



Australian Government
Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research



ACIAR POLICY BRIEF

Research findings with policy implications

Promoting Gender and Youth Inclusiveness through AIPs: Voices from SIMLESA

KEY MESSAGES:

Policy on (gender and youth) needs to be focused on mentoring, supported by national governments through a Gender and Youth Strategic Interests Alliance, to ensure research, policy and investment institutions engage.

Policy proclamation alone cannot achieve gender mainstreaming and strategic interests. There is need for related mechanisms, including laws and supportive instruments from the government, non-governmental and private sectors for effective implementation.

Agricultural Innovation Platforms (AIP) combine the principles of cooperatives (commercial goals), CBO's (community or collective approach), higher level partnerships (value chains), and social welfare. They are effective mechanisms to channel policy solutions that target gender and youth.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

SIMLESA case research (see Stake 1995) illustrate AIPs are an effective mechanism for gender mainstreaming and addressing strategic interests. This realisation bolstered SIMLESA's resolve to establish 58 AIPs. Findings among 6 most successful AIPs in Tanzania, Rwanda, Mozambique and Kenya illustrate policy, capital investments, knowledge and skills, access to credit and smart identification of business niches determined gendered access to SI benefits.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES:

- Gender equity in agriculture faces numerous barriers (e.g. Doss 2001; Agrawal 1997). For instance, SIMLESA findings in Kagera Tanzania (Adam 2011) show women were excluded from openly and directly engaging with traders to sell beans. They did so clandestinely, without their husbands' knowledge. Similar situations were observed in South Asia (Agrawal 1997).
- Across eastern and southern Africa (ESA) women, children and the youth are quite often limited to participating at the food production level, while men dominate commercial processing and marketing.
- Agriculture in ESA underperforms partly because of severe gender and youth-related gaps in access to opportunities, agricultural resources, social and cultural challenges (Doss and Morris 2001; Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2010; Quisumbing and Pandolfelli 2010).
- Gender equity is the process of allocating resources, programs, and decision-making fairly to both males and females without any discrimination on the basis of sex, age, among others and addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to males and females.
- Successful Agricultural Innovation Platforms (AIP) were effective vehicles for generation of, and equitable sharing of benefits of agricultural sustainable intensification (SI).
- Policy facilitated investments. These are critical enablers of small start-ups, private public partnerships, and appropriate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that generate equitable opportunities.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS: SIMLESA RESEARCH

1. Gender mainstreaming (Reeves and Baden 2000)

SIMLESA gender findings provide useful guide for integrating gender into existing institutions of the mainstream.

a) Successful AIPs are effective vehicles to entrench gender and youth participation

AIP (Rwanda)	No. groups	No. of Women	% (women)	No. men	% (men)	Membership
Mudende	23	226	37	384	63	610
Gataraga	33	501	62	302	38	803
KIAI	5	74	58	54	42	128

b) Successful AIPs in Rwanda and Kenya had a healthy ratio of women to men leaders—39:61

Key leadership positions (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and counsellor in Rwanda) mattered in equitable generation and sharing of benefits. The age range of AIPs was wide, ranging from 20 years to over 60. The distribution of leadership was influenced by public policy, culture and founding principles of AIPs.

2. Strategic (gender) interests (UNESCO 2003)

These focus on fundamental (esp. structural) issues of inequities among women and men. Strategic gender interests rely heavily on gender planning and policy development tools, such as the Moser Framework (March *et al.*, 1999). These determine how women, youth and men generate and share SI benefits.

a) These benefits are:

- i) **Farm diversification related**—especially increased yields (more than 100% average for cassava, milk and potato) within periods of 3 years of AIP maturity in Rwanda. These had direct influence on maize SI as income from these activities resulted in more input use in maize production.

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- ii) **Business**—the mainstay of successful AIPs, which included i) higher incomes esp. dividends and profits, previously non-existent. These stemmed from equitable market access. ii) Entrepreneurship skills iii) inputs cost reduction—collective purchasing and access to cheaper credit (Misiko *et al.*, 2016).
- iii) **Social**—successful AIPs prioritised diversification and integration of enterprises. This improved diets and nutrition. Integration enhanced societal harmony; “brought together” diverse actors based on complementarity, reduced drudgery among women e.g. commercial cassava cleaning at KIAI.
- iv) **Environment**—collective action increased efficient land management—reduced soil erosion. Among the 58 SIMLESA AIPs, a key ecological benefit has been reduction in incidences of stubborn weeds after the initial investments in herbicide use. Reduced weeding is a key benefit among women; it freed time and increased focus on other beneficial activities.
- v) **Infrastructural**—Mudende AIP (Western Province, Rwanda) and KIAI benefitted from targeted infrastructural investments. Mudende got a potato greenhouse, potato seed storage centre, land (by the government), credit for electric cables, milk collection center facility, etc. The local government constructed feeder road as a result of AIP success. KIAI acquired a processing plant, a produce cleaning facility, office (which also served as a community resource center), storage facility, a ten ton lorry for supplies and product transport. These were aided by United States African Development Foundation (USADF), while land was given by the government. Men and women equitably owned AIP assets.

b) Determinants of equitable benefits generation, and sharing

- i) Guided donor investments and contributions including research and skills. KIAI illustrates the need for **complementary donor investments**: United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) research-into-use fund enabled the availability of improved cassava varieties (and initiated KIAI), United States African Development Foundation (USADF) aided the construction of processing and storage facilities, Rwanda Government guaranteed 40% contribution on capital equipment to ensure affordability, AIP membership provided 60%; RAB performed national coordination.
- ii) Smart business niche identification—enabled wider benefits generation, minimised failure and reduced competition among farmer entities.
- iii) Trainings and mentoring process of national officers at RAB and AIP officials.
- iv) Partnerships—public, private, research and donors joined forces to align/ complement efforts.
- v) Right business niche attracted private investment support, and the right value chain partnerships.

What agricultural policy can do?

Gender mainstreaming and strategic interests require two elements: (i) integrating a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulating measures and spending programmes, and (ii) addressing the issue of representation of women and men in the given policy area (e.g. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion 2010), with the goal of promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination. In addition, mainstreaming is a process that involves men and women, in collective processes that require systematic investments and mentoring of leadership to coordinate plans as illustrated through successful AIPs.

Evidence shows policy is critical to catalyze investments. However, policy needs to be operationalized through laws and supportive instruments. In Rwanda, gender is entrenched within wider policy and operationalized through strategic planning instruments. Equally crucial, there is:

- a) Widespread policy awareness, among AIP actors.
- b) Monitoring and evaluation and setting clear roles, especially in public institutions—setting and observance of minimum conditions for registering AIP/ cooperatives.
- c) Clear and guaranteed individual/collective ramifications for non-conformity. Women had legal redress if equity was not upheld.
- d) Successful AIPs are anchored on legally established cooperatives. However, weak AIP were concerned about registration taxation. A key policy suggestion is tax exemption for the initial three years of “infancy” or until 30 percent profitability, whichever comes first.

National institutions—especially RAB played critical roles in strategic projects right from initiation. And esp. in national coordination. RAB officials were mentored, and supported by internationally available skills, including SIMLESA. Policy on (gender and youth) needs to be focused on mentoring, supported by national governments through a Gender and Youth Strategic Interests Alliance, to ensure research, policy and investment institutions engage. This is necessary to guide institutionalisation of AIP, including through regular national budgeting.

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