



SIMLESA
Sustainable Intensification of Maize
and Legume Systems for Food
Security in Eastern and Southern Africa



Australian Government
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WORKING PAPER

ENHANCING RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY ON AFRICAN FARMS

Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Cropping System for Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA) Policy Brief : A gender case from Mozambique

Promoting women and youth participation in agricultural value chains improves food security and livelihoods

Mozambique

Limited access to land and technical services inhibit the ability of women and youth to produce food affecting overall food security. Unequal roles and unilateral decision making within households give women further disadvantages and less control of their livelihoods.

Mozambique's smallholder production and livelihoods are stifled due to the unequal access woman and youth have to farming information and resources compared to men, among other factors.

The agricultural productivity of women and youth farmers in Mozambique remains well below its potential. TEXT BOX

Although crucial contributors to agriculture, particularly food production, women's efforts are not given the recognition they deserve (i.e. underpaid and undervalued). **Failure to invest in women and youth farmers is one of the major contributing factors to food insecurity in the nation.**

Research shows involving women more fully in agriculture can drive economic development, increase food security and improve household welfare.

In the maize and legume farming system, research shows men have final decision over maize crop production, while women have increased decision-making power regarding certain legumes, such as cowpeas, and groundnut, as they are mostly only for household consumption.

SIMLESA researchers recommends that promoting women's participation in the production and selling of legumes as cash crops is an opportunity to empower women, increase their household income and households' food security.

Women and youth productivity is hindered by the following issues:

Insufficiently included in capacity building. Women and youth know less about maize and legume conservation agriculture-based sustainable intensification compared to men as they are not evenly involved in capacity building.

. Women and youth need specialized agricultural training, child care and customized support to ease their double workload as farmers and caregivers.

Lack access to productive resources. A lack to productive resources limit women and youth's ability to produce the same amount as men. They own fewer assets, land, livestock, and have less access to inputs, seeds, fertilizer, labor, finance and services, training, insurance than men.

Women seldomly manage resource at the farm level although undertake farming activities. Although women perform much of the agricultural activities they are restricted by cultural norms to perform pesticide application. It is considered dangerous for women and children to manage chemical products due to the health risks that pesticides pose. The low pest control results to lower yields and food production on women's plots.

In a majority of the cases men control product marketing, household finances and women generally have less access to productive resources than male farmers. Supporters rather than actors

Face increased labor. Women and youth complete the majority of the physically demanding farming activities. This puts extensive time pressure on women who need to complete household chores as well.

Youth have abandoned working in agriculture due to its physical demands and lack of access to agricultural machinery.

Limited access to value chains. Women and youth lack access to critical areas of the of the maize and legume value chains, which negatively impact their livelihoods.

Women are more concentrated in the lower level of the value chains. Women have to sell their produce at lower prices in small quantities at local markets, transported on head, in their houses or farm gate. This reduces the profitability of maize and legume production, discourages expansion and limits control of income by women.

Cultural norms restrict women's mobility, thus reducing their access to distant and more profitable markets. Women sell their products in the local markets in small amounts occasionally, whenever they need money for household expenses. When the markets are far away, men take charge of transporting the products to the market, because women are expected to take care of the children and the house.

On the trading side, the major issue is that cultural norms, which dictate women to be heavily involved in the household chores and catering for the children and the husband restricts women's mobility to distant villages.

Men in the district revealed that they participate in marketing because they have the skills to negotiate the prices and better understand the math/accounting compared to women. The respondents added that women have low level of education, which makes them unable to read the scales well and do the mathematics involved in transactions; thus, they sometimes end up being cheated by buyers.

Women and youth seen as supporters rather than actors. Women and youth are less likely to voice their concerns and are often not acknowledged in farming groups as they are seen as supporters to men in farming systems.

Reaching women farmers can be particularly challenging because they may not be active in farmers' organizations, and only often produce crops for household consumption rather than sale.

Including women and youth in value chain networks leads to increased food production and income

SIMLESA introduced multidisciplinary approach to study how women and youth could become more involved in value chains and close the gap in maize legume systems. Following a gender assessment of the agricultural value chains for maize and leguminous crops to obtain a greater understanding of the complex gender related challenges to inform strategies. SIMLESA researchers launched an integrated package of activities, from

promoting women and youth participation in agricultural innovation platforms, increased training and gender awareness training.

Many gender sensitization efforts focused on demonstrating the economic benefits to households and communities when women and youth are fully included in agriculture.

Improving the connections between women and youth with extension services, traders, nongovernmental organizations, researchers helps to improve farmer education and capacity to produce more food and connect with value chain actors.

Agricultural innovation platforms (AIPs) improve the welfare of women and youth.

Including women as members of farmer groups at agricultural innovation platforms promotes women's participation in farming.

Agricultural innovation platforms bring together extension workers, researchers, agro-dealers, traders of the produced maize and legumes by the members of the AIPs, NGO's, practitioners to work together to improve maize and legume conservation agriculture-based sustainable intensification and their livelihoods through improved income.

SIMLESA research demonstrates that women who participate in successful AIPs are progressing better than they did before joining. Women reported that they have extra income, and that their households are more food-secure.

TEXT BOX

Women participating in SIMLESA Agricultural Innovation Platforms reported:

- Improved access to timely and reliable information on optimal farming practices
- Improved women access to farm inputs, including seed and fertilizer
- Improved crop yields, farm diversification and nutrition
- Increased participation in market
- Increased access to labor saving technologies, conservation agriculture, agricultural machinery
- Improved access to microcredit
- Ability to take leading role in innovation platforms
- Sell agricultural products at fairer prices

Women who are members of successful AIPs gain economic, social, and environmental benefits and learn how to conduct business affairs. Some married women members reported that previously they did not see the whole amount of revenue from sales of their agricultural produce, because only their husbands were involved in selling the produce. These married women had to find other means of coping with the lack of benefit from the revenue derived from the sale of their crops by farming on rented or women's groups' plots, or by covertly diverting part of the agricultural produce without their husband's knowledge, among other strategies.

This approach advocates the empowerment of women through partnerships. Through women taking an active role in different innovation-related tasks and patterns of interactions (e.g. rural-based organizations and networks); and through institutions (practices, norms), policies (research, development, and extension), and skills gained through learning informed

by both tacit and codified knowledge.

When women and youth are linked to agricultural value chains from production all the way to processing and marketing, they help make traditional farming more productive and commercially viable. Inclusive value chains also offer work opportunities for women and men off the farm.

Women take control of legumes selling. Promoting household discussions on the management of resources led to the greater inclusion of women in decision-making. This approach proved effective in securing the buy-in of male family members as well as local leaders. Increasingly, men report that they see their entrepreneurial and economically independent wives as key partners in improving household welfare. This is an important shift from previous views that women's economic power somehow threatened the role of men in the household.

Women empowerment helps household food security. Analysis of Mozambique data indicated that jointly managed by men and women plots were more likely to receive higher fertilizer application rates, than for non-food cash crops. This preference for women to secure family food production indicates that efforts to increase women's farmers' access to inputs may need to be better targeted, and joint ownership be encouraged. Furthermore, improving women's bargaining power under joint management of farm household activities could be a pathway to improve gender equality in agriculture.

Increased access to labor saving technologies benefit women and youth. The adoption of conservation agriculture-based practices significantly reduces labor required for farming activities. The use conservation agriculture powered by agricultural mechanization, specifically direct seeding treatment reduced labor by up to 28 person-days per hectare. The labor and time saved for both men and women could be allocated to other household and off-farm activities for income generation.

Such technologies has shown to be a positive method to promote the participation of youth in agricultural value chains. They also reduce women's workloads and back breaking labor, produce more and divide their time more efficiently between agricultural and home labour.

Recommendations and opportunities for policy action

Mainstream gender in Agricultural Innovation Platforms (AIPs). Policies and programs incorporating innovation system concepts need to ensure deliberate gender facilitation that takes into account household gender dynamics. This will ensure benefits and income derived from its members activities will be shared equally without regard to gender.

Access to market: There is a need to promote and increase women's access to lucrative markets and address the mobility issues. This can include working with existing women's and youth groups to strengthen their access to market opportunities, as well as related services via Information Communication Technology (ICT).

In addition, strong gender trainings and policies which target male farmers need to be crafted and executed to educate male farmers about the importance of making sure that their wives/women also have an equal say in terms of the revenue collected from agricultural sells, so that women are not left behind in terms of income/financial access and are able to reap the rewards of their hard labor. Village leaders need to be involved in campaigns to make sure that women are not only involved at the end of the value chain.

Access to information, knowledge and training: Low levels of women's participation in agricultural extension services should be addressed. In terms of policy priorities, there is a need to tailor extension services to women's needs, and to use social networks to spread agricultural knowledge. Bringing agricultural training and advice to women's doorsteps through farmer field schools and mobile phone applications and identifying female volunteer farm advisors to spread information within women's social networks is necessary.

Increase the participation of women in project activities, including demonstration plots, field days and exchange visits. Promote greater representation of women in leadership positions within the associations in order to voice women's concerns.

Focus on crops that give women advantage in terms of ownership of the proceeds and other decision-making processes. There is a potential for expansion of legumes such as soybeans and common beans. Encourage women to adopt improved legume seeds and promote value addition through processing the legumes. For instance, the processing of soybeans is important for food and nutritional security and income for the rural households.

For traders, there is a need to provide and increase access to credit services for business expansion. There is a need to support women to be more involved in trade activities through programs, which support and educate women about the importance of being entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, and how to trade and how to operate a business.

Impacts of action

Failure to act on these recommendations will lead to increase in the gap of gender inequality in the agricultural sector in Mozambique. Women and youth's reduced access to information and resources such as good quality maize and legume seeds can have detrimental effect to the productivity of maize and legumes and ultimately hamper food security situation of the country.