

Innovation for Agricultural Training and Education

Preliminary Study: Gender, Higher Education and AET



Female students, University of Battambang, Cambodia

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Outline

- Describe the major gender issues in AET and higher education
- Review global and regional gender data on AET in higher education
- Present results from case studies in Cambodia, Bangladesh, and South Sudan
- Present good practices for addressing gender disparities in AET higher education programs



Field training for graduate students from Makerere University, Uganda. Collaboration between the College of Agriculture and Women and Gender Studies.

Why is it important to consider gender in agriculture education and training?

- It is critical for increasing human capital in agriculture, promoting knowledge, raising agricultural productivity, and realizing the potential of women in agriculture
- Female farmers play a vital role in agriculture, yet they are poorly represented in agricultural programs in higher education
- It is necessary to improve the representation of women in important policy debates and decision-making processes
- There is little attention to the roles women play in agricultural production
- It can help focus more on the issues women farmers face in agriculture

Global data

- Female participation is increasing slightly in tertiary education relative to male participation
- Women make up about 47% of students in tertiary education
- Since 1980's women's participation in all fields has increased with the exception of education and agriculture in Africa
- In the majority of developing countries less than 30% of the eligible age group is enrolled in tertiary education

Source: UNESCO 2004

Global data (cont'd)

- Women are concentrated in “feminine fields” (home economics, health, education and the humanities)
- Female participation is lowest in the fields of engineering, manufacturing, science and agriculture
- 38% of students in tertiary agricultural programs are women (UNESCO, 2004)
- In advanced degree programs women's numbers decrease (UNESCO, 2004)
- At the professional level, women comprise about 20% of agricultural researchers in developing countries (Beintema, 2006)



Female scientists in Mali IPM lab

Barriers women face in higher education

- Lack of time due to household responsibilities
- Cultural norms value education for boys over girls
- Poverty that keeps daughters home to work or leads to early marriage
- Lack of adequate facilities for women to live and to ensure their safety
- Negative bias in teacher attitudes toward female students as well as in textbooks in curricula
- Sexual harassment

Discrimination is often not visible and unrecognized because it is covert and indirect

- Gender-insensitive pedagogical processes
- Prejudice about women's academic abilities and intellectual authority
- Lack of gender policy implementation
- Backlash and stigmatization in affirmative action programs

Specific constraints women face in agricultural programs

- Curricula often fail to address topics such as nutrition or hygiene that are particularly important to women farmers
- Agriculture is perceived to be a masculine discipline, and women are not believed to have physical, mental and social capabilities to succeed
- Fear of traveling far from home to take part in extension projects

Source: Mangheni et al., 2010

Constraints women face in professional environments

- Male dominated review and promotion committees
- Women excluded from career development opportunities
- Lack of networks of female peers and role models
- Men's networking takes place in spaces that exclude women (bars, tea rooms, sporting events)
- Difficulties maintaining a work-life balance when prevailing norms burden women with double responsibilities for work and caring for the family

Gender issues in AET and higher education vary significantly across regions

Female students outnumber male students in tertiary education in all regions except South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2012)

Wide variation within regions (example: Arab states: Mauritania has a female to male ratio of .41, compared to Qatar with a ratio of 5.38 (UNESCO 2012))



IPM scientist Carmen Suarez in Ecuador



SANREM graduate student and research assistants in UBB, Cambodia



IPM scientist Mme. Gambi in Mali

Preliminary research of gender issues in AET institutions in Cambodia, Bangladesh, and South Sudan

Cambodia: 53 students, instructors, faculty, and administrators (24M, 29F) interviewed from three AET institutions

- Preah Leap National School of Agriculture
- University of Battambang (UBB)
- Royal University of Agriculture (RUA)



Bangladesh: Six administrators, faculty, and students (2M, 4F) from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU)



South Sudan: 52 (37M, 15F) students interviewed from three AET institutions

- University of Juba (UoJ)
- Catholic University of South Sudan (CU)
- John Garang University of Science and Technology (JG-MUST)



Gender sensitive government policies make a difference

- Quotas for government employees and prioritizing women – Cambodia and South Sudan
- Maternity leave is guaranteed to employees
 - Cambodia –90 days (USAID 2009)
 - Bangladesh – 6 months (Chaudhury 2011)
- Education Strategic Plan, Cambodia
 - “Construct dormitories for students from provinces, especially for female students” (MOEYS 2010)



Findings confirm many of the above issues

Challenges include concerns about women's safety, a lack of awareness about the difficulties women face, women's heavy domestic workloads, and cultural perceptions about the roles of women



Students registering for classes at BSMRAU, Bangladesh

The number of female students and instructors is increasing, although almost none are in high-level positions as full faculty or administrators

Women's safety was cited by men and women as the primary concern and reason why women cannot work in the field or rural, isolated places

“A big problem that my parents worry about for me is my security as a girl. They worry for men too, but men can take care of themselves. Men rape girls, girls do not rape men. If a girl is raped, she feels so ashamed, and if people know, they don't pity her but look down on her. Also family honor would be destroyed too. Authorities don't worry either; they say the solution is to marry with that man, finish the case. A lot of cases are solved by this solution.”

(Female student, RUA, Cambodia)

Cultural expectations dictate that girls and women are responsible for domestic tasks and family care

“[We] also have the problem [that women] have to work a lot more than men. We need to do everything in house: help mother, help with care of younger sister or brother, and mom or dad... Men have less care, if there is something he wants he does it. But women have to think a lot [more] about family than the men.”

(Female student, UBB, Cambodia)



Domestic tasks and family care (cont'd)

“It is hard to have a family and study. It has affected my exams results. I have less hours to learn compared with others male students. I have to manage my family, bring my two children to kindergarten and back, clean the house, shopping, preparing food after returning from school.”

(Female student, CU, South Sudan)

Access to housing is a key issue

“Most of the women at RUA are not from Phnom Penh so they don’t have to worry about their own housework – they stay with friends, relatives, or in dorms. But if they stay with relatives, they will be expected to contribute to housework.”

(Women’s focus group, RUA, Cambodia)



SANREM IL Team house in
Cambodia: men only

Cultural perceptions of beauty, strength, and intelligence affect women's participation

"It is normal to hear bad things about students who study agriculture, especially girls. They say why did you not choose banking or accounting? If a girl is not beautiful they say she should study agriculture. If you study agriculture, you are in the sun and it makes the skin dark, it is a dirty place and you will become ugly. Families with beautiful daughters don't want them to study [agriculture]."

(Women's focus group, RUA, Cambodia)



Battambang, Cambodia

Lack of awareness of the constraints women face

- Faculty members and students commented that male and female students already have the same opportunities and that there are no constraints for women in AET institutions
- Beliefs that NGOs and other programs have already addressed gender
- Gender issues are not addressed in AET curriculum



Dr. Christie with a gender aware and supportive UBB Rector Dr. Visalsok Touch

Unsupportive policies and leadership

- Women are poorly represented in high-level decision making
- Male decision-makers are not always supportive of maternity and family leave
- No childcare for students or faculty
- Resistance from male leaders at the professional level

“Once I approached the Ministry of Agriculture, to submit my application for job, somebody complained about working under women, saying ‘how can a woman be my boss?’”

(Female student, MUST, South Sudan)

Conservative ideas and religious views

“Religious views are a social problem. Some religious people don’t want women coming outside the house. They think women should work only in the house. Families don’t want their daughters to study.”

(Female student, BSMRAU, Bangladesh)

Determination & challenging gender stereotypes

“Many people said it is not good to send a girl to the city ...I got high scores and my mom agreed but was still worried. I promised myself I will break the record in my village. No girl had ever studied in Phnom Penh...I never listen to people who say ‘she cannot do it.’ I only listen to me, and listen to the people who encourage me.”

(Female student, RUA, Cambodia)

Resisting cultural perceptions of physical strength

“[Agriculture is] not just for men, because now we don’t have to use strength, we can use our brains to make a machine and girls can make a machine because girls have brains like the boys. Boys can think about something new, but girls can think too.”

(Women’s focus group,
RUA, Cambodia)



Woman in Cambodia using hand tractor

Recommendations from research participants

- Raise awareness about gender issues at different levels
- Work with the families of female students
- Provide on campus dormitories
- Offer childcare on campus
- Increase men's share of housework
- Offer women internship opportunities in the private sector and with NGOs
- Create spaces for men and women to work together
- Help women secure jobs when they graduate
- Offer more scholarships for women, including PhD training
- Provide safe transportation for female students
- Improve safety for women in rural areas

Other “good practices” from around the world

- Develop flexible PhD programs that work with women's schedules
- Offer pre-entry remedial programs targeted at women
- Create a clear sexual harassment policy and educate staff and students about the policy
- Offer child care facilities on campus
- Use successful female role models
- Appoint a gender focal point in each department
- Establish quotas for female students
- Develop gender sensitive curriculum
- Require gender and diversity seminars for staff and faculty
- Construct safe and reliable sanitation facilities
- Cultivate high level male allies

Optimism about the future

“I think in our future women will be leading national agricultural systems, research, and education institutions.”

(Woman professor, BSMRAU, Bangladesh)



Dr. Charity Mutegei, Kenya, recipient of the 2013 Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application



Thank you

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Agriculture students in the South Sudan

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