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Enhancing Women's Assets to Manage Risk under Climate Change: Potential for Group-Based Approaches

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

The challenge

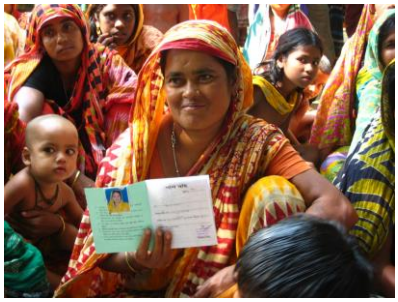
Poor rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change due to widespread poverty, low levels of human and physical capital, poor infrastructure, dependence on agriculture, and expected severe climate changes. However, there is little evidence on how climate change may differentially affect men and women, and how group-based approaches can improve resilience to climate change.

Control over assets plays a fundamental role in increasing incomes, reducing vulnerability, and empowering people to move out of poverty. In the context of climate change, assets help individuals and households adapt to increasing variability of production and selling assets buffers the impact of climate-related shocks, such as droughts, floods, fires and hailstorms. The gap between men's and women's access to and control over key assets suggests that women may be at a disadvantage when dealing with the negative impacts of climate change. There has been relatively little attention to the gendered distribution of assets in the context of climate shocks, many of which are becoming more severe with climate change, or how various programs and group-based approaches can help poor households, and especially women, protect or enhance their assets.

Project name	Enhancing Women's Assets to Manage Risk under Climate Change: Potential for Group-Based Approaches
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Project region	Bengladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali
Lead executing agency	IFPRI – International Food Policy Research Institute Contact person: Claudia Ringler c.ringler@cgiar.org
German cooperation	Center for Development Research (ZEF)
Duration	03.2011 – 09.2014

Our approach

The goal of this project is to help poor women farmers and pastoralists in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (especially Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali and Bangladesh) manage risks under climate change as a result of more effective programs to protect or strengthen women's control over critical assets, including natural resources and social capital. The project also examines the potential for group-based approaches to increase women's assets and strengthen their risk-management capabilities in the context of climate change.



L. to r.: Women working the field in Kenya, Woman selling vegetables in Ethiopia, Bangladeshi woman showing her NGO membership card

Contact person

Wolfgang Kasten
wolfgang.kasten@giz.de

Specifically, research conducted for the project aims to:

1. Enhance understanding of how men and women and their respective control over assets are affected by climate variability and change.

2. Assess the scope for group-based approaches to address rural men's and women's needs for risk management under climate change; and the determinants for women's participation in such approaches and programs.

3. Strengthen capacity of communities and development agencies in case study countries to manage risk under climate change using group-based approaches.

4. Inform the development of policies related to gender and climate change, and increase awareness of the effects of climate change on women's assets and effective methods for risk management.

The benefits

Practitioners involved in climate change adaptation projects in all the case study countries have identified gender as a key consideration when implementing projects aimed at increasing resilience to climate change yet few practitioners have the tools or data to support gender integration into their projects.

This project provides resources for government and development agencies and practitioners, researchers on gender and adaptation to climate change; and farmer associations, and other local groups focusing on climate risk management and adaptation to climate change.

Tools developed through this project support the development of gender sensitive climate change adaptation strategies so that adaptation efforts are more effective at increasing the resilience of rural households to climate change and meeting the needs of poor women.

Expected impact

The research products and knowledge generated in the course of this project will contribute directly to improving the livelihoods of the rural poor, and reduce gender asset inequality by identifying those pathways through which policies and programs can act to reduce vulnerability and the ways in which such interventions could be better targeted, particularly to poor women. The ultimate beneficiaries are poor rural women and their families, whose welfare will increase if women's assets are strengthened through appropriate policies and institutions.

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Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany
Advisory Service on Agricultural Research for Development
Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65760 Eschborn, Germany
T +49 61 96 79-2149
F +49 61 96 79-11 15
beaf@giz.de
www.giz.de

Author(s) Claudia Ringler

Layout Nizar Omrani

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Division
Rural Development; Agriculture; Food Security

Addresses of the BMZ offices

BMZ Bonn
Dahlmannstraße 4
53113 Bonn, Germany
T +49 (0)228 99 535-0
F +49 (0)228 99 535-3500

BMZ Berlin
Stresemannstraße 94
10963 Berlin, Germany
T +49 (0)30 18 535-0
F +49 (0)30 18 535-2501

poststelle@bmz.bund.de
www.bmz.de