How a new beekeeping tech project is addressing gender inclusivity

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ICARDA Flickr: Women in Ethiopia

This month, we're launching a new project that will work with women beekeepers to adapt and pilot a beekeeping app in Uzbekistan and Ethiopia to support improved hive management: *AI-Driven Climate-Smart Beekeeping for Women*. Why women beekeepers? We know women face inequalities, particularly when it comes to agriculture, technology, and pandemics:

"If women working in agriculture in developing countries had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent[1]"

As in many developing countries, access to internet and smartphones is lower among women than men in both Ethiopia and Uzbekistan

On top of these existing challenges, the addition of COVID-19 has resulted in an unequal burden on women, as many have needed to care for children during school shutdowns and have consequentially lost income

It's easy to list the challenges faced by women, but the harder question is, what do we do about it? What does it really mean to ensure project activities truly listen to and support women? Using UNESCO Gender Equality Markers, we have looked across our project lifecycle to see exactly where we have opportunities to support women and improve their livelihoods:

AI-Driven Climate-Smart Beekeeping for Women

UNESCO definition

Example of application in our project:

Gender sensitive: *identifies and acknowledges the existing differences and inequalities between women and men*

1

From the moment we started our project proposal and planning activities, we acknowledged the inequalities faced by women. We learned about the unequal access to resources, land, and opportunities women face and considered ways in which our project could mitigate these inequalities.

Gender responsive: *identifies and acknowledges the existing differences and inequalities between women and men AND articulates policies and initiatives which address the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of women and men*

2

The development process of our application will be gender-responsive, as we will work directly with women to address their needs and integrate their contributions into the app. While we have baseline technology and options of how the app will be developed, it will be ultimately the input of women beekeepers that determines the features that are most helpful to them. We also want to implement best practices for AgTech apps for women[2], such as using women role models or avatars in our communications.

Gender transformative: *implements actions and initiatives that challenge existing discriminatory policies and/or practices and carries out changes for the betterment of quality of life for all*

3

Our result (a beekeeping companion app developed with women for improved hive management) is gender-transformative as it enables women to better manage their hives for healthier and more productive bees. This enables the production of higher honey yields for greater income opportunities.

As a new project, we have the opportunity to ensure we are gender-sensitive, transformative, and responsive from the get-go. We will continue to learn and reflect on how we can best serve the women beekeepers we work for and keep you updated on our progress.

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