INCLUSIVITY: SUSTAINABILITY’S POWERHOUSE

“It’s important to say that women are always busy. They take care of all household tasks - children, finding water, cooking. (.....) Any country that seeks development has demographic issues to solve. It’s not enough to act only at the formal and policy level, in parliament or in government. We have to look into how to seek gender relation changes in the bottom side. Unfortunately we don’t talk about this. It’s a taboo. Women can’t express their voices. They get married early, which has a direct effect on perpetuation of poverty.” - Male interviewee

An Important Partnership

Experience has shown that sustainable development must include and benefit both men and women in order to succeed. Incorporating gender into effective policy is a necessity, not a luxury.

The UNDP World Centre for Sustainable Development (RIO+ Centre)/Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) Partnership project is intended to support national and regional programmes improving livelihood and food security benefits to at least 1.2 million small-scale farmers through proven climate-smart agriculture (CSA) initiatives combining crop production with agro-forestry and livestock management. Funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), it promotes CSA in East and Southern Africa to increase agricultural productivity and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth, in the context of climate change.

CSA blends economic, social and environmental objectives under one umbrella, in order to tackle food security, increased income and low-carbon agricultural practices.

But no sustainable solution or Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is feasible without paying careful attention to gender dynamics. Increasing outputs, even with gender-neutral people-smart innovation, is not enough. We have too often seen how increased productivity does not necessarily equally benefit both men and women. Sustainable agricultural policy needs to be climate-smart, people-smart, and gender-smart. SDG Goal No. 2 (Sustainable Agriculture) and Goal No. 5 (Gender Equality) must go hand in hand.

Equal Partners, Sustained Change

To find out how people-smart agriculture policy should be formulated to be responsive to people’s needs and ways to learning and adapting, the RIO+ Centre set out to consider the how CSA can promote a robust gender-responsive approach, and what gender gaps exist in relevant policies across five
focus countries: Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We blended desk-based literature review, a deep scan of existing policies linked to agriculture, and climate change gender and perspectives from stakeholders including farmers. Ultimately 105 people (64 men and 41 women) from the five countries as well as eight additional countries participated in the study.

Here is what one male participant said: “We can talk not only about gender relationships, but it's important to point out that women are the ones who work in the farm but the right to access to land and natural resources traditionally in our cultures benefits only men.”

Key Findings on Attitudes
- Men and women across the board agree that gender is relevant to CSA.
- Men tend to think that women and men play similar roles in the agriculture value change, while women disagree.
- Women farmers see government and farmers’ organizations as important support structures.
- Men and women share common interests in climate and weather information but they use this information in different ways.
- There is a significant unsatisfied appetite for discussion on gender and CSA.

A Clear Mandate
This analysis, although small in scope, sends clear signals to all who are involved in negotiating both a new climate agreement and those who are committed to gender equality and women's empowerment as central to the SDGs. It shows that the two must go together if either is to succeed.

In the words of a participant in our Community of Practice e-Discussion on Gender and CSA (October 2014), “The determination of “smartness” has to come from farmers as evidence that it is doable, brings returns, and doesn’t have women bending, digging and doing more manual labour as CSA has done so far.”

Climate-smartness! People-smartness! Gender-smartness! These are critical elements to bring about a revolutionary change for the agriculture sector and the millions of women and men who toil daily in farms, forests, and fields and whose efforts also contribute to our food security, nutrition and wellbeing.


Acknowledgements: Appreciation and thanks to Sohaila Abdulali and Rosaly Byrd for their contributions to this Summary.

Contact Information: Leisa Perch, Policy Specialist, RIO+ Centre, (leisa.perch@undp.org).

1 Excerpt from an interview, with a key informant in Mozambique, conducted by Duarte Rafael (consultant).