



RESEARCH BRIEF

Participatory Gender Study: Understanding the Gender Dimension in Food Security and Climate Change

Objectives

1. To understand and document the impacts of climate change on food security and how these affect men and women farmers in Southeast Asia;
2. To identify concrete responses that can help men and women farmers address the many issues related to climate change as it affects food security; and,
3. To contribute to small farmers' local, national and international advocacy on climate change.

Areas Covered

Focus group discussions were held with men and women farmers in the villages of Solor, Adonara and Flores in Indonesia; Saben in Oe-cusse, Timor Leste; and Ang Tasom in Cambodia. These villages are considered to be some of the poorest in their countries.

The national consultations included workshops focusing on the impact of climate change on agriculture and on women, factors responsible for food insecurity, and on the recommended advocacies and agenda to promote climate resilience and food security. These were attended by representatives from national farmers' organizations, civil society groups and government agencies. National consultations were conducted in Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Core Findings

1. Climate change poses multi-dimensional impacts on women on account of their productive and reproductive roles and functions.



Village consultation with women farmers in Indonesia

Apart from working longer hours, women farmers assume a broader range of roles as they perform both productive and reproductive functions. Bulk of women's time is spent undertaking reproductive work such

as preparing and gathering food, taking care of the children and

cleaning the home. However, they are also involved in productive work, and in some cases, assume some of the productive tasks and responsibilities taken on by men.

"What men can do, we also can do"

--*Indonesian woman*

"When the harvest is poor, I find it hard to sleep because I think of where and how to get food for my family"

--*Cambodian woman*

"When there is no income because of crop failure, our men take out their frustrations on us, they become violent towards us"



Women farmers are involved in the production, gathering, storage and preparation of food and fetching of water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. They are also primarily in charge of household resource management and allocation to meet the consumption and nutritional requirements of the family. It is also because many women feel responsible about maintaining and ensuring household food security that many of them take on additional economic activities, such as preparing snacks, weaving clothes and making handicrafts to sell in the market in order to earn additional income to meet the family's food needs.

2. Impact of climate change on food security is influenced by the state of the physical environment, the level of support given by government and NGOs, and level of awareness and capability of women and men farmers and of farmers' organizations.



Village consultation with women farmers in Cambodia

Men and women farmers are able to better manage the impact of extreme weather conditions when they take care of the environment by practicing sustainable resource management.

For instance, they observe that they are now more able to cope

with extreme weather events when they decided to stop adopting slash and burn farming techniques and implemented community reforestation programs and watershed preservation and management techniques.

The absence of government support for basic productivity enhancing measures increases their vulnerability to climate change. For instance, the absence of irrigation facilities limits men and women farmers' capability to produce food during periods of drought or extremely dry weather.

"The tools given by government are of poor quality and so are not effective in improving our productivity"
--Indonesian farmer

"Our government's extension workers promote chemical based farming. We find it hard to adapt because of high costs of fertilizers"
-- Timor Leste farmer

"Families with fewer children are less food insecure when crops fail because of bad weather"
--Cambodian farmer

3. There are two sets of coping strategies to climate change effects: simply managing hunger and proactive responses to address food insecurity.

The first set deals with simply managing hunger in the face of inadequate food supply. This includes reducing food intake, changing the composition of the diet to one that uses readily accessible food, maintaining household food security reserves and borrowing food from neighbors and other sources. The second set involves more proactive responses to address food insecurity, aimed at reducing vulnerability to the effects of changes in weather patterns. This includes improving farmers' capability to increase and diversify agriculture and food production, and protecting common resources such as community forests and watershed systems that are vital to food production. Examples of these are: community reforestation programs, crop diversification, adoption of sustainable farming technologies



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such as organic farming, watershed and soil management technologies such as stone and hedgerow terracing, in-row and in-hole tillage.

Recommendations

At the National Level

- a. Allocate resources for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures for women in agriculture
 - increase farmers' awareness on the negative impact of slash-and-burn farming
 - intensify reforestation program by ensuring the participation of local communities
 - promote sustainable farming practices such as seed development, soil management, watershed management, organic farming, terracing and value adding technologies, among others
 - develop community irrigation systems, and local food and water storage facilities
 - provide sanitation facilities and health care support to lessen peoples' vulnerabilities to sickness and diseases as a result of extreme weather conditions
- b. Adopt a bottom-up approach in developing and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation programs
- c. Improve short- and long-term weather forecasting, and timely dissemination of weather information to help farmers better plan their cropping calendar
- d. Restructure farm production policies and programs to support sustainable farming practices
- e. Ensure small farmers' and civil society participation in the drafting of NAMAs and in formulating reports for the UNFCCC national communication
- f. Enact and implement national legislation supporting sustainable resource management

At the International Level

- Ensure that the current negotiation on climate change mitigation in agriculture is framed in the context of the sector's importance to the attainment of developing countries' objectives of food security, sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation, and not merely on the promotion of production efficiency
- Support calls for increased funds for climate adaptation and mitigation that will be used to finance climate adaptation projects developed and endorsed by local communities of small scale men and women farmers