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SYNOPSIS

Mainstreaming Gender in Rural Development Operations

SUMMARY OF A TECHNICAL NOTE ON GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONS[1]

Introduction

Women are at the nexus of rural development, food security, and agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), making up a large but statistically underrepresented contributor to rural life through their paid and unpaid employment. Yet they have less access than men to productive assets such as land, water, credit, and agriculture inputs. It is estimated that if rural women in developing countries had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output by as much as 4 percent, thereby reducing the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17 percent. Discrimination against women as food producers, therefore, is not only a violation of their rights; it also has social and economic costs because of the considerable productivity losses it entails.

The technical note summarized here provides guidance for project managers and policy makers on how to embed the gender perspective in rural development projects in LAC. It reviews gender equality challenges that should be taken into account when designing rural development policies or projects and identifies ways to meet those challenges. The summary provides important questions to answer during the project cycle and indicators to monitor and evaluate projects' gender-related results.

Challenges to gender equality in rural development projects

The absence or ineffectiveness of public policies to reduce gender gaps in land inheritance laws, water rights, extension services, access to productive assets, and subsidies is cutting into the performance of the agricultural sector, particularly as women continue to take the place of men lost to northward migration.

Some of the challenges and inequities that the region's women face are outlined below.

Employment and social participation

Rural women in LAC work more than 12 hours per day to sustain their households, putting in at least three times more

1. The full note "Mainstreaming Gender in Agricultural Operations" (Technical Note 8, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, December 2014) is one of a series of sector-specific technical notes that have been developed as practical guides to support implementation of IDB's Operational Policy on Gender Equality. Full note prepared by Barbara Coello (Senior Social Rural Economist), in collaboration with Anne-Marie Urban (SCL/GDI), with comments from Maria Claudia Perazza, Lina Piedad Salazar, Ricardo Quiroga, Ricardo Vargas del Valle, Sybille Nuenninghoff (INE/RND), as well as Luis Marquez, Nathyeli Acuña and Paola Buitrago (SCL/GDI). Editing by Steven Kennedy.

hours than men in unremunerated activities such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, collecting firewood, and caring for the very young and the elderly. Women also are more likely than men to work at part-time, seasonal, and informal jobs that pay less and offer fewer benefits but allow the greater flexibility that women require.

Uncompensated activities result in lost opportunities for women, who do not have the time to attend classes, obtain training, travel to markets to sell produce, or undertake other activities to improve their earning power and obtain greater recognition. Women also have less access to labor-saving technology and are less likely to participate in producer organizations and cooperatives.

Tangible assets: Land, water, credit, technology

The benefits of any rural-development project or policy depend on the availability of assets which tend to be less readily available for female-headed households.

Land. The unequal distribution of land contributes to the high incidence of rural poverty typical among rural women in Latin America. Just 18 to 30 percent of landholders in LAC countries are women, and their plots tend to be smaller than men's.

Gender inequality in land ownership is related to male preference in inheritance, male privilege in marriage, male bias in land-distribution programs, and gender bias in the land market. Women are less likely than men to acquire land from official land-redistribution programs, though several countries have found ways to include more women.

Water. In most LAC countries women have limited access to water for productive uses. Access to water and irrigation depends not only on the availability of water, but also on the legal and regulatory systems governing its distribution and use. In most countries in the region, access to water is contingent on land tenure; as a result, women may find themselves disadvantaged.

Access to credit. Women are less likely to possess the collateral needed to obtain credit because they are generally poorer than men, are paid less for their labor time, and own fewer assets. Other impediments include less education, mobility constraints, and social networks, which may be important for reaching the appropriate person within a bank, for example.

Access to technology. Gender gaps exist for access to a wide range of agricultural inputs and technologies, including machines and tools, improved plant varieties and animal breeds, fertilizers, pest-control measures, and management techniques. Women are much less likely to use such inputs and tools.

Knowledge and extension services

Agricultural research and development, including extension services, have largely ignored women's role in crop production and failed to recognize their need for technology and information. Where extension services are available, women tend to have less access to them.

Extension agents tend to approach male farmers more often than female farmers because of the general misconception that women do not farm. Time, and transportation constraints, as well as women's lower levels of literacy, Spanish proficiency, and access to information also can further hinder participation in extension activities.

Gender sensitivity in counterpart organizations and implementing teams

Most public institutions and implementing agencies do not involve men and women equally in the design, implementation, management, monitoring, and evaluation of policies or projects. Officials and managers may not be aware of existing gender policy or legislation, and implementing teams may lack the capacity or the resources to translate gender policy into action.

Data and measurement

A paucity of accurate sex-disaggregated agricultural data leads to underestimation of the evolving role and contribution of women in the agricultural labor force. Women's participation in agriculture is difficult to measure because data are usually collected at the farm level, and only the gender of the "principal farmer" is usually reported. Farming roles are rarely disaggregated by sex. Most current surveys pay little or no attention to matters such as the gender-differentiation of asset ownership, how assets are acquired, or the person using them.

Finally the agriculture sector has always focused activities and data collection on production. Other activities (such as transformation, logistics, or commercialization) where women tend to be more concentrated have received less attention.

Addressing the gender challenges: Proposed actions

Employment and social participation

Take into account women's time demands, transportation needs, and safety concerns in designing and executing project activities. Plan project activities at times that are well aligned with women's needs and responsibilities. Ease women's time constraints by providing affordable childcare or transportation.

Take steps to inform women about the project. Target communication activities to include venues that women producers frequent. Have women communicate with women, as social norms may deter women from asking questions of male facilitators. Conduct project activities in languages that will ensure participation of both women and men. Before choosing communication technologies, ensure that certain categories of women are not excluded (for example, those who do not have a mobile phone).

Adopt a gender perspective that heightens understanding of the distinct roles, needs, and opportunities of different household members. Understand how women allocate their labor time, to which type of crop, and to which tasks in the agricultural value chain.

When designing technological packages in different interventions customize them to take into account women's particular preferences and conditions—such as time constraints, lower access to inputs, and their need to contract male labor for the heaviest physical tasks.

Support rural women's producer organizations and workers' unions that can play a vital role in negotiating fairer and safer conditions for employment, including better product prices and wages.

Increase market opportunities for women's crops as a way to improve women's discretionary income and decision-making power. Projects focused on cash and major commodity crops generally have low potential to reach women farmers effectively.

Increase women's empowerment and leadership by promoting recognition of their activities in the household and in producer organizations. When reinforcing producer groups, cooperatives, and so on, design incentives to propel more women into leadership roles, and teach skills that will enable women to build their social and political capital.

Tangible assets: Land, water, credit, technology

When designing land projects, seek joint titling for couples and pursue measures such as priority for female heads of household or quotas for women in land-distribution schemes. Link land registers with the marriage registry to systematically register women and inform them of their rights.

Assess women's access to water and include water availability as a topic in agro-ecological efforts and interventions.

Require lower amounts of collateral from women. Consider relaxing the eligibility criteria for agricultural investment or services so as to facilitate women's participation.

Explore ways to improve women's access to agricultural technology.

Knowledge and extension services

Recognize and apply women's knowledge of traditional farming practices. Design training courses to build relevant skills and reduce knowledge gaps between men and women.

Include the gender perspective in agriculture research centers and in the ministry of agriculture. Ensure that extension agents, male and female, are sensitive to the realities, needs, and constraints of rural women.

Open projects to women scientists, research managers, lecturers, and academics, who can help agencies better address the challenges faced by women farmers, while also serving as role models.

Institutional capacity and awareness

"Engender" the human resources of counterpart organizations. Allocate resources to provide gender training for agencies responsible for implementing projects and delivering services. Recruit a gender specialist to maximize the gender-equality benefits of the intervention.

Monitor the budget, since in many cases an implementing agency may emphasize gender in order to be chosen for the project but later subordinate it.

Data and measurement

Enlarge agricultural data collection and research to measure everyone's roles and responsibilities and to cover the spillover effects of mainstreaming gender in agriculture and rural development. Include women among interviewers and supervisors to facilitate responses to culturally sensitive questions.

Proposed questions to guide gender mainstreaming throughout the project cycle

(See the full note for additional questions)

Area of intervention	Proposed questions
General	Is a gender analysis available for the sector in which the intervention will occur?
Employment and social participation	What barriers limit the participation of women in the project? Are women represented in the project team? Are the opportunity costs of participation different for men and women? Should the project compensate women for those costs in order to ensure their participation? Will the project promote trade in subsectors where women have a prominent role?
Tangible assets: Land, water, credit, technology	Are there de facto conditions that exclude most women by requiring land ownership, too much cultivated land, or previous experience with a specific type of crop? Is the land-reform component of the project designed in such a way as to decrease gender inequality in land ownership?
Knowledge and extension services	Have training courses been designed to build relevant skills and reduce knowledge gaps? Will the project raise awareness of gender issues in the training offered to extension agents?
Institutional capacity and awareness	Does the government (central or local) have institutional mechanisms to support the gender-equality goals of the project? Will a gender specialist be recruited to mainstream gender in the project's various components?
Data and measurement	Are sex-disaggregated data being collected during all phases of the project? Does the intervention have a plan to measure its impact on gender equality?

Sample indicators for gender mainstreaming in agricultural operations

(See the full note for a longer set of indicators). The following indicators should be disaggregated by gender.

Area of intervention	Outputs	Outcomes
General indicators	# beneficiaries participating in (or leading) organizations, cooperatives, and groups # beneficiaries who received training or technical assistance # recipients of direct financial support (matching grant, conditional cash transfer, vouchers, other)	% increase in agricultural producers' adoption of environmentally friendly technologies % increase in population owning or co-owning equipment and tools for production, processing, and commercialization % increase in beneficiaries with jobs in the formal sector thanks to the project
Research, extension, and modernization services	New technologies developed with emphasis on tasks and crops or livestock # farmers who have access to extension services or received visit from extension agent # extension agents who were trained on gender issues	% increase in farmers adopting a new technology or new farming practices % increase in farmers satisfied with extension services % increase in farmers with access to productive resources (specify)
Land titling and registration	# new land titles registered # beneficiaries of natural resource concessions	% change in ownership of agricultural land and property % beneficiaries obtaining land title through project / total population without land title
Infrastructure and market access	# newly registered businesses per year # landless farmers with access to water from irrigation schemes	% increase in beneficiaries with access to services and facilities (irrigation, electrification, water supply, and sanitation) due to project % increase in producers accessing markets as a result of project investments

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