly agricultural services delivery should ensure that women farmers' rights to access land, credit facilities, technologies, and training are not violated. Availing financial literacy programmes, extending gender sensitive agricultural inputs and outputs and enabling access to micro-finance can enable women boost their venture into agriculture by investing in their production (World Bank, 2014). Furthermore, it can entail activities such as workshops or seminars relating to appropriate farming techniques in either in gender basis, ownership of Land as well as the ways in which women can benefit from technology input in agriculture.

Creating Gender-Sensitive Materials: It is therefore important that extension services provide gender sensitive gender targeted information to both the male and the female farmers. These materials should depict women in farming and present information in a manner which the women can easily understand by writing in languages understandable by women in the villages and using simple illustrations and checklists (FAO, 2013). Collaborating with Women's Organizations: There is the need to collaborate with local women's organizations to enable gender sensitive approach to be embraced in the agricultural extension services. Organisations of women can be used to take fates directly to the rural women farmers, gain their trust and allow the females to come together and share their problems and their possible solutions (Doss, 2018). Although, through the following strategies, agricultural extension services can assist to reduce the negative impacts on the gender gap, encourage women farmers and improve on the existing models of agricultural extension services for sustainable agricultural advancement.

Breaking the Barriers on realities on gender equality for agricultural extension.

For an effective and sustainable agricultural transformation for the economic development of countries from the developing world, it is only possible if gender barriers to extension services for being educated on improved food crops and animal breeds are eliminated. Unfortunately, even today women are highly involved in agricultural production and yet they encounter numerous challenges that deny them realise benefits from extension. These are social, cultural, economic and institutional push factors which require complaint in order to allow women to



engage in agricultural processes.

1. Socio-Cultural Barriers: In many cultures, a woman belongs to the domestication section while men are believed to be the farmers and in most cases the decision makers. A relatively high percentage of women is likely to be locked out of participating in the agricultural extension programs or faces a lot of challenges to access these programs (FAO, 2011). In order to counter these barriers, the agricultural extension services need to counter these stereotypes by demonstrating the important role women play in agricultural production. Husband/wife batching should be discouraged while gender-sensitive training and outreach strategies should be adopted in extending the services. It is just as important, therefore, to modify social behaviors by taking community enlightenment initiatives and campaigns.

2. Limited Access to Resources: Women farmers for instance suffer favoritism when it comes to the distribution of important resources like land, credit, technology and education. Due to their limited access to land and financial capital, women also cannot afford to make investments in soil, plant and equipment or use better yields producing technologies (World Bank, 2014). To eliminate this, there is need to put in place legal frameworks to address women's property rights, financial initiative interventions and technologies enhanced to respond to women's needs. To achieve greater transformations, extension services need to promote the same opportunities for women as those in funding farming improvement: resources, loans, and grants.

3. Lack of Gender-Sensitive Training for Extension Workers: Often the extension workers themselves are not trained properly in terms of identifying the particular concerns that women farmers may have. This ostensibly egalitarian attitude can lead to a lack of gender awareness and women can be failed to be considered or supported (Miller & Jones, 2016). In this light, gender training to enhance the capacity of workers providing extension services to farmers is an area of concern. Men and WOCBA farmers' can also benefit from compulsory extension services as it can empower MEτ,(extension services) to work and provide information suitable for women farmers.

4. Women's Limited Participation in Decision-Making: Most decisions in both organizations and households are made by men with women being left out throughout these entire processes.



This reduces their capacity to engage any form of control over matters regarding agriculture that touch on their lives (Doss, 2018). To overcome this, agricultural extension services should play a leading role of encouraging women on decision-making. Women should be given a chance to exercise leadership within the agricultural organisations, co-operatives and other groups to have chance to share their problems and solutions with the rest.

5. Inadequate Infrastructure and Mobility Constraints: In the rural setting, this is especially the case because cultural norms may limit the amount of time that women can spend outside the home, and there may be neither transportation to get there from here nor someone at home to take care of children and household chores in the event that women travel. Such constraints can hinder them from attending classes or receive extension services as pointed by FAO in 2013. To deal with these constraints, extension services must provide home-based training or make plans to take information into women's compounds.

Conclusion

Equal access to agricultural extension services has proved to be good for business, not to mention the fact that it is the right thing to do socially. Since women are involved in agriculture activities they need better access to inputs, knowledge as well as decision-making this results in better development indicators. Even though much has been achieved especially in the developed countries there is still a lot that needs to be done regarding hindrances to women's uptake of extension services for agriculture. Another crucial factor that need to be considered in the quest to enhance gender issues in extension service delivery is the social-cultural impediments that escort Minister of Food and Agriculture Ladies and gentlemen analyze women's access to extension services. Women usability is always limited by gender norms standards, which hinders them to fully participate in training programs and decisions relating to agricultural practices (FAO, 2011). To overcome such hurdles it is necessary to adopt a successful strategy of the targeted approach and the cooperation with local communities as well as to change the stereotypic ideology that oppresses women. However, Increasing women's leadership in these organizations may be possible to improve their decision making at local and policy levelage (Miller & Jones, 2016). Another challenge relates to what was termed as resource which include

land, finance and technology among others. These factors have much limited women's access to credit to invest in the improvement and development of technologies in agriculture. Optimal improvement of these constraints through policy reforms and gender sensitive financial support program is likely to economically enhance the women towards enhanced productivity within the agricultural sectors. Agricultural extension services can therefore not afford to allow women fall short of these resource endowments if they are to enhance their economic productivity. However, gender sensitive training of the extension workers should also be provided so as to reflect on the needs of female farmers. Extension workers themselves should be made to understand and appreciate forms of gender disparities and make sure that female challenges in particular are captured in services delivered or programmes being implemented (Doss, 2018). If extension staff can be made knowledgeable to properly relate with women, such services will be made more responsive and gender sensitive. Last but not the least, thus access to extension services is contingent upon breaking mobility and infrastructure barriers for women. Most of the rural women cannot attend training programs due to time constraints other limitations such as lack of or poor access to transport and cultural restrictions. Training institutions can hence avail themselves using transports that can move round to conduct training for the women or conduct training that is flexible to allow these women to attend classes from home or trainings that would be planned in such a way that the women could be able to attend them easily (FAO, 2013). Therefore, this paper concludes that gender consideration in accessing agricultural extension services is vital in realizing sustainable agricultural growth and food security. Thus, if barriers to women's opportunities are removed and resource, training and decision-making on extension services are made equally accessible between the sexes, extension services can improve women productivity and support overall objective of extending its services and its impact for inclusive rural development.

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