

Putting gender at the heart of Africa RISING research in the Ethiopian Highlands

The number of women engaged in agriculture is increasing as more men withdraw from farming in search of higher paying employment. The ability of women to realize their full productive potential is constrained by numerous social, economic, political and environmental factors (IFPRI 2012).

Africa RISING aims to provide support for social, technological and economic empowerment, through intensification of farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, while conserving or enhancing the natural resource base.

To narrow the gender gap in agriculture, project research in the Ethiopian highlands is guided by a gender action plan. This aims to improve the nutritional status and welfare of women and children and also empower women to have decision-making power about agricultural production. It also addresses issues around access to and control over productive resources, control over use of income, *leadership in the community and efficient time use*.



Photo 1: Behafta(left) teaching fellow farmers on benefits of farming potato in Endamehoni Woreda (Photo credit: Africa RISING/ Branislav Cika).

Gender is a cross-cutting thematic area and it is integrated into all of Africa RISING's research and development interventions in the Ethiopian Highlands. This is done through purposeful gender mainstreaming into ongoing research interventions and through strategic gender research.

Gender work within Africa RISING has four primary objectives:

- To diagnose and characterize the most important constraints that hold back women from achieving full productive potential and income generation (including the types of gender relations, norms and structures) that influence these outcomes positively or negatively;

- To develop, test and evaluate approaches for increasing women's participation in and benefits from research in Africa RISING's research sites;
- To identify and analyse opportunities for technological, institutional and market innovations that improve women's access to and control of resources and benefits.
- To enhance the capacity of researchers and local staff to collect, analyse and interpret sex/gender disaggregated data and use this information to address gender-based constraints in integrated farming systems.

Research

To achieve these objectives, several research activities are being undertaken and these are highlighted below:

A *Systematic literature review* has been carried out to understand agricultural intensification in Ethiopia and to identify and characterize the most important constraints that underpin the 'gender gaps' that hinder women in integrated farming systems from achieving full productivity potential and income generation. These gender-based constraints are categorized into seven capitals (human, social, physical, financial, natural, political and cultural capitals) which give a holistic perspective of the resources required to successfully intensify agriculture in Ethiopia. The literature review has revealed that, although previous studies have investigated the determinants of technology adoption in Ethiopia, the gender-specific constraints that affect technology adoption and sustainable intensification are not well documented. Little attention has been paid to understanding how gender issues affect technology adoption within and across households, particularly adoption of multiple technologies.

Increasing participation of women farmers in each step of research is critical. Innovation platforms (IPs) are used as instruments to foster inclusion of both men and women farmers in research. For IPs to be effective instruments for generation, sharing and application of new knowledge and technologies that benefit men and women, gender analysis of innovation platforms is being conducted to understand men and women's involvement in research activities, the gender responsiveness of selected interventions and how IP processes affect participation of men and women. IP processes analyzed include: how men and women work together, participation, decision making, the roles of men and women and communication. Information is captured through participant observation and documentation during IP meetings. Factors that hinder/foster women farmer

participation in and benefit from research in Africa RISING Ethiopia's research sites are being documented and strategies put in place to alleviate the constraints.



Photo 1: Africa RISING Gender Capacity Development Workshop, (Photo credit: ILRI/Apollo Habtamu)

Increasing women's participation in value chains. Increasing women's participation in and benefits from value chain development is of great importance to the project. Introduction of more effective, labour-saving and safe butter processing technologies in rural areas was identified as one of the niches that could boost women's participation in dairy value chains, leading to increased income and nutritional benefits at household level.

Gender capacity development is recognized as important to staff and partners' capacity to diagnose and address gender inequalities in agriculture. Therefore gender capacity development for staff and local partners is being conducted to equip them with knowledge, skills and tools to conduct gender analysis, be able to understand the gender disparities and use the information to design strategies to address them. Staff and local partners have been exposed to the different concepts of gender and the importance of integrating gender in agricultural programs, basic tools and techniques for conducting gender analysis in agricultural development work, gendered approaches to assessing agricultural value chains, different energizers that can introduce gender issues, and participatory communication strategies that can be used to address gender issues.

Promote efficient labour allocation. Shifts in farming systems from subsistence to market orientated production may lead to changes in gender relations, labour allocation and access to and control of resources. While agricultural innovation

leads to the reallocation of family labour and time allocation, control over outputs and income by men may jeopardize the welfare and nutritional status of the family. Therefore, efforts are made to create an understanding of how gender relations, labour allocation, access to and control of resources and benefits change at different stages of intensification in order to improve the efficiency of crop–livestock farming systems amongst male and female farmers.

Monitoring and evaluation. Africa RISING monitors progress towards enhanced women's access to and control of resources, family nutrition, food security, income and other outcomes that benefit women, children and other disadvantaged groups. The monitoring and evaluation scheme includes gender-specific targets that align with the Feed the Future gender goals, outcomes and outputs. The identified gender champions within the action sites provide support in monitoring change.

Future

The project is contributing to the global comparative study on 'gender norms, agency'¹ and innovations in agriculture and natural resource management', conducted by multiple CGIAR Research Programs. The objective is to understand the role of gender norms and agency in adoption of innovations, how agriculture and natural resource management innovations affect gender norms and agency, and how agencies of women and men change. The research findings will facilitate application of transformative innovations that change constraining gender relations and norms and enhance the capability of poor, rural men and women to access and use the project's innovations equitably.

References

- IFPRI. 2012. Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. Washington, D.C.: IFPRI.
- World Bank. 2014. Voice and Agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity. Washington, DC: World Bank

¹Agency is the ability to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome (World Bank 2014:3).



The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads an associated project on monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

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