Workshop for Dryland Systems: ESA Flagships Evidence based Transformation
Amman: 26-27 May 2014

Strategic Gender Research Planning

Katherine Snyder, Everisto Mapedza, Nicoline de Haan, Nelson Mango and Cecilia Turin

Strategic Gender Research Planning Workshop

26th June – 27th May, 2014
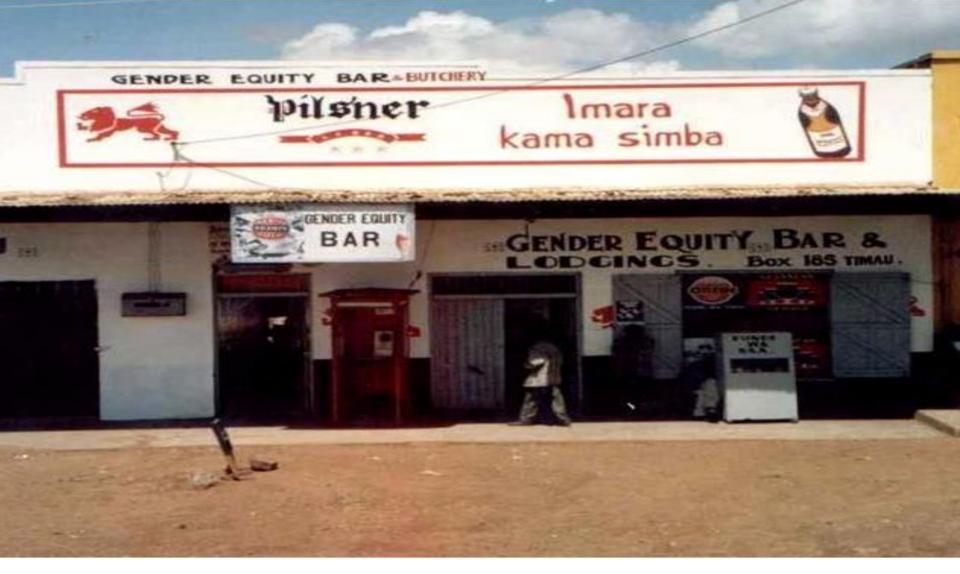
Holiday Inn Hotel - Amman, Jordan

Gender Equity in Timau, Kenya

Photo credit: Lucy Emerton

Key points about gender

- Remembering that gender is not just women.
- Women and men not homogenous groups.
- Gender is a social and cultural construction and so varies considerably according to context.
- Gender: "the ways in which members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated, and expected to behave."
- Understanding gender in drylands involves unpacking the complex social systems in the program sites.
- Gender research needs to look at gender relations – how men and women relate and are define d in relation to one another.

Key points from the gender strategy

- Power: people's capacity to make choices and exercise influence - in relation to themselves as well as others
- Empowerment: processes by which this capacity is acquired by those who have been denied it
- Agency: the capacity to exercise choice and pursue goals. Agency gives people the power to challenge or renegotiate unequal power relations. It operates by providing:
- Voice - to seek individually or collectively ways to bring about desired change, and
- Exit - to withdraw from or withhold cooperation in an unfavourable situation

Data and analysis

- Just asking women what they want or what they do (gender division of labor) and collecting gender-disaggregated data)- will tell you what patterns exist but not why and without the why, entry points can be wrongly identified.

- Gender needs to be integrated into research questions from the beginning, not tacked on midway through or thought about at the end when impact needs to be assessed.

- Understanding differences within gender for better targeting.

Gender and power

- Gender is about a system of power relations.
- Addressing poverty will not in itself solve the issues of gender equity.
- Gender can only be understood by examining the wider cultural, economic and political context in which it is situated.
- Essentializing gender might only deepen inequalities and poverty.
- Need to understand formal versus informal rights.

Some gender myths and stereotypes

- Women naturally cooperate in groups.
- Women are risk averse
- Women are naturally the 'guardians of nature'.
- Getting women access to markets will address poverty.

Stereotypes and myths cont'd

- Women are victims (…. Of men…)
- Marriage is the site of women's subordination
- Women focus on food crops, men on cash crops
- Women are risk averse

Problems with simplification

- Households are made up of individuals with separate sometimes complementary sometimes opposed gender interests.
- Need to be cautious about applicability of Western models to non-Western contexts.

Interventions and their effects

- Creating new institutions with emphasis on consensus may only marginalize women and poor men more.

- Having urban women fieldworkers may not necessarily mean better understanding of rural women.

- Perspectives on marginal men or differences among women often missing.

Interventions

- Polygamy in Botswana.
- Targeting only women can create a backlash.
- Technical interventions without advocacy and awareness raising unlikely to address underlying gender inequities.
- Research should link to NGO/civil society sector as well as government.

Unsubstantiated claims

- Paper by Doss et al: Gender Inequalities in Ownership and Control of Land in Africa: Myths versus Reality (IFPRI)
- debunking statements like "women own only 2 percent of land in the world" as gross over-simplifications.
- To understand land ownership, one has to understand how 'ownership' is defined and conceived in a given context.
- Ownership needs to look at men as well.
- Cultural context in which men and women live critical to understand.

Conclusion

- What to do when women/men appear to embrace systems that we as outside researchers view as linked to their subordination and marginalization?

- Policy needs to be based on science rather than assumption?