

Review

Gender mainstreaming in smallholder agriculture development: A global and African overview with emerging issues from Swaziland

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The paper presents a review of literature in gender mainstreaming in agricultural development. It begins by defining key terms related to gender mainstreaming, and then followed by the discussion of the historical background of gender mainstreaming. This is then followed by review of literature concerning the gender mainstreaming and agricultural development, and African perspective of gender mainstreaming and the current status of gender mainstreaming in Swaziland. The review ends by discussing the potential benefits that can be harnessed from mainstreaming gender in the country's agriculture sector and development programmes.

Key words: Gender, mainstreaming, smallholder farming, sustainable agriculture, development.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of gender mainstreaming

Engendering

Engendering is a term that is used to refer to ways in which gender based roles have been demystified to ensure participation of males and females, especially in the community development process. Engendering development means engaging men and women equally

in the production process. This is geared towards enhancing equality in sustainable agricultural development. On the other hand, gendering is the dynamic way that makes female roles adapt, established or confirmed, clearly demonstrated in the historicity of gender relations in both private and public spheres. Due to the changing nature of economy and human needs, there is a need to engender development process and streamline the stereotypes that have characterized the

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arena of development (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2010: 48).

Gender

Gender is defined as the set of characteristics, roles and behavior patterns that socially and culturally distinguish women from men in the society. Gender characteristics change overtime and differ from one culture to another and concept of gender refers to the roles and characteristics of women and men into the relations of power between them (GoS, 2010). Indeed, the term gender is often misunderstood and used indiscriminately as a synonym for sex. As mentioned earlier, "gender" refers to socially constructed differences between sexes, while sex refers to relatively fixed biological differences between men and women (Sanga, 2008: 107).

Gender equality

Gender equality refers to equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men in the community. According to AfDB (2010), gender equality involves the removal of discrimination and structural inequalities in access to resources, opportunities and services, and the promotion of equal rights. Equality does not mean that women should be the same as men. However, promoting equality recognises that men and women have different roles and needs, and takes these into account in development planning and programming.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is defined as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences, an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (Dayanandan, 2011: 510). Gender mainstreaming means the process of identifying gender gaps and making the concerns and experiences of women, men, girls and boys integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all spheres so that the benefits are equitably distributed (GoS, 2010).

Gender and development (GAD)

GAD is an approach based on the premise that development cooperation programs cannot succeed or

the impact be sustained if the people affected do not support them. It examines the ways in how men's and women's differing roles, responsibilities, resources and priorities may affect project implementation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Around the world, gender mainstreaming has emerged as a key gender equality strategy following the 1995 Beijing women's conference (Alston, 2006: 123). Rural communities, where some 70% of the world's rural poor are concentrated, generally rely on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock for their livelihoods. Within those communities, the poorest of the poor are often women and young girls; and FAO (2010) stated that 6 out of 10 of the world's poorest people are women who lack regular and decent employment and income. The reports further states that these women face hunger and/or malnutrition, poor access to health, education and productive assets, time poverty caused by disproportionate paid and unpaid work burdens and child labour. This is in contrast to the fact that women tend to be the main producers of food, while men manage most of the commercial crops (FAO, 2010).

Since the mid 1980s, there has been a growing consensus that sustainable development requires an understanding of both women's and men's roles and responsibilities within the community and their relations to each other. This has come to be known as the GAD approach. Improving the status of women is no longer seen as just women's issue, but as a goal that requires the active participation of both men and women. For instance in Columbia, Nilsson et al. (2009) reported that due to the armed conflict, both women and men face problems accessing their land. Women, however, are discriminated against in a disproportionate manner; although legally they are entitled to land ownership, in practice they struggle to exercise this right.

As a consequence, when demining activities take place and land is released, women often lose access to their land as a result of gender-based discrimination. Moreover, profits made from these land areas seldom benefit women. Statistics reveal that women own less than 5% of the world's titled land, a critical perspective of gender mainstreaming in African countries (Nilsson et al., 2009).

GENDER AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The section identifies gender gaps and potential benefits that can be observed from mainstreaming gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programmes and projects to achieve sustainable development.

Improved socio-economic status of smallholder farmers

Women are crucial in the translation of the products of a vibrant agriculture sector into food and nutritional security for their households. They are often the farmers who cultivate food crops and produce commercial crops alongside the men in their households as a source of income (World Bank, 2009). Gender equality is fundamental for achieving agricultural development supported by economic empowerment so that more women receive secondary and tertiary educations to enhance their chances of finding jobs. According to World Bank (2009), gender equality and women's empowerment are far from being achieved, although women play a significant role in agriculture.

Access and control of productive resources

Despite women prominent role in food production, market and processing, women have limited access to land, agricultural extension services, credit, infrastructure, technology and markets that are crucial for enhancing their productivity (Mthuli et al., 2011). In North Africa 32.6% of women and 32.9% of men are employed in the agriculture sector, while the figures are much higher in sub-Saharan Africa where 67.9% of women and 62.4% of men are employed in the sector in 2007 (AfDB, 2010). Studies that were conducted in Kenya have shown that where women farmers have equal access to inputs, education and technology their productivity increases by 20%. African agricultural and rural development efforts cannot afford not to invest in initiatives that increase the productivity of women engaged in agriculture (Mthuli et al., 2011).

World Bank (2007) cited in AfDB (2010) stated that gender inequalities in access to productive resources, opportunities and services limit agricultural productivity and undermine sustainable and inclusive development in the sector. For example, in Kenya women contribute 80% labor to food production, account for 70% of the agriculture workers and manage 40% of the smallholder farms and yet they receive less than 10% of the credit allocated to small holders, hold less than 10% of the registered land titles and receive less than 5% agricultural credit.

Agriculture projects financed by AfDB indicate that considerations related to gender issues and women's participation influence the success and sustainability of a project. Women are major contributors to the economy, both through their remunerative work on farms and through the unpaid work they traditionally render at home and in the community. Yet in many societies they are systematically excluded from access to resources, essential services, and decision making. The predominance of patriarchy in law, policy, and practice

ensures that the land has owners but that they are not women (Mbote, 2005).

Improved and meaningful participation of women in agriculture

Women contribute tremendously to agricultural output but unfortunately they hardly benefit from agricultural incentives and innovation because of economic suppression and traditional practices which undermine the constitutional provisions on the equality of men and women. Gender discrimination, rather than ignorance, is the reason for the lack of women participation in agricultural programmes and projects (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009: 21). The loss of biodiversity in agriculture is the key threat to food security and sustainability in relation to diversity in food, feed, fish, and animal stocks which has narrowed down alarmingly. For example, in rural India, it is women who conserve biodiversity on farm as well as *ex situ* through various rituals. The role of women as custodians of agriculture and livestock still cannot be ruled out (Satyavathi et al., 2010: 44). They depend greatly on the environment for their basic needs such as fuel, water, food and medicine. According to a study that was conducted in the Philippines, it was noted that while women play important economic roles in fishing, particularly in processing and marketing, their roles are often neglected in programmes and projects in the sector. Women are particularly concerned about overfishing, which is reducing the viability of fishing communities, and are keen to participate in protection and sustainable management efforts (ADB, 2006). In addition, women, whose carbon footprint is smaller than that of men, should play a larger role in confronting climate change since they make the majority of consumption decisions for households (OECD, 2008).

Increased agricultural productivity

Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009: 20) mentioned that women are known to be more involved in agricultural activities than men in sub-Saharan African countries, Nigeria inclusive. As much as 73% were involved in cash crops, arable and vegetable gardening, while postharvest activities had 16% and agroforestry, 15%. It is estimated that women's contribution to the production of food crops range from 30% in the Sudan to 80% in the Congo contributing substantially to national agricultural production and food security, while being primarily responsible for the food crops. Samuel and Dasmani (2010: 441) noted farm level efficiency can improved particularly when tradition, culture and other socio-economic constraints that hinder women participation are removed. Therefore, it is critical to amplify women's participation in agricultural development to increase their

economic roles in rural development particularly in food production.

Policy development

Mbote (2005) stated that under all systems of law in many African countries, land ownership is anchored in patriarchy. Law can be used to reinforce or make permanent social injustices in the realm of women's rights, legal rules may give rise to or exacerbate gender inequality. Legal systems can also become obstacles when change is required: often the *de jure* position, which may provide for gender neutrality, cannot be achieved in practice due to numerous obstacles (Mbote, 2005).

According to Mbote (2005), the predominance of patriarchy in law, policy, and practice ensures that the land has owners but that they are not women. For law and policy to influence gender relations to land tenure, there is need to deconstruct, reconstruct, and reconceptualise customary law notions around the issues of access, control, and ownership. The view should be to intervene at points that make the most difference for women. There is need for innovative and even radical approaches. In determining tenure to land, rights should be earned or deduced from an entity's relationship to the land. Rights should be anchored on use and subjected to greater public good resident in the trusteeship over land for posterity.

PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Sanga (2008: 102) stated that during the closing decades of the last millennium, the African continent witnessed the emergence of a number of initiatives aimed at improving the social, economic, and political condition of its citizens that included a number of national, regional, and international development plans such as the Poverty Reduction Strategies, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the pursuit of this agenda, it has been widely recognized that women and men face different socio-economic realities especially in the development of sustainable agricultural activities.

According to Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009: 19), the bedrock of agriculture and agricultural development in developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa is rural development, without which all efforts in agricultural development will be futile. A large majority of the farmers operate at the subsistence, smallholder level, with intensive agriculture being uncommon and women's and men's roles and responsibilities in a society or culture are dynamic and change overtime. Social, cultural, religious, economic, political and legal factors and trends all have a complex and profound influence on gender roles and responsibilities and tend to impede sustainable

agricultural development. Many of these factors can constrain women's participation in development activities. Women have limited access to agricultural services and inputs, are more likely to lack assets, and grow more subsistence crops. Consequently, women farmers are more likely to be asset-poor subsistence farmers. In sub-Saharan Africa, it has been calculated that agricultural productivity could increase by up to 20% if women's access to such resources as land, seed, and fertilizer were equal to men's, yet women still face serious constraints in obtaining essential support for most productive resources, such as land, fertilizer, knowledge, infrastructure, and market organization (World Bank, 2009).

Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009: 28) noted that in sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture accounts for approximately 21% of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP) and women contribute 60 to 80% of the labour used to produce food. Estimate of women's contribution to the production of food crops range from 30% in the Sudan to 80% in the Congo, while their proportion of the economically active labour force in agriculture ranges from 48% in Burkina Faso to 73% in the Congo and 80% in the traditional sector in Sudan. On another note, the World Bank (2009) stated that in sub-Saharan Africa, women are largely responsible for selling and marketing traditional crops such as maize, sorghum, cassava, and leafy vegetables in local markets. However, in countries where urban markets for these traditional crops are expanding rapidly, such as Cameroon and Kenya, the challenge is to ensure that women retain control over their production, processing, and marketing. In Uganda the strong demand for leafy vegetables (traditionally a woman's crop) in Kampala markets caused men to take over their cultivation. Maseno and Kilonzo (2010: 48) explain that considerable gender disparities exist in the Kenyan labour market. Although women constitute about 50% of Kenya's total population, they account for only about 30% of the total formal-sector wage employment and earn less than men, even after making adjustments for the type of employment, occupation, and hours of work. The scholars argue that women's participation rates are higher (compared to men's) in rural areas, where they are actively involved in subsistence activities and agricultural production in addition to unpaid domestic work.

This is further evidenced by Maseno and Kilonzo (2010: 48) that they spend more than 8 h in a day working in the fields in order to provide for their families with basic needs. Studies have documented that women work 12 to 13 h a week more than men, as the prevalent economic and environmental crises have increased the working hours of the poorest women. Women work hard to cope with their household chores like collecting firewood and fetching water from wells or rivers that may be far away from home, besides other activities. Most of these activities are recognized as 'minor' household jobs that are meant for women and are hardly shared with the

spouses or the sons. Ara (2012: 8) noted that in the developing world, gender difference in the labour market is a common issue and it needs to be studied in relation to the social customs in those countries.

According to IFAD (2011), women's empowerment benefits not only women themselves but also their families and communities. Moreover, farm productivity increases when women have access to agricultural inputs and relevant knowledge. The report further states that in Gambia, although many development interventions actively promote the equitable control of and access to productive lands, in practice it has been found that the land rights of women and other disadvantaged groups may fare better under a local bargaining process than where redistribution is pushed by external interventions. Concerning the contribution of gender in economic growth, Mthuli et al. (2011) reported that in the sub-Saharan Africa, women contribute 60 to 80% of the labour used to produce food both for household consumption and for sale. Therefore, promoting gender equality in employment is an important cornerstone to advance women's economic empowerment in Africa.

Gender mainstreaming in Swaziland

The government of Swaziland has made some progress in promoting gender in alignment with regional and international commitments in providing equitable opportunities for women and men, boys and girls at all levels, women empowerment and social justice. This has been achieved through the enactment and the implementation of the nation gender policy. Through the policy the government of Swaziland conducts capacity building for gender mainstreaming in all national and sectoral policies, plans, programmes and budgets. It also focuses on strengthening the capacity and capability of the gender unit. The unit is responsible for the coordination of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the gender policy; advocate for the allocation of resources and public expenditure so that they are equally beneficial to men and women; strengthening partnerships with development partners, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community leaderships for gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls. Lastly, mobilizing at all levels for social transformation on gender issues and for the implementation of the gender policy. The section discusses the potential benefits that can be harnessed from mainstreaming gender in the country's agriculture sector and development programmes.

Socio-economic improvement of smallholder sugarcane farmers

In Swaziland, the sugar sector is central to the economy of Swaziland accounting for 59% of agricultural output,

35% of agricultural wage employment and about 18% to the country output (SSA, 2012). The Government of Swaziland has noted that the sector can make a meaningful vehicle in the fight against high levels of poverty and unemployment. Small-scale sugarcane farming is now practiced by many households, particularly those in the poverty stricken areas of the Lowveld. SSA (2012) observed that sugar industry presents a good opportunity for small-scale farmers to get employment, raise incomes and move out of poverty. This is also supported by Mnisi and Dlamini (2012: 4337) when they observed that in India, the sugar industry is the focal point for socio-economic development in the rural areas by mobilizing rural resources, generating employment and higher income, and developing transport and communication facilities. In addition, the GoS (2005) stated that women are the major labour force in food production in Swaziland and also are responsible for food preparation, household hygiene, and childcare that are linked to household nutritional status. Therefore, women's rights, participation, needs, education and training, need to be recognized in all aspects of agricultural production.

Access and control of productive resources

Access and control over resources is also gendered as only males access Swazi Nation Land (SNL) through paying allegiance to the chief. Women on the other hand do not access resources in their own right and may only access land through males, as husband, father or son and other male relatives (LUSIP, 2011). Presently, women in Swaziland are particularly vulnerable to poverty, with about twenty percent (20%) of households are headed by women (GoS, 2006). Women are mainly disadvantaged by the Swaziland law and custom which deprives women from the right to own land and access to finances. The customary law of the country states that widowed women traditionally do not inherit land, but are allowed to remain on the matrimonial land and home until death or remarriage. Women also have less access to education in rural areas. It is estimated that over 70% of women in rural Swaziland are illiterate, compared to the national average of 21% (McKnight, 2009). According to GoS (2006), about 63% of female-headed households are poor and lack productive assets compared to 52% male counterparts. Therefore, agricultural production can be used as a source of income through crop production forestry, fisheries and animal production.

Equal and meaningful participation

The Government of Swaziland has recognized the need to ensure equitable and full participation of women and men at all levels of development. Deliberate efforts have

been employed to ensure that the barriers that prevent full and effective participation of women and men in all sectors are removed (GoS, 2010). The government of Swaziland developed a gender policy that aims to address the inequities between women and men. It provides a vision to improve the living conditions of women and men including practical and forward looking guidelines and strategies for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the related constitutional provisions. Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009: 22) examined the level of participation of rural women in the decision-making in different areas of agriculture and studied factors influencing their participation in the decision-making process in farm management. They found that women's participation in decision making was quite minimal. In each of the farm operations, less than 20% of the women were consulted, except in the sourcing of farm credit, where about 28% were consulted; about 13% or less of the women had their opinion considered in each of the farm operations. However, only between 1.0 and 2.5% took the final decision in all of the farm operations.

The role that women play and their position in meeting the challenges of agricultural production and development are quite dominant and prominent. Findings from a study financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that women make up some 60 to 80% of agricultural labour force in Nigeria (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009: 20), depending on the region and they produce two-thirds of the food crops. In contrast, widespread assumption that men and not women make the key farm management decisions has prevailed.

Policy development

In most African countries female farmers are among the voiceless, especially with respect to influencing agricultural policies (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009: 19). Policies which are aimed at increasing food security and food production tend to either underestimate or totally ignore women's role in both production and the general decision-making process within the household.

The promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women have been recognized as a key millennium development goal and to meet this goal, the Kingdom of Swaziland has developed a gender policy to provide guidelines for attaining gender equity in the country. The development of appropriate policies and strengthening of national gender machineries to fully undertake the challenging mandates are crucial actions particularly in addressing structural relationships of inequality between men and women. The national gender policy provides guidelines, indicators and a framework to assist stakeholders to achieve gender equity as provided for in the country and other relevant international instruments that the country has ratified (GoS, 2010). On another

note, the Government of Swaziland has undertaken numerous initiatives to ensure full and coherent participation of women and men in achieving the national objectives of economic growth, self-reliance, social justice and stability through involving women and men in the mainstream of the country's development (GoS 2010).

Conclusion

The research reviewed gave understanding of gender mainstreaming in agricultural development with reference to small-scale farmers involved in crop production. It also highlighted the critical issues that hinder participation of women in agriculture in African countries including Swaziland with regards to access and control of productive resources, participation of men and women in agricultural development and the potential benefits of gender mainstreaming in policy development and its positive contribution into the improvement socio-economic status of farmers and poverty reduction. Furthermore, it highlights the progress of the government of Swaziland in creating a suitable environment for implementing gender mainstreaming in community development activities.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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