Can Membership in Farmers and Rural Producers Organizations be a Pathway to Cultivate Gender Equality?

Maria Fay Rola-Rubzen and Rahma Adam
• **Sub-Saharan Africa** and **South Asia** have the highest concentration of poor in the world
• **Agriculture** - major source of livelihoods of the poor

**Issues:**
- Soil degradation
- Low productivity
- Poorly functioning markets
- Vulnerable to climate change

• Conservation agriculture sustainable intensification
  - SIMLES - sub-Saharan Africa
  - SRFS - South Asia

─ **Issue:** Despite women’s active participation in farm activities, their participation and benefits from CASI are low
SIMLESA

- Focus on Agricultural Innovation Platforms (AIPs)

SRFSI

- Gender mainstreaming used multi-pronged approach
Objectives

Research question:
Can membership in farmer groups improve women’s access to resources and technology, and if so, does this result to welfare improvement and gender equity?

Research objective:
Assess the impact of farmer groups to women’s access to resources and technology, markets, income and household welfare.
Research approach

SIMLESA

- Agricultural Innovation Platforms (AIPs) involved
  - 6 Kenya
  - 6 Mozambique
  - 6 Rwanda
  - 6 Tanzania
  - Total 24 AIPs

- Key informant interviews (66 farmers)
  - Management members of the AIPs (i.e. president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer)
  - Interviewed 2 to 3 informants for each AIP

- Focus-group discussions:
  - 427 farmers (198 Males & 229 Females)

SRFSI

- Farmer groups, Self-help groups and Innovation Platforms (IPs)

- Key informant interviews
  - 9 organisations/ models
  - 1 Nepal (iDE)
  - 1 West Bengal, India (Farmer’s club)
  - 4 Bihar, India (JEEViKA, Arayank, SAKHI, DeHaat)
  - 3 Bangladesh (RDRS IP, RDRS FUF, GTFC)

- Focus-group discussions:
  - 404 farmers (218 Males & 186 Females)
  - Nepal (2 districts), India (1 district), Bangladesh (2 districts)
SIMLESA Results

- Brought together extensions, researchers, agro-dealers, NGO’s, practitioners to educate farmers about sustainable intensification agriculture techniques

- Women and men members of the AIPs **received more information on good agricultural practices** (i.e., importance of the use of improved varieties of seeds, practicing the use of SI technologies, etc)
Increased access in credit and thus able to access farm inputs (e.g., in Kenya women AIP members have been able to access credit through Twaweza fund, Equity bank, etc; in Mozambique AIP women and men members have been able to access funds through institutions such as AGRIMEC, GAPI and ADEM)
SIMLES A Results

➢ Women and men farmers experienced increased yields of crops (maize and legumes) and dairy products, as well as diversification related benefits.

They also have experienced higher income earnings, particularly profits and some dividends (business related benefits), through collective marketing.

Patricia from LIGANWA women’s group in Kenya with her bumper harvest: from 1.5 bags to 14 bags after learning about the right amount of fertilizer and selection of good seeds from KALRO.

Patricia, Christine and Rosemary, group members of LIGANWA in Kenya.
SIMLESRA Results

- Women and men members of the AIP experienced infrastructural related benefits, particularly seen in Rwanda for Huguka Mudende AIP, which focused on production of Irish potatoes seedlings and Irish potatoes roots for selling and consumption (roots) & milk production for selling and household consumption.

The Cassava Innovation Platform in Rwanda was even able to produce well packaged cassava flour for sale in Kigali city and other parts of the country.
SIMLES A Results

- Experienced environmental benefits (i.e., improved soil health, social benefits and infrastructure related benefits, e.g., able to build storage facilities, etc.)
- Spill over effects (i.e., able to provide health insurance to the members of the AIP as seen by Terimbere Rugeshi AIP in Rwanda)

Some of the AIP members from Terimbere Rugeshi AIP, with the woman president Ms. Nikuze who pioneered the idea of health insurance (standing second from the right)
SRFSI Results: Impact in Nepal (KII)

- Innovation platform was created to provide avenue for innovative ideas in solving problems through multi-stakeholder engagement
- Women farmers, together with men members, were encouraged to participate in innovation platform
- Women farmers had good interaction with various actors in the IP
- They were able to share their knowledge and problems to concerned actors
- **Direct impact:** Some women had benefitted from **access to shallow-tubewell and seed support** from District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) through IP.

Figure 1: Agricultural innovation model in Nepal
NARC, 2016
• JEEViKA was scaled-out to 534 blocks in Bihar State
• Each SHG is composed of 10-20 women, 80% are poor
• Each Village Organisation (VO) is composed of 8 SHGs
• **Direct impact:** Access to resources from agencies
• VOs then are organised into Cluster Level Federation (CLF) then into Block Level Federations (BLF)
• **Direct impact:** Better support from agencies at the cluster and block level

Source: JEEViKA, 2018

SHGs – Self Help Groups; VOs – Village Organisations; CLFs – Cluster Level Federations; Block Level Federations.
BAU: Bihar Agricultural University; ICAR: Indian Council for Agricultural Research

Rola-Rubzen et al., 2019
SRFSI Results: Impact in West Bengal, India

- Farmers’ club program was established in 2015 to provide credit, technology transfer, awareness and capacity building to farmers.
- Through FCs, most women had positive experience with zero tillage technology: labour-saving, drudgery-reducing, decrease cost of cultivation, seed saving, irrigation water and time saving, less time for fertilising, and early planting of wheat and maize crops.
- Resulted in **yield and income increases** and was spent on improved **dietary nutrition, schooling of children, less tension and conflict in household, more leisure time**.
- Some women are interested in operating machinery but none were trained as drivers.
- Women were as interested as men in CASI technologies but had limited exposure.

Table 1. Farmer’s Club investigated in West Bengal, India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Establish</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satmille Satish Club “O” Pathagar</td>
<td>Chhatelajan village, Cooch Behar district</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>110 (35 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabuj Mitra Farmers Club</td>
<td>Durganagar village, Cooch Behar district</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>122 (20 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tufanganj Anwesa Welfare Society</td>
<td>Mansai village, Tufanganj-II, Cooch Behar district</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7 (2 females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahadipur Farmers’ Club</td>
<td>Mahadiput village, Chanchal-II, Malda district</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>22 (5 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabuj Bahini Farmers’ Club</td>
<td>Bidyanandapur, Chanchal-II, Malda district</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10 (0 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonarai Farmers’ Club</td>
<td>Sonarai village, Chanchal-II, Malda district</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>21 (8 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manikchak Progressive Farmers Club</td>
<td>Manickchak, Malda district</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>12 (1 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivekananda Farmers Club</td>
<td>Kalinagar village, Gazole, Malda district</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>42 (14 female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gourangapur Farmers’ Club</td>
<td>Gourangapur village, Gazole, Malda district</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>11 (1 female)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS) is an NGO that empowers poor and women farmers.

- 385 federations with 330,000 household members
- Each federation has 1,200 members
- Most federations have large membership of women and youth.

Two components of innovation platform (IP):

- Agricultural Community Clinic and Information Centre
- Business operation through provision of machinery and inputs

Direct Impact: provision of services, capacity building, linkages, information and logistic support.

Rola-Rubzen et al., 2019
Access to CASI technologies and support was facilitated through farmer groups.

Female farmers, as well as male farmers, benefitted: savings in labour, increased yield, saved time, and lowered costs.
Conclusion & policy implications

- Participation of women in farmer groups help facilitate access to technology, credit, and market access, leading to more equitable outcomes.
- In the context of conservation agriculture technologies, women membership resulted in increased income, which led to improvement in household welfare.
- Impacts include:
  - Higher incomes
  - Reduction in farm labour use and labour costs
  - Reduction in production costs
  - Reduced drudgery of their work
Conclusion & policy implications cont.

- More time to do other productive tasks and more leisure time
- Better education – increased income from CASI allowed them to send their children to better schools,
- Better nutrition for their family
- Thus, innovation platforms, farmer groups, and self-help groups play key roles in improving women’s access to resources, technology and markets, increase income and household welfare and can be a pathway for gender equity
- But some challenges remain such as limited training opportunities relative to men, hence membership in organisations should be coupled with other gender mainstreaming strategies
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Thank you

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