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Full Length Research Paper

Less noise in the household: the impact of Farmer Field Schools on Gender Relations

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The study examines the impact of collective action in Kenyan Farmer Field School groups on household gender equity. Qualitative fieldwork reveal significant changes in household division of labour and decision-making; in gendered customs and traditions, and in men's work ethics and their view of women. To understand how the participatory education experience in collective action groups impacts spousal relations, two theoretical frameworks were used; collective action and gender relations and transformative learning theory. The study concludes that Farmer Field Schools generate gender impacts not only because it empowers women but because it also provides opportunities for the men, the agent of oppression in this case, to change their view on women. This suggests that equity in household gender relations may be improved through the active engagement of both women and men in non-formal adult education within mixed collective organizations. This approach provides an alternative to the widespread strategies of aid agencies that seek to enhance standing of women by targeting them as individuals.

Keywords: Gender equality, farmer field schools, agricultural extension.

INTRODUCTION

Most agree that gender equity, particularly within the household, is an important element in rural development (World Bank 2001; Razavi and Tsikata, 2003; Cornwall, 2000). Since the turn of the century, efforts to enhance household gender equity have been widely accepted by international donor agencies and mainstreamed into a variety of development interventions (O'Laughlin, 2007). Yet, gender inequality has persisted in rural Africa, and most development interventions seem to have little lasting impact on improving gender relations, especially within the household. This article focuses on the dynamics of household gender relations in rural Africa with the aim of improving our understanding of whether and how participation in non-formal educational development efforts leads to changes in gender dynamics.

Gender equity and relations have gained an increased

focus lately through the growing recognition that processes involved in alleviating poverty are more complex than simply developing ways (e.g., non-formal education programs) to give women control of productive resources (Kristjanson, Place et al., 2002). When the poor themselves are asked what poverty means to them, income is only one of a range of the aspects they highlight. Power and control over their lives seems equally important to most community members (Chambers, 1989; Narayan et al., 2000), aspects often strongly determined by gender roles and relations. Power and knowledge are, however, inseparable from each other, and, particularly in the case of gender relations, power produces knowledge and knowledge produces power (Flyvbjerg 2001; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001). Freedom is thus 'the capacity to participate effectively in shaping the social limits that define what is possible' (Hayward, 1989). As Ingram points out (1987), we learn so that we have more control over our world, and learning frees us from dependence on others. In this view, knowledge can thus be regarded as one instrument in the battle for power (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001), and thus in promoting gender equity.

Gender relations are socially determined ideas and

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Less Noise in the Household: Impact of FFSS on Gender Relations

research 8feb_12 less noise in the household the impact of farmer field schools on gender relations.pdf


Farmer Field School - A group-based learning process through which farmers carry out experiential learning activities that help them to understand the ecology of their fields, based on simple experiments, regular field observations and group analysis. The knowledge gained from these activities enables participants to make their own locally specific decisions about crop management practices. This approach represents a radical departure from earlier agricultural extension

programmes, in which farmers were expected to adopt generalized recommendations that are formulated by specialists from outside the community.

Gender relations are the specific sub-set of social relations uniting men and women as social groups in a particular community, including how power and access to and control over resources are distributed between the sexes. Gender relations intersect with all other influences on social relations - age, ethnicity, race, religion - to determine the position and identity of people in a social group. Since gender relations are a social construct, they can be transformed over time to become more equitable.

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Blue Gold Program Wiki

The wiki version of the Lessons Learnt Report of the Blue Gold program, documents the experiences of a technical assistance (TA) team working in a development project implemented by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) over an eight+ year period from March 2013 to December 2021. The wiki lessons learnt report (LLR) is intended to complement the BWDB and DAE project completion reports (PCRs), with the aim of recording lessons learnt for use in the design and implementation of future interventions in the coastal zone.

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