

Info Note

Gender assessment for women's economic empowerment in Doyogena climate-smart landscape in Southern Ethiopia

Preliminary findings from a gender-based assessment for women's economic empowerment with integrated climate-smart crops and-small ruminants

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Key messages

- Women in rural areas are more vulnerable to climate-related risks due to existing social norms and gender inequalities.
- In Doyogena climate-smart landscape, access and control over productive assets and access to services are mainly dominated by men.
- As a result of their triple roles in society, women in Doyogena have an extra work burden and limited decision-making opportunities/power; restricting their active participation in meaningful productive activities and their contribution to societal and national development.
- To realize women's economic empowerment and build their adaptive capacity, climate change resilience initiatives must properly target and engage women at all decision-making levels while also challenging gendered relationships at home, in the community and structural setups by engaging men and promoting social dialogues.

Introduction

Agricultural production systems in Ethiopia depend on seasonal rains, which are increasingly becoming variable, affecting the livelihoods of many farmers. Women in rural areas are more vulnerable to climate change and climate-related risks due to existing social norms and gender inequalities (limited ownership and control over productive assets/resources, decision-making power, access to information, extension services, market etc.) and multidimensional social factors. These gender

inequalities affect the ability of women to adapt to climate change. On the other hand, women have unique knowledge and skills that can help create effective and sustainable responses to climate change (Habtezion 2013).

In Ethiopia, rural women play a critical role in agriculture, with up to 45% of the total agricultural labor force composed of women (FAO 2019). However, in terms of asset ownership and decision-making, women only hold 18.7% of farmland and are household heads in 20% of rural households in Ethiopia. In addition, crop productivity per hectare in female-owned farms across rural Ethiopia is 35% less when compared to male-owned farms due to lower levels of input use and less access to extension services (UN Women 2018).

From 2018, the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) in collaboration with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Africa RISING (a sustainable agricultural intensification research program supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Inter Aide France and Areka Agricultural Research Center, has been working with farmers to evaluate and promote climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices in the Doyogena climate-smart landscape as part of efforts to help the community manage climate-related risks and adapt to climate change.

Despite efforts to build the resilience of the community in the area, women's active involvement in climate-smart practices has not been thoroughly assessed. To address this gap, this study was undertaken by CCAFS and UN Women to provide qualitative and quantitative information that examines gender inequalities, social factors and the impacts on women's vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities regarding agricultural value chains in the context of climate change.

Methods

A Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA) was conducted within three kebeles¹ of Doyogena climate-smart landscape in Southern Ethiopia. The kebeles included Gomora Gewada, Lemi Suticho and Ancha Sedecha. Doyogena district is densely populated (about 700 inhabitants/km²), with a per capita land size of less than 0.5 hectares (Getamesay 2014). Agriculture is the main livelihood source in the area. The farming system is rain-fed mixed crop-livestock, characterized by low productivity. Main crops grown include wheat, barley, potato, vegetables and enset (*Ensete ventricosum*). The major livestock for rearing and fattening include cattle (for meat, dairy and ploughing), sheep and poultry.

The RGA employed a household survey (both male headed households (MHH) and female headed households (FHH)), focus group discussions (FGDs) with different community members and key informant interviews (KIIs) with local leaders and experts from institutions including the district agricultural office, women, children and youth office, kebele administrators and women leaders in the area. A total of 149 households (46 FHH and 103 MHH) were surveyed. In the case of MHHs, both spouses were interviewed separately. A total of 12 FGDs were conducted from the three kebeles to collect qualitative data. Four categories/groups of FGDs were conducted with female community members (3 FGDs), male community members (3 FGDs), combined male and female leaders (3 FGDs) and FHHs (3 FGDs).

The RGA assessed the gender gap between men and women and generated evidence on access to and control over productive assets; access to services; gender roles and division of labor in households and community; and roles in decision making and participation in leadership.

Women's access and control over productive assets

The results from the FGDs, KIIs and household surveys show that men dominate the control of major and valuable productive resources including agricultural land,

large livestock and farming equipment. Women only have control of assets that are of lesser economic value such as chicken, eggs, milk and milk products. In most cases, husbands may consult wives regarding the sale of assets, but the decision of the husband is usually final. Although men respondents indicated that there is a joint ownership of assets, the FGDs conducted with exclusively women indicate that women have limitations in terms of control over assets. This finding was similar to information gathered from sector offices that also confirmed that there is a high probability that men dominate in control over resources. Figure 1 shows that as land size increases, ownership tends to be dominated by men. Discussants also shared that women and men have access to communal resources such as water (for irrigation, animal fattening and consumption) but the control is dominated by men. Also, women and men have shared ownership when it comes to small ruminants, however, information gathered indicates that men make the major decisions regarding sales and control over cash.

The differences in access to and control over productive assets/resources have impacts on women's ability to adapt to climate change. According to DeVoe et al. (2018), gender equality is critical in addressing climate change issues. Therefore, empowering girls and women to have access to and control over productive assets is a key foundation towards enhancing women's ability to adapt to climate change.

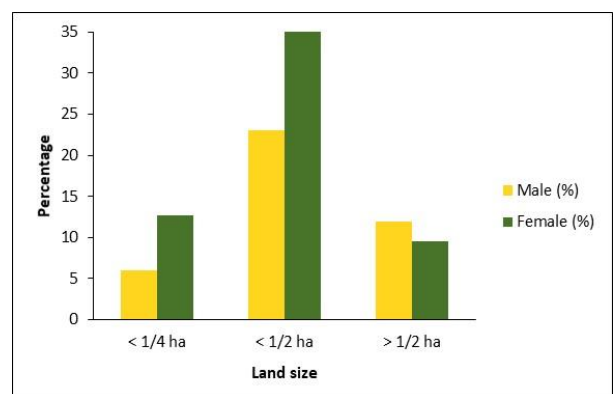


Figure 1. Land size holding by gender in Doyogena, Ethiopia.

Access to services

Women's lack of access to services such as primary education, agricultural and health extension services has emanated from multifaceted challenges/issues including limited awareness/information, cultural norms, gender roles, poor infrastructure facilities, household workload and the capacity, gender responsiveness and willingness of service providers. For instance, since women's roles are for the most part, restricted to the home environment and they are burdened with household chores, they are not exposed to information sources regarding available services. In

¹ Kebele is the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia

contrast, men's gender roles are mainly performed outside the house giving them the privilege of easily accessing information.

Women lack access to capacity building opportunities and formal financial services in the area including credit with limited production and market information, thus limiting women's economic empowerment and in turn exacerbating the vulnerability of women to climate change as well as hindering the wellbeing and livelihoods of the households.

Gender roles and division of labor

Women and men have different roles within the household and community in Doyogena. Women's roles focus on three domains of work: productive, reproductive and community activities. Men's roles are limited to the productive and community activities, and they hardly play a visible role in reproductive activities.

The extra burden on women results in a lack of time for women to engage in more profitable businesses and opportunities to educate and empower themselves.

In addition, the impacts of climate change add an extra burden to women's provisioning roles. Women are the primary providers of water and feed for the family and livestock. Climate-related water and feed shortages put an increased burden on women as they have to travel a longer distance in search of water and livestock feed.

Women's roles are also limited when it comes to climate change adaptation and resilience due to a lack of information and targeted capacity building support. Rural households lack labor and energy saving technologies support to reduce the extra work burden and free up additional time to engage in more productive activities.

Women in decision-making

Discussions with women on separate FGDs and sector office representatives indicate that most of the household decisions are made by men. Women make decisions related to acquisition (purchase) or sale of small items with low economic value, similar to the findings related to access to and control over productive assets.

On the contrary, results from the FGDs with men indicate that most of the decisions at the household level are made jointly (by women and men). These include decisions on which crops to grow for home consumption, which products to take to the market, whether to engage in non-farm business activity and purchase of clothes. Decisions related to daily household expenditures on food, sales and use of income from minor goods like milk, eggs and poultry, are often made by the women. Decisions on the type of crops to grow for sale and the type of inputs (e.g. fertilizers) to use for agricultural production and use of income from sales of livestock are made by men only.

The findings show that the differences in decision-making between women and men are linked to access and control over productive resources. For example, women make decisions over those resources which are under their control and so do men. Women's limited decision-making power is attributed to cultural norms (assuming male superiority over women) that put women in a subordinate position to men.

According to different data sources, the barriers to full participation of women and girls in decision-making processes include:

- Women's limited education, awareness, and information (about their rights, how to access and utilize services available in the locality);
- Negative self-perception of women towards themselves;
- Societal attitude (lack of will of husband, societal perception towards women's workload and women's decision-making and leadership capacity);
- Long processes in public service affecting women's service seeking behavior;
- Gender-based violence (GBV) or restriction in movement – especially fear of rape, abduction and verbal harassment.

Conclusions and policy implications

The adverse impacts of climate change are felt the most by the poorest and marginalized groups of a community. Due to existing social inequalities, women carry the heaviest burdens associated with climate change and related risks. Even though women have unique knowledge and skills to help make an effective response to climate change, often they are left out of such conversations.

The study indicated that women face multifaceted and interlinked social problems including access and control over productive assets and access to services limiting their adaptive capacity to climate change.

Assessing the needs, affirmatively targeting women and girls, strategically addressing identified problems with women endorsed interventions and engaging male counterparts in the process can be a good point of entry to multidimensional gender inequality and societal issues.

At the policy level, the country needs to develop and implement policies and women's economic empowerment strategies that:

- Work towards attitude and behavior change as well as gender sensitization of communities;
- Enable women to have access to better livelihood opportunities;

- Organize and support existing women's saving and credit associations and provide revolving funds to solve the problems of women's access to finance and credit;
- Support expansion of women's existing businesses and engage women in new income generating activities/businesses;
- Promote adult literacy and capacity building programs for women;
- Work towards building the self-confidence of women through training and experience sharing;
- Introduce and scale labor and energy saving CSA practices for the active engagement of women on productivity.

Further Reading

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