Gender Mainstreaming for Food Security:

Good Practices, Outcomes and Recommendations from SIMLESA Project

ASARECA Gender Mainstreaming Policy Brief No.1

Summary: Gender issues in agricultural research occasion dynamic sets of opportunities and constraints that influence the effectiveness of research. The project "*Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume cropping systems for food security in Eastern and Southern Africa* (SIMLESA)" was implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania to increase farm-level food security and productivity, in the context of climate risk and change. ASARECA led the gender mainstreaming activities in SIMLESA, by conducting capacity building and supporting instrumentation, data disaggregation and dissemination. The integration of gender in project implementation has led to, among other things, the creation of new approaches to characterization of maize-legume production, as well as input and output value chain systems and improved household livelihoods, as a result of targeted gender-responsive technologies and approaches to demonstrations and trials.

Introduction

Gender issues in agricultural research interact with other systems to produce dynamic sets of opportunities and constraints, which, in turn, influence the participation and benefits of different categories of men and women, boys and girls. These dynamics have far-reaching implications on agricultural productivity and food security, especially for smallholder farmers in different cropping systems. Gender mainstreaming is an intentional and structured process of addressing these dynamics by promoting gender equality. In agricultural research, gender mainstreaming is central to the achievement of outputs, outcomes and ultimately impacts.

The regional project, "Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume cropping systems for food security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA)" was implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, and it was aimed at increasing farm-level food security and productivity, in the context of climate risk and change. The implementation of this multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder project was led by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) and other partners, including the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), with donor support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). ASARECA led the gender mainstreaming activities in SIMLESA project, with special focus on the following aspects:

- Capacity building for the participating countries through training of local trainers and other National Agricultural Research Systems

(NARS) staff on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis;

- Provision of technical input in the use of Gender Disaggregated Data and other tools for farm-level socioeconomic surveys, data gathering and analysis on the role of gender in maize-legume systems;
- Development of communication products such as this policy brief on strategies to enhance the impact of maize-legume technologies for empowering women.

The implementation of SIMLESA has yielded useful results. New approaches to characterization of maize-legume production, input and output value chain systems, and impact pathways have been obtained. Sets of technologies and practices for productive, resilient and sustainable smallholder maize-legume cropping systems have also been developed and disseminated. In the participating countries and locations, an increased range of maize and legume varieties for smallholders is now available.

Approaches and Methods

Gender mainstreaming in SIMLESA had a two-pronged approach: (1) building capacity of the NARS scientists in the participating countries; and (2) providing technical input to various processes of the programme.

A series of regional and national level training workshops were conducted. The regional workshops were conducted under different themes, including: (1) "*Strengthening gender mainstreaming skills among NARS implementing SIMLESA"* (Arusha, Tanzania, 22- 25 February 2011); (2) "*Towards building capacity for data collection*" to enable participants acquire knowledge, tools and skills in generation and use of Gender Disaggregated Data (GDD) (Morogoro, Tanzania, 26-29 July 2011); and (3) "*Harmonizing gender mainstreaming action plans and development of case study and lesson learned*" (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 23-27 July 2012).

Farmer mapping gender roles, access to resources and preferred SIMLESA technologies for investment in Mozambique

Lessons and practical recommendations have also been generated on how to nurture and develop regional and local innovations systems, as well as build capacity for increased efficiency in agricultural research. Specific findings have been documented and disseminated on how gender mainstreaming can be conducted and used to increase the efficiency of agricultural research and productivity in intensive cropping systems.

Subsequently, in addition, national level trainings were carried out and the skills acquired were used to implement the SIMLESA activities. Case studies were compiled on the gender mainstreaming activities, and they have deepened the understanding of participating scientists and the smallholder farmers in the targeted communities on the change resulting from the gender mainstreaming efforts of the SIMLESA programme . Skills for collection and

Mr & Mrs. Chalendwain (Malawi) front of the SIMLESA trail plots for soybean and maize

interpretation of GDD analysis were also sharpened through the case studies.

An important aspect of gender mainstreaming was the selection of farmers to participate in SIMLESA trials through a set of guidelines that ensure coverage of important gender dimensions in the communities and households. Through the research protocols it adopted, the project identified at least 5 communities per district, with about 200 households per community, and one or two learning centers with several trials and demonstrations on Conservation Agriculture (CA) and other intensification technologies. This allowed various categories of people involved and thus tapped the different interests of men, women and youth through socio-culturally acceptable research procedures.

Findings: Good Practices and Lessons from Country Cases

Contribution of Gender Mainstreaming to Research Effectiveness

In addition to the achievements and benefits from the project listed here, researchers and SIMLESA partners across the countries report an increased research effectiveness and efficiency. The researchers think they are now better equipped in connecting with diverse groups of farmers and households with different gender compositions. The scientists stated that they have also improved their skills in research, design, collection of gender disaggregated data and reporting of research findings. They confirmed that the results of gender analysis can be used to design experiments, demonstrations, trials and even reveal gender-based benefits of research undertakings.

The application of gender analysis frameworks and participatory tools in community level data

Chairlady of a women's group conducts researchers through a SIMLESA demonstration/trial plot

collection have enriched the research process, by facilitating the appraisal of technology demand of a community engaged in maize-legume cropping systems in the project areas. The frameworks and tools also support the use of the case study approach in showcasing technology adoption and its impact on selected SIMLESA participating farmers.

Key Findings and Achievements

The project has registered many outcomes and is already showing significant contributions to livelihoods of participating households and groups, such as the following:

- Increased adoption of SIMLESA technologies and practices across the different gender categories , owing to benefits with respect to evident savings in labour and time and the promotion of legumes perceived to be "women's crops";
- Reduced malnutrition cases. The Wimbehealth centre in Kasungu (Malawi) reported a contribution to reduced prevalence of levels of malnutrition;
- Overall across countries, there was an increase in the access to information and technologies especially by women, owing to more frequent contact with extension workers, selection of female- led households as hosts of demonstrations and trials, increased availability of agricultural knowledge and skills to women

groups and households, and improved status of women, including those elected into leadership positions;

- Increased adoption of SIMLESA promoted technologies by individuals and groups:
- Increased income among households, including female-led households, resulting into increased investment in agriculture and payment of school fees, previously perceived as expensive. Increased yields also elicited more family participation. Members of the Liganwa women's group witnessed increased involvement of their husbands, sons and daughters in agricultural productivity and in their group activities, with improved access to microcredit services, which also improved in terms of membership, amount of borrowing and realization of 100% repayment rates.
- SIMLESA has revealed good practices and lessons in gender mainstreaming, pertinent to improving the research effectiveness and understanding of intensive maize-legume systems, as well as the impact of Conservation Agriculture on gender relations; the opportunity for fostering equitable representation in research and agricultural activities; gender, technology, seed systems and asset inter linkages; and the implication of capacity levels in gender on research and disaggregation of data.

Some Success Stories

- Adoption of zero or minimum tillage agriculture, weed control through cover crop/mulching and use of herbicides critically reduced labour demands at peak seasons of land preparation and weeding in Mtunthama village in Malawi.
- Access to new skills and production resources by Nakhafu Women's Group in Syekumulo Village, Bumula sub-location in Bungoma County (Kenya) enabled them to venture into more innovative ways of improving family income. Instead of waiting for new improved seeds, the women in the group found means of propagating the improved seeds for example desmodium spp and exchanging it for milk for the household;
- Farmers have formed linkages from the SIMLESA activities to improve supply inputs; these ensure, for example, timely supply of good quality seed to farmers. For instance, the Abelha-IDEAA association found in Macate village, Gondola district, Manica Province in central Mozambique has improved the access and supply of several varieties of maize seeds, such as Tsangano, Dimba and Olipa.
- In Gerbi community in the Gerbi-wudinaboren Kebele administration, Adamitulu Judo Kombolcha district, Eastern Showa Rural Zone in Oromiya Region of Ethiopia, the community acknowledged and adopted Conservation Agriculture (CA) because the practice reduces frequency of ploughing and reduces production costs, especially the cost of land preparation and weed control; therefore, it is very suitable for female and elderly farmers since it demands less labour. Better performance of the crop has also been reported on plots under CA, where crop residue is retained in the field as compared to the traditional practices.

Towards Gender Mainstreaming in Agricultural Research

Here are a few general findings that emerge from the experience of the SIMLESA project:

- At the institutional level, the existence of too few gender specialists among agricultural researchers poses a challenge of sustainability of gender interventions in agricultural research. It is, therefore, necessary to build this capability in scientists as part of project implementation and ensure that all gender dimensions are captured in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting.
- At the community level, involvement of existing women's, youths' and men's groups will enhance access to technologies and promote realization of group objectives. It is important to establish gender sensitive criteria to select the farmers to host and participate in demonstrations and field trials.
- At the research project level, improved research quality will depend on the extent to which sex and gender disaggregated data has been developed. After undertaking gender analysis, projects should be redesigned to include gender sensitive indicators and enhance its implementation in equitable ways to address gender issues, including access and control of productive resources (including land), information and technologies, inputs and supplies, credit and other research and agricultural intensification outcomes.
- Specific targeting of the youth through information dissemination and invitation to meetings to discuss their participation ensures greater youth participation in agricultural innovations for improved productivity.

This brief is based on the gender mainstreaming activities in SIMLESA project implementation. It includes information on the gender trainings conducted, partner monitoring and evaluations, review meetings as well as commissioned studies to document outcomes of gender mainstreaming. Funding for SIMLESA was secured from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

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