Gender Cross-Cutting Research Activity

Gendered Perspectives for Conservation Agriculture: Local soil knowledge and crop-livestock interaction

Dr. Maria Elisa Christie, Keri Agriesti, and Jess Martin

Introduction
The Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program (SANREM CRSP) is in its fourth phase of using science to improve the livelihoods and food security of small farmers in the developing world. The current phase focuses on conservation agriculture production systems (CAPS), defined by the following components: year-round soil cover, no tillage, and crop rotation. It includes the Gendered Perspectives for Conservation Agriculture cross-cutting research activity (CCRA), which addresses gender-related factors that contribute to the success or failure of CAPS. Socio-economic factors such as increased labor requirements—especially for women—are among the critical constraints to adoption of CAPS (Giller, 2009).

Research Data
From 2009 to 2010, focus group activities, including soil interpretation were conducted in: Mali, Ghana, Uganda, Ecuador, Kenya, and Philippines. Fieldwork begins in Bolivia and the Philippines in 2011, and India and Cambodia in 2012.

Research Objectives
Objective 1: Document differences in men and women’s knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions of soil fertility.
Objective 2: Document the gendered nature of crop-livestock interaction with respect to the conservation objective of maintaining crop residue cover on the soil.

Methodology
Researchers use participatory, qualitative techniques, including: focus group discussions, socio-economic activity charts, participant observation, transect walks, structured and unstructured interviews, participatory mapping, and interpretation of photographs and soil samples. Gender disaggregated data is gathered by dividing men and women into different groups to carry out activities, and then coming back together to present as a whole.

Gendered Knowledge, Beliefs, & Perceptions
Using qualitative, case study-based research, this project considers how gendered access to and control of land and livestock correlates with men and women’s knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions of soil fertility.

Gender Analysis
The Gender Dimensions Framework (GDF) facilitates a gender analysis of data collected. It incorporates four dimensions and the cross-cutting dimension of power (Rubin et al., 2009).

Hypothesis
Women will identify soil variables relating to fertility while men will identify variables related to field labor.

Access to Resources
Using participatory methods to map gendered landscapes showing access, control, and labor in relation to productive and reproductive activities—including gardening and raising small animals.

Acknowledgements
This publication/presentation was made possible by the United States Agency for International Development and the generous support of the American People for the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program under terms of Cooperative Agreement No. EPP-A-00-04-00013-00.

References

Access to Resources
Map of Kaplak showing access, control, and labor (Kapchorwa, Uganda).

Anticipated Products
Two MSc theses, peer-reviewed journal articles, methodological tools for future research and projects. Recommendations for building on women’s knowledge for promotion of CAPS.

Practices and Participation
Who does what?

Impediments Encountered
1. Understanding beliefs and perceptions requires ethnographic techniques and understanding of local culture and language.
2. Researchers mistranslate and summarize indigenous and local knowledge into Western science constructs.