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Agriculture inputs for women’s empowerment in agriculture: a livelihood based social protection perspective

18-19 October 2016
Protea Parktonian Braamfontein
Johannesburg, South Africa
Closing the gender gap in agricultural inputs

www.fao.org/sofa/gender

Video on closing the gender gap
HUNGER
Women’s status in agriculture

- 70% of the world’s poor are women.
- The bulk of these are in subsistence farming and are in food processing and preparation.
- Vulnerable men & women experience vulnerabilities differently with rural women’s more pronounced.
- Subsistence and small-scale agriculture is the mainstay of rural SADC and women represent the peasantry.
- Women produce up to 45%-80% of subsistence food.
- Women specifically are vulnerable to social, structural, economic, cultural factors & resulting in serious work burden and time poverty (FAO, 2012).
Women work in agriculture as **farmers** on their own account, as **unpaid workers** on family farms and as **paid or unpaid labourers** on other farms and agricultural enterprises.
Women’s access to agricultural inputs

Despite the fact that rural women produce the bulk of the rural subsistence crop, they have limited access to modern productive resources, e.g., training, inputs, finance which are critical for agricultural productivity.
Implications of women’s limited access to resources

- They will always lag behind in development (TIME POVERTY)
- They will continue to lack access to formal basic comprehensive social protection systems which are mostly tied to formal employment (Pensions, health, maternity benefits etc)

- They will continue to be confined to unpaid or unregulated agricultural work
Defining empowerment

- Women’s empowerment offers a means for women to be more productive and to contribute to overall economic development.

- Several definitions of empowerment e.g. Longwe (1999), Control, participation, Conscientisation, Access, Welfare.

- Kabeer (2002):
  - “expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts where this ability has been denied them” (p.4). – increasing agency.
Women’s empowerment

- USAID/IFPRI (2012),
  - **Production**: Sole or joint decision making over food and cash-crop farming,
  - **Resources**: Ownership, access to, and decision making power over productive resources such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit
  - **Income**: Sole or joint control over income and expenditures
  - **Leadership**: Membership in economic or social groups and comfort in speaking in public
  - **Time**: Allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks and satisfaction with the available time for leisure activities
Livelihood:

- Refers to the means a person has in securing the necessities of life.
- Includes one’s abilities, the resources at her/his disposal and activities through which she/he makes a living.
- It’s about working with individuals and communities within their space.
- Puts people at the centre of development.
- Builds upon people’s strengths rather than their needs.
- Unifies different sectors behind a common theme.
- Takes into account how development decisions affect gender.
- Linking policy decisions and household level activities.
Livelihoods Assets

The woman farmer

Human Capital

Social Capital

Natural Capital

Physical Capital

Financial Capital
### Livelihood assets

#### Human-skills, aptitudes, knowledge:

**INPUTS REQUIRED**
- Increase women’s access to extension services (timing of trainings, duration, content, palatability)
- Appropriate labour saving technologies (productive, reproductive and community roles) – participate in development of technologies

#### Natural land, water, wildlife:

- Increase access to and control of land (20% quota for women is a policy provision in Zimbabwe) – secure tenure
- Irrigated fields/gardens
- Diversification of farming enterprises (livestock, beekeeping)

#### Financial-savings, credit, remittances and pensions

- Village-based income and savings schemes
- Flexible collateral requirements (e.g. group-based)
- Village-based pensions

#### Physical-transport, shelter, communications

- Linkages with markets for off-farm sales
- ICT

#### Social-networks, groups, access to institutions and policies

- Extended kinship systems
- Influence the formulation of gender policies
Benefits of empowering women with inputs

- Gains accrue to the entire household as women tend to be concerned about translating benefits to their entire households.
  - e.g. Improved household nutrition especially for children,
  - Increased investments in children’s education and
  - The household’s social indicators are improved (World Bank, 2012; SOFA, 2011).

- Can improve income security and reduce overall inequalities including gender inequality and contribute to household food and nutrition security.

- Increased income enables women to invest in assets that benefit the entire household (Devereux, 2009).

- They can also negotiate at markets.
CONCLUSION

increasing women’s access to inputs leads to positive effects on household nutrition, school attendance and education, and health status of the household (Quisimbing, 2012).
Livelhoods based inputs can:

- Lead to women’s empowerment and increase women’s agency
- Move from protection to productivity (beyond farming for consumption)
- Diversify livelihood options to non-agriculture based enterprises—which can mitigate against agriculture based shocks
- Increase income security (discretionary income)
- Reduce negative coping mechanisms (e.g. preferential feeding, transactional sex)
FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY AND ALL OTHER ASSOCIATED BENEFITS