Understanding gender roles in cropping systems with plantain in West and Central Africa

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Presentation

- Gender concepts
- Examples from literature
- Including gender analysis
Gender as a social relation

• Gender: “The ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another” (Bravo-Baumann, 2000)

• Gender relations are specific to societies and time

• Gender relations are social relations of power

• Gender influences division of tasks, access to land, information, knowledge and networks and is therefore an important factor in shaping opportunities
Being gender-responsive..

- Recognizing that women and men have different roles and responsibilities in farming and farm enterprises
- Expanding your areas of investigation beyond the visible activities that are often under men’s control to bring women’s often ‘invisible’ activities to light
Ashanti region In Ghana (Dankyi et al., 2007)

Objective: Identify plantain production practices and constraints

- Survey in 24 communities in Ashanti region, Ghana totaling 259 farmers (52% Men)
- Average age 47 y (only 7% below 30 y)

“Mainly slash and burn agriculture: establishing the initial right to land is accomplished through clearing the land, a task generally assigned to men”
Ashanti region In Ghana (Dankyi et al., 2007)

- 25% of farmers had heard from new released plantain varieties
- 85% of farmers did not threat suckers before planting

Research in Ghana (Doss & Morris., 2000) suggests that gender-linked differences in technology adoption result from gender-linked differences in resource access to external inputs especially land, labor and extension service
Southern Cameroon (Bisseleua et al., 2007)

• Objective: “understand the mechanisms of land acquisition by women in southern Cameroon and the impact of their management practices on the incidence of pest, diseases, yields and income in Traditional Forest Gardens”

• Survey 55 women of which 74% widow, 9% divorced, 6% single, 11% married
Southern Cameroon (Bisseleu et al., 2007)

89% of women cultivated plantain, mainly as food crop

“The primary task of a wife is to cultivate food crops that shade the cocoa seedlings and which are used to meet the daily household requirement”
Nigeria, Kogi state (Audu, 2009)

- Objective: shed light on the degree of involvement of men and women in agricultural production in the area
- Survey 120 farmers ‘random sample’
- Women slightly dominate in plantain production (58.3% ownership of plants)
- Land clearing (71.1% men)
- Women dominated in the rearing of small animals (poultry, goats, sheep)

“Women don’t ride bicycle in the area. The women that transported farm produce did it on their heads”
Understanding the role of women and men in cropping systems

• Land
  • Availability
  • Control & Access

• Labor
  • Allocation
  • Availability of labor market

• Other resources
  • Access to external inputs such as seed, fertilizer, credit
  • Access to knowledge and information

• Needs / opportunities
  • Household consumption / nutrition needs
  • Opportunities for commercialization (market demand)
Summarizing

Little literature found that explicitly studies and describes gender-differences with regards to cropping systems

• Women dominate in home-garden production
• Men dominate in ‘field’ production
• Women often contribute labor to men’s fields
• Constraints and opportunities are not the same for men and women
• Where are the young?
Summarizing

Although we often know (something) about gender-linked differences in production systems, in design and implementation of projects, trials and studies they are often not taken into account.

• Samples do not make sense
• Results are not differentiated for gender
• Men and women of all ages are approached as one homogenous group ‘Farmers’
Which cropping systems do we consider?

• What kind of gender-linked differences?
  – Objectives (consumption / sale)
  – Intercrops
  – Agro-biodiversity /cultivar variation
  – Use of inputs
  – Volumes produced

• Who contributes labor to production?
Gender analysis

• **Gender analysis** is the collection and examination of information about the different roles, experience, capacities, needs, constraints and priorities of women and men.

• Gender analysis should form part of a wider situational analysis to understand the social and economic complexities of the context in which research and development activities are being carried out.
Rules

• Collect gender-disintegrated data and show gender-disintegrated results
• Don’t expect men to answer for women and vice versa
• Doing household surveys doesn’t imply only interviewing ‘head of households’
• Women-led households are not representative for all female farmers
Gender responsive research questions

Including a gender analysis means explicitly inquiring about:

1. Gendered division of labour
2. Gendered livelihoods
3. Gendered access to and control over resources
4. Gendered Decision-making Processes
1. Gendered division of labour

- Multiple roles
- The reproductive sphere
- Crop production
- Seasonality
2. Gendered livelihoods

• Informal activities
• Various sources of income
• Non-staple crops
• Non-timber forest products (NTFPs)
• Non-market activities
• Animal rearing
3. Gendered access to and control over resources

- Informal access to resources
- Gendered spaces
- Control over resources
4. Gendered Decision-making Processes

- Decision-making within the household
- Decision-making within the community
“Men and women exist and act within a network of social relations, and, [...] to some extent these social relations (with spouses, siblings, parents, friends, kin group members, etc.) both enable and constrain action. Decisions are seldom taken or implemented by men or women in isolation, with no reference to joint interests and projects or to the interests and projects of others. Thus, a simplistic conception of individual decision-making and individual action can be dangerously misleading” (Sumberg & Okali 2013)
THANKS