



Gender and IPM in Nepal

The FAO Programme
for Community IPM in Asia
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Introduction



Within the last two decades, global recognition of the importance of the role of women in the development process has influenced the governmental, academic and development workers in Nepal to confront gender issues. The Nepalese Government and donors have committed themselves to more fully incorporate the participation of women in their national development agenda. Subsequently, the level of women's economic participation, their level of formal education attainment, literacy as well as the child and mortality rate and life expectancy have all improved. Gender inequalities nevertheless continue to affect all aspects of the lives of Nepalese women. Socio-cultural, political and legal frameworks still confine them to their traditional roles and their lower, subordinate, status to men. The dominant patriarchal system continues to impose severe limits to the access women have to resources and an independent identity.

The National IPM Programme in Nepal is committed to provide women and men equal access to their training. The Programme wants to implement its activities on a gender equal basis. That this is not easy and straightforward is an experience we gained during the three year implementation of the programme. In this report we like to share these experiences, reveal the problems we are facing, the mistakes we have made. However, we also want to show our good intentions and the progress we have reached so far. In the nearby future we intend to implement the suggestions as recommended in this report.

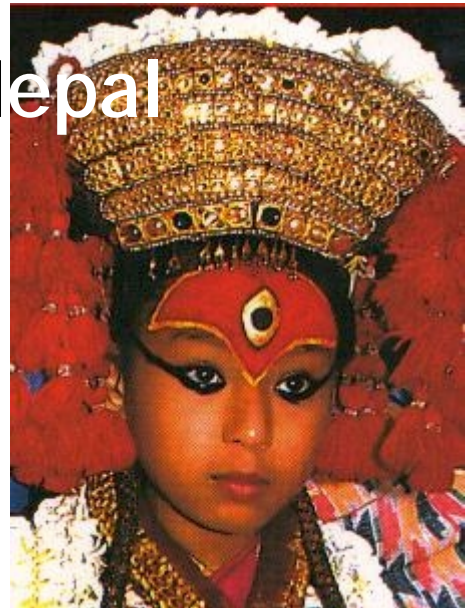
We like to share this information with interested staff of development projects and programmes, donor agencies, other IPM Programmes in the region and hope to receive some valuable suggestions and comments to help us implement our programme in such a way that women and men will benefit equally.

Women in Nepal

Living goddess

The living goddess Kumari is worshipped by all ethnic groups in Nepal.

Kumari, literally meaning a virgin girl, is regarded a symbol of purity, innocence and power. The King also worships her, as it is believed that her blessing strongly influences the prosperity of the country. She resides in a special house in Kumari Ghar in Kathmandu.



Socio-religious cultural practices in Nepal are contradictory. Women have subordinate positions, with no independent identity of their own. The father is the only recognised guardian of his children. A daughter has equal rights to parental property only if she is unmarried at 35 and remains unmarried the rest of her life. Child mortality figures clearly show the preference for sons and social discrimination against daughters.

Discrimination on the basis of gender is still widespread in Nepal and it has a great impact on rural development. The productive role of women in agriculture management is not reflected in proper representation and decision making power. Neither in indigenous institutions nor in externally sponsored institutions. Women are only involved in the informal sphere of day to day activities and decision making. These roles of men and women are to be understood.

Agricultural Perspective Plan

In the Agricultural Perspective Plan (1997) it is clearly stated that the government wants to create an environment for equal participation of men and women in agricultural decision-making process and give equal access to agricultural inputs such as credit, extension service, training programmes

Women farmers

In Nepal more than 90% of the population live in rural areas, and their lives depend on subsistence farming. Women farmers make up the majority of the total farming labour force (63 % versus 27%). Women work 10.8 hours /day versus men 7.5 in agriculture.



Decision-making

Men and women are both involved in decision-making in agriculture, whereby women decide what to do pre-planting, weeding and during harvesting and beyond. At household level men dominate decision-making and also at community level men take policy decisions.

Female headed households

With more and more men leaving rural hilly areas in search for lucrative jobs in cities and abroad, women are left to cultivate the land and sustain their families. Women constitute the larger proportion of the agricultural labour force. Their control over resources, services and benefits, however remains small.

IPM and Gender



“Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an ecological approach where agriculture is viewed as a complex, living system in which humans interact with land, water, plants and other elements. IPM promotes sustainability by applying ecological management and discovery

learning principles in the cultivation of field in an attempt to optimise the use of existing resources.

Farmers become experts, and the central focus of the agricultural system. Farmers become active, independent, competent partners within agricultural development. Farmers are the main owners, implementer, and developers of IPM. Farmers determine their own needs and create solutions and practices appropriate to specific local conditions” (Indonesian Minister of Agriculture on IPM, 1994)

In 1997 with assistance from the FAO an IPM Programme was launched in Nepal. From the beginning women have participated in the programme at all levels, as farmers, trainers and managers.

On reviewing the achievements of the programme IPM Nepal gradually came to realise that women cannot always participate in the training activities. The programme realises the need to incorporate gender sensitive approaches in all the programme activities. Female participation in farmers' fieldschools (FFS) varies from 100% in some areas (e.g. Bhaktapur district) to 0% in Terai communities. Among the IPM trainers only 7% is female.

The important role of women in agriculture in Nepal requires to be reflected in the IPM programme. Women should be able to participate in the training activities that are being organised in 50 districts in Nepal.

Understanding the gender relations in regard to how family farms operate and deciding on the resources will

be a start to ensure equity for women and eventually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the project interventions.

Farmers selection

To improve the selection of farmers to take part in an FFS, IPM has introduced a so called 'gender matrix'. An exercise in which men and women analyse 'who does what' in farm production and draw conclusions on which sex should take part in the season-long training on IPM in rice.

Case

In Bhaktapur in the season long rice IPM Farmers Fieldschool (Unaati) only women have participated. The dominant ethnic group is Newari, traditionally present in the Kathmandu valley. The farm size in this area is small, about 0.4 ha per household. Farmers grow rice and wheat and some cultivate vegetables. For both crops, manuring, planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing is mainly done by women. Whereas land preparation, digging the terrace corners, preparing the terrace bunds and application of chemical fertiliser and pesticides are mainly performed by men. For the total activities in agricultural production men spend about 3 person days, while women spend 22 person-days per family plot.

Land, the most important asset in the household, is owned and controlled by men.

Many of the men in this area are involved in non-farming activities to generate an income (trade, business) and therefore there was for the women not much competition from men to take part in the IPM FFS, which paved the way for full women participation. Although the selection procedure was democratic and no emphasis was given to female participation it was clear in this case that the IPM Programme was aimed to fulfil a need for women in Bhaktapur. And because women in this FFS are involved in decision-making at the agricultural production level, their newly acquired skills and knowledge could be implemented successfully.



Needs analysis

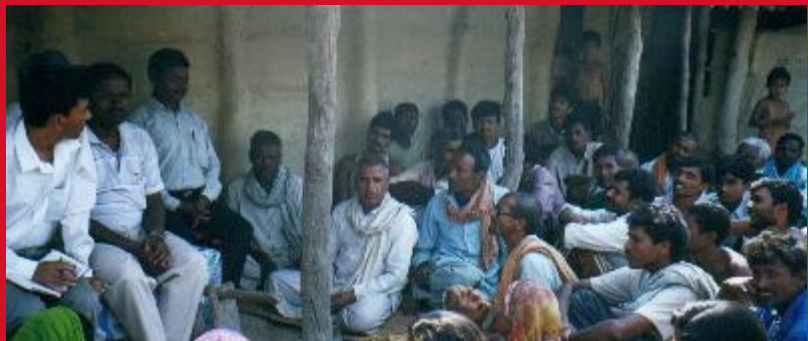
Prior to investigating what women think about the project, their needs and aspirations should be investigated. For project and field staff it is often difficult to find out farmers' needs and ideas. Their discourse is distorted due to prior projects: farmers ask what they can get and that is not necessarily what they need. In the IPM Programme we try to identify the needs of women and men. To find out women's and men's ideas and perceptions it is not enough to conduct interviews. Particularly women and poor people voice their ideas and needs privately with each other or in small groups and perhaps a trusted outsider, but never openly in public. From various sources information has to be collected, analysed, and interpreted. IPM trainers and facilitators play a crucial role in these exercises.

Case

Many FFS on IPM in Rice have already been organised in Danusha district. The participation of women in these FFS has been very limited. The dominant ethnic group (Mithila) restrict women's movement outside the house. Men generally feel that women should not go outside their home at all because of social pressure and religious reasons.

Here, most male farmers do not see the need to involve or consult women and will give their female household members an order to accomplish the work. Despite that women are the primary users and labourers involved in agriculture, neither their voice is heard, nor are they in practice properly informed by their husbands on formal decisions made.

In an area as in Danusha district formation of separate groups (exclusively women or men) might be an option to increase women participation in the IPM Programme.



Participatory planning

IPM mobilises and encourages community development by community organisations and their members. A majority of the participants are women.

In follow-up activities the National IPM Programme aims at increasing local people's awareness of their own potential and responsibilities, equipping them with planning skills and enable them to initiate their own programme.

The participants learn to understand their situation and to identify and analyse their real needs, problems and priorities. With these skills men and women are able to initiate their own programmes, and to mobilise local resources and skills with minimum external assistance.

Literacy groups

In many Nepalese villages literacy classes and women's trainings are conducted. These mostly address women's strategic interests. At first sight such non-formal gatherings seem a suitable organization for reaching women. In Nepal the National IPM



Programme has started to work with NGOs that are running literacy programmes. Improving literacy can be a start to increase women participation in IPM. On the other hand, after literacy classes IPM Farmer fieldschools are a valid activity to increase farmers knowledge and improve their livelihoods for greater empowerment and well-being. Given the importance farmers give to education and literacy training, it addresses a genuine need. The literacy classes conducted by local NGOs in cooperation with World Education have very good results as a starter activity for more involvement of women in IPM.

Yet, it is to be kept in mind that literacy is not a prerequisite for agricultural development. It significantly contributes to confidence building and developing communicative skills. Thus, literacy makes it easier for the outsiders to reach out to these women, rather than that it is an indispensable tool for the women to pursue development.

Challenges

What are the potentials, constraints and challenges for women to participate in the IPM Programme?

Potentials

- Women are involved in all steps of rice production. There are some differences between ethnic groups and regions, but everywhere women contribute labour to rice growing
- At national level the Government is committed to increase the access for women to agricultural training
- Growing awareness to gender equity makes it easier for women to participate in IPM training

Constraints & Challenges

1. At national level there are only a few qualified women and gender-sensitive men among the staff of the Plant Protection Division, and as result only a few female IPM trainers are active in the IPM Programme at district level
2. Women have a limited role in decision-making on agriculture at the household level
3. Women do not often take a leadership role in community activities and their voice in community decision making is small
4. Women have many responsibilities at home and therefore limited time to take part in regular a FFS
5. Men can join the FFS without consulting their families, women have to get permission form their husband and (extended) members
6. Selection criteria: although in general the programme encourages participation of illiterate and semi-literate farmers, in some areas ability to write and read is considered a selection criterium for FFS participants.
7. In some ethnic communities participation of women in mixed sex FFS is difficult to achieve
8. Many trainers are not gender - sensitive.
9. Gender discrimination is regarded a culture issue in which trainers are not to interfere.



Case

Purna is a Government Officer, based at the District Agriculture Development Office in Bharatpur, Chitwan. She has been trained as an IPM trainer and conducted two FFS on IPM in Rice. However, since last year she has hardly been involved in the IPM Programme due to several reasons. Her inability to ride a motorbike, pregnancy and the care of two young children, social pressure, has made her feel forced to do mainly work at the office. Several women who are holding a job face similar problems and are often hampered to work in the field.

Actions/ Recommendations

- ö Encourage participation of illiterate and semi-literate farmers by making the exercises simple and using skills to visualise written parts
- ö Use gender sensitive tools during the farmers selection procedure
- ö Discuss and set the time of the FFS in consult with women and men
- ö Encourage more women to become IPM trainer
- ö Consider leadership training for women in some farmers fieldschools
- ö More gender awareness training and a commitment from the programme to increase gender analytical skill of trainers, project staff at national, regional and district level
- ö In some communities consider the organisation of separate male and/or female FFS.

The key to involving women is to focus on women's and men's aspirations, their practical and strategical gender needs. Women need an active, equitable position, not only for their own empowerment and upliftment, yet, also for strengthening democratic structures and for successful agricultural development. Therefore, a strategy focusing on the enhancement of women's status has to be taken seriously. In each community it is important to find out women's own ideas in this regard.