

Gender Relations and the Management of Agricultural Water and Land in the Farming Collectives at Saptari, Nepal

Manita Raut

m.raut@cigar.org

International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

19th February 2020



Australian Government

**Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research**

Innovative water solutions for sustainable development

Food · Climate · Growth

Background

5 farmer collectives formation and introduction of dry season irrigation technologies for marginal and tenant farmers, particularly women in Saptari Nepal

Why

To examine **if and how** establishment of collective farming **enables women** farmers to engage in smallholder farming

How social relations mediate collectivization processes such as group membership, gendered labor division, and the share of produce

Reflection

Women are increasingly making farm decisions, the **traditional gender roles** still **dictate** agricultural decisions

Methods



Participatory Action Research:

Establishing 5 farmer collectives in partnership with local NGOs, government and research partners

Research Site	Focused Group Discussions	Semi-structured Interviews	Household Survey
Saptari district Nepal	20	38	2

5 collectives formation

Agronomic trainings
and group
strengthening

Stakeholders
consultation and
engagement

Ambivalences regarding the redistribution of labor, land, produce and capital through collective farming

(1) Gendered
division of labor
and gendered
technology
adoption

(2) social
relations across
scales (intra-
household,
group and
community
relations)

(3)
intersectionality
(e.g. gender,
class, caste, age,
ethnicity)

5 collectives formation

Agronomic trainings
and group
strengthening

Stakeholders
consultation and
engagement

1) Gendered division of labor and gendered technology adoption

- **Dependence on male members** or outside laborers : land preparation and irrigation
- **Women only groups showed a greater ability to work together** when compared to the mixed gender groups:
 - Technology: gender friendly technology
 - Repair work still done by men
 - Training women is good but work burden too

2) Social Relation Across Scales

For some women

- Increased mobility
- Social engagement
- Creation of spaces for women to move, communicate and act

- “I realized I can earn money myself when my husband is out” (T_FGD3)
- “Women do not feel shy to speak to strangers anymore, they have become active. We women tell men to repair water connections!” (S_I4H)

2) Social Relation Across Scales

...Others also experience limitations of gender norms: spatial mobility and “voice”

Accessing water resources, subsidies and markets: missing land ownership certificates

- Exposure and learning, but also feeling insecure due to limited knowledge on prices and lack of bargaining power
“I get overcharged for agricultural inputs, they say `you receive remittances`”
- Attending meetings, representing household heads, but also being overheard in meetings

3) Intersectionality of gender and class

In some of our case studies, **power imbalances due to gender, class (land ownership), education and social networks** amongst group members led to unequal divisions of labor and benefit sharing

When **gender inequalities** intersect with **land ownership inequalities**, women had relationally lower financial benefits than male landowners from the produce

If the division of labor, capital and land distribution and group benefits remain unequally distributed due to unequal gender and class relations, the intent of collective farming approach to redistribute land, labor and water resources more justly may be hindered

Conclusion





Thank you



International Water
Management Institute

Innovative water solutions for sustainable development

Food · Climate · Growth

