

InnovATE Trip Report

Final, June 28, 2013

Country(s) visited: Cambodia, Bangladesh

Dates of travel: May 30-June 25, 2013 including other projects

Names of travelers and affiliations: Maria Elisa Christie, Virginia Tech

Purpose of trip:

Visit Siem Reap, Battambang, and Phnom Penh in Cambodia, and university in Bangladesh and interview students (including alumna), faculty/staff, and administrators from agricultural universities about gender issues in their institutions and agricultural profession in their country. Meet with USAID officers in Phnom Penh. Test and revise gender research tools (focus group guide and interview questionnaire).

Sites visited: University of Battambang in Battambang, Royal University of Agriculture in Phnom Penh, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU) in Gazipur, Bangladesh

Summary

Interviews at sites listed above, and with two graduates of Prek Leap National School of Agriculture. At UBB, interviewed a total of 11 female students and nine male students; the Rector/President, the Dean of Agriculture, and the farm manager (all men); the Department Head of Rural Development (a woman); an instructor who teaches a gender course (not in agriculture, a woman); and three entry level female Assistant Instructors (with a Bachelor's degree). Gave gender instructor at UBB several PPT presentations from my gender course to use or cannibalize for photos, and a video. Held Focus Group Discussions with male and female students (10 F, 10 M, separately) at RUA, and interviewed faculty and administrators, including the only woman Dean Dr. Krisna (of Agricultural Technology and Management, soon to be officially renamed the Faculty of Agricultural Engineering. In total, I interviewed 51 people and collected their perceptions and experiences of gender issues in their institutions and field. I got a copy of the numbers and graph comparing male and female students enrolled and graduated at RUA for the last 5 years. The trip to Cambodia ended with a meeting with Bill Bradley and a team from the Office of Food Security and the Environment, with Clara Cohen calling in from Washington. In Bangladesh, I

spent one day at BSMRAU (Bangabandhu Skeikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University) introducing InnovATE to the Vice-Chancellor and other administrators and faculty at an official meeting, then I interviewed a total of six (administrator, faculty, assistant professor, and students). School was out of session but I was able to observe male and female students registering for the upcoming semester (pretty much equal men and women), and meet with two students. I collected sex-disaggregated statistics (mostly compiled specifically for me) in RUA and BSMRAU.

Key findings are detailed below, but in general the numbers show gradually increasing presence of female students and instructors, while few (to none) make it to upper positions (full faculty or administrative). Safety and “mindset” or “culture” are cited in both countries as the main obstacles for gender equity in agricultural professions. Most consider teaching and research as the most appropriate for women, though many women students also expressed wanting to work in the field—and some of whom pointed out that you do not only need physical strength to work in the field and operate a farm. Probably the biggest hurdle is the assumption that things are pretty equal and women have all the opportunities (except by those whose lived experience does not concur), suggesting the need for general awareness raising (through culturally appropriate and locally organized approaches and activities). Also need to overcome the idea that gender is only relevant is agricultural extension and rural development—not in the technical fields.

Note that not all people contacted during this trip are listed here as they form part of a confidential study.

Description of activities /observations:

Sun, June 2: SIEM REAP

Interview two graduates of Prek Leap National School of Agriculture (now university) who work with ADDA (Agricultural Development Denmark Asia) and are SANREM CRSP collaborators. One was in Animal Science in the class of 2006, (with no women professors and 30% female students). The other was in agriculture and graduated in 2009, with “3 to 5” women professors to “6 or 7” men; there were 6 women students and 10 men in her class. Both women I interviewed work with farmers, primarily women farmers, with self-help groups that aim to empower women, increase agricultural income, add value to agricultural products through micro-enterprises, and train women in leadership and civil society skills.

Mon, June 3: BATTAMBANG

Meet with University of Battambang Rector and President, Dr. Visalsok Touch. Develop schedule for interviews during the following days.

Fri, June 7: All day at the University of Battambang. Hold two Focus Group Discussions, one with 10 women students, and one with 9 men students. Interview the Dean of the Faculty of

Agriculture and Food Processing, Mr. Sip Pagnasoley (“Mr. Soley”), and Mr. Bunna Touch, farm manager of Agricultural Research and Training.

Sat, June 8: Two interviews at UBB, one with Rector Touch and one of an administrative assistant in his office who is also an instructor.

Sun, June 9: Interview key woman student in third year who is working with my SANREM graduate student, Daniel Sumner.

Mon, June 10: Half day of interviews at UBB, with the head of the Department of Rural Development (which has two agriculture courses), and two instructors, including one who teaches gender (not in agriculture). All are women. I gave the gender instructor 3 or 4 PPT presentations from my gender, environment and development course and a short video clip of a woman grinding millet with a baby on her back in Mali to use in her gender class.

Tues, June 11: Take bus to Phnom Penh

Wed, June 12: Full day of interviews at the Royal University of Agriculture. The rector was called away to the provinces with the governor. Met briefly with Dr. SENG Mom, Vice Rector of International Cooperation. Nothing was set up for me but she was kind enough to assign Mr. THENG Kouch, Vice Chief, Planning and International Cooperation Office, to set up some meetings for today. Had one interview with Mr. Lor Lytour, Vice Dean of the Graduate School, and two focus groups, one with 10 upper classmen and one with 10 upper classwomen, all of whom spoke excellent English. Also interviewed one teaching assistant and Dr. Kong Krisna, Dean of Agricultural Technology and Management; the latter is in charge of gender for RUA. Had lunch with and translation from an extraordinary student, Ms. Kit Pheran, who is a member of the Fulbright and Undergraduate State Alumni Association of Cambodia (FUSAAC); Kit had a scholarship Undergraduate Intensive English Learning Program hosted by Utah State University for two months, and also went to Duksunk Women’s university in Korea. She is looking for a scholarship to go to the US to study for a Master’s focusing on drip irrigation systems. (I gave her Dr. Manny Reyes’ contact at NC A & T, as this is his specialty and wrote Manny about her; Manny has offered to be her major professor.) I also met with another extraordinary student, Ms. Chea Chanreaksa, who lives at a girls dorm that is a project of the Harpswell Foundation to encourage women leaders, which has students from different fields and universities and includes a reading and analyzing/discussing one newspaper article/event daily, and a weekly series of guest speakers. In my next visit to PP, she would like me to be a guest speaker. This dorm sounds like a great model for what InnovATE could be doing in the future, especially since lack of dorms are the number one constraint for getting girls to universities.

I met briefly with Rector Bunthan. The most important thing I learned is that the girls’ dorm only has capacity for 20 girls, while the total student population is about 5,000.

Thurs, June 13: Meeting at USAID, Cambodia Mission, with Clara joining via conference call.

Shared my findings and recommendations. Discussion with team. Of them, Dr. Megan Rourke, AA Fellow, will be joining Virginia Tech as Assistant Professor of Horticulture this fall. In conclusion, Bill Bradley said the long term vision was to link USAID's agricultural development activities in the country (such as Harvest) with student capacity-building in country, and to build long-lasting relationships so that in 10 years there would be strong links between Cambodian agricultural training and education institutions and US land-grant universities. There was interest in developing a system to connect Cambodian students to projects in country (like my UBB students in SANREM) and to organizing a mechanism (roster) of US scientists including postdocs (make sure to include women) to be visiting fellows and teach at Cambodian institutions.

Fri, June 13: Fly from Phnom Penh to Dhaka

Tues, June 18: Interviews and meetings with Administrators, faculty and students at BSMRAU (which is how it is referred to), standing for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University.

Tues, June 25: Interview only BSMRAU woman faculty

Receive data/stats on gender

Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics

http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/webnew/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=465:enrolment-by-gender-in-public-universities-2009&catid=78:university-education-2010&Itemid=186

Documents collected:

RUA: Student statistics in the field of "Agriculture and Rural Development showing student enrolment and graduated from 2009-2013 by gender

BSMRAU: Statistics on graduate student admission by department, level (MS or PhD), and gender; statistics on undergraduate student admission by department and gender; and statistics on female professors by department; and

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INNOVATE:

- Safety is one of the primary constraints for women pursuing studies or professions in AET. Measures must be taken to provide safe lodging and transportation for women students and faculty. Working in pairs so that women do not have to travel alone to the field is another way

to address this issue. It will also be necessary to work with parents to change deeply held perceptions of danger that may not be consistent with recently improved safety measures.

- While it is critical to increase the number of female students in all levels of AET, support for women pursuing PhDs is essential. Without high-level degrees, women faculty are not able to advance into higher levels of university administration or decision-making positions. Long-term efforts to increase the pool of qualified women for these high-level positions is necessary to improve gender balance at all levels of AET institutions.
- Coverage of gender issues in AET curricula is clearly lacking. AET programs should develop a gender awareness course that is required for all students in their first year to help change the “mindset” and “culture” issues that faculty and students reported. InnovATE could help develop a general course that could be adapted for country contexts. Likewise, a gender awareness workshop for faculty should be a required element of their orientation or continuing education.
- Raising awareness of women’s double workload is critical and while this may require a cultural revolution in the big picture, this can be addressed to some extent at an institutional level. The domestic responsibilities and demands on women (students, instructors, faculty) affect ability to succeed. Government-sponsored maternity leave in both countries needs full support, childcare facilities would help, and dorms for girls (so they do not have to stay with family or friends of family in the city and take care of their house/cooking/washing/childcare) all would make a dent.

Key findings in Cambodia (UBB & RUA)

- Women’s safety is cited as the biggest and more common concern and the reason women can’t work in the field or rural, isolated places. Solutions include educating the rural population so that presumably they would learn to respect (and not rape) women, sending women out to work in teams (pairs at least) even though this requires additional budget.
- At UBB, administrators such as the Rector, the Deans, the farm manager all teach. At the same time, lower level administrative support staff (all women) with a Bachelor’s degree also teach. Dr. Touch sends good students abroad to come back with experience and credentials (though he cited one excellent female student whose family would not let her get her PhD).
- People teaching at UBB either come through the civil service government channels and have a Master’s degree and get a permanent position), or are “contract” staff that are hired by UBB directly and only have a Bachelor’s degree (often from UBB). All of the latter are women, while the former includes some women at the level of the university, though none in agriculture
- Many think there are equal opportunities for women and men; this seems to be based on the idea of men and women having complementary roles (“equal but different”) and one that keeps women out of certain areas, including the field
- Many women think they can do anything: “Women can drive tractors and grow crops. Can do anything same as the men.” (female students’ focus group)
- Among the places women students wanted to work which men did not (did not mention) was in stores and in the classroom

- According to one student, 40% of the students come from rural areas (suggest Penn State confirm with Dr. Touch)
- There is strong support for women from the Rector and Dean
- Government scholarships for rural girls are critical in getting females from villages who have farming backgrounds and want to study agriculture to university to do so
- Many males and females want to farm, using technical expertise and to help small farmers
- UBB gives three months of maternity leave, paid full salary for government employees and one woman said paid half salary if contract staff

Key findings at BSMRAU

- Students perceive the primary gender-based constraints in AET to be related to conservative and religious views that women shouldn't work in remote areas and should stay in the house and not study. Faculty cited other constraints such as resistance from male leadership in regards to maternity leave and the lack of women in high-level decision-making positions.
- Students and faculty agree that there should be a course on gender or at least seminars and workshops to increase gender awareness.
- Female faculty noted that some male department heads and deans are supportive of women while others are not. [emphasizes need for supportive men as advocates for women in AET]
- Several faculty member emphasized that girls do better than boys in classes (they do not go out at night –one of the benefits of women being more secluded and men more freedom to be in public space—and are not busy with other things)
- With so many women at lower ranks in teaching and research, and female students outperforming males, one woman faculty expressed that she is confident that women will soon be running the agricultural universities and research centers.
- Statistics (female students and faculty at BSMRAU):
 - o As of June 2013, there are 147 faculty at BSMRAU: 126 men and 21 women. Of the 21 women faculty, four hold PhDs while the rest have Masters degrees. Just over half (12) of the 21 women faculty hold Assistant Professor positions while the remaining nine are Lecturers. The women faculty are distributed across a range of departments and specialties including agricultural economics, agricultural extension & rural development, agroforestry, plant breeding & plant pathology, fisheries, and animal science & veterinary medicine.
 - o Among undergraduate students at BSMRAU, a slight majority of students admitted to the Agriculture program have been female, and since 2011 more female than male students have been admitted. In the Fisheries department, female students comprise just over one third of admitted students since the program's first year in 2009, and about twice as many male as female students are accepted each year (with the exception of 2011 and 2012). The Agricultural Economics program just started in 2013 but includes 11 female and nine male students. The Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program only admitted three female students (compared to 17 male students) in its first

year in 2011, but has since admitted equal or near equal numbers for a total of 36 male and 24 female students.

- Since 1991, 2,107 male students and 218 female students have been admitted to MS programs, while 365 male students and 18 female students have been admitted to PhD programs. The first female PhD student was admitted to the Plant Pathology program in 2001.

Gender-based constraints from UBB interviews

- Women are expected to be beautiful and depend on looks to find work and husbands
- Dark skin is not beautiful (considered “burned”) and working in the field is thus in conflict with the need to be beautiful according to cultural expectations (this may also reflect a prejudice against all farmers, with skin color reflecting in part that they spend a lot of time in the field)
- Safety safety safety—need to develop strategies to overcome dangers and mindset about this to extent possible (some ideas below)
- Family choosing to keep girl home and send boy to college (rooted in safety and productive/reproductive division of labor with girls supposed to help with housework and caring for siblings or parents)
- Domestic work, see one respondent says she comes late Mon, Tues, another says tired
- Gendered spaces—women destined for banking and tissue labs, or stores “selling pesticides”
- Infrastructure—need place to stay at farm where students do experiments, as it is too expensive for them to go and come back on their motos (fuel costs); and/or need closer farm to allow girls to go and return more easily
- Lack of gender awareness beyond seeing equal opportunities in equal pay but not looking at different ranks even if equal pay within ranks

Gender-based constraints from RUA interviews

- Dangers for women in rural areas (again, safety is a major concern)
- Perceptions of danger may be more of an issue than danger itself
- Women may choose not to (or not be able to) participate in opportunities that would advance their careers (like training abroad) because of family responsibilities and lack of childcare
- Parents’ perceptions of dangers for their daughters or the lack of adequate housing in rural areas (where agricultural programs may send students or professionals) lead parents to be resistant to the idea of their daughters pursuing education in agriculture and instead to them encouraging their daughters to work in cities or factories (where housing with friends and neighbors is more readily available)
- Women expected to be light-skinned—families don’t want their daughters working in the sun and getting dark skin, and women may not want this either (even linked to concerns about traveling long distances—don’t want to travel in sun and darken skin)

- If women are able to overcome the logistical issue of housing and find relatives to stay with, they will still face the burden of being expected to contribute to the housework. Staying with friends or in dorms is the best way to reduce this burden for women.

Gender-based constraints from BSMRAU

- Department heads or other men in official positions not supportive of women taking maternity leave, despite government policy that supports maternity leave and encourages women to breastfeed for six months
- No facilities for childcare at BSMRAU
- No women in decision-making roles at BSMRAU (to become department head requires Professor or Associate Professor status, and there are no women at those levels so there will be no women department heads)
- Political context determines job opportunities for both men and women [NOT GENDER SPECIFIC, BUT IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR BANGLADESH CONTEXT]
- No courses address gender and agriculture at the undergraduate level at BSMRAU, but one course in rural development talks about gender and rural development
- Pregnancy presents many challenges for women—taking leave, lack of facilities for childcare after birth, etc.
- Lack of family support for women working in the field, concerns about women staying alone (lodging)
- Men don't want to teach women agriculture—don't see why women want to study agriculture when "they can't go in the field"
- Religious views and social norms that keep women in the house: women farmers are not included in agricultural trainings and families do not want their daughters to go to school to study
- Farmers in remote areas have conservative views and do not like women coming to work there
- Women expected to clean the house, care for children, and care for parents
- Perceptions that men are superior or better suited to fieldwork and data collection
- Multiple responsibilities of women faculty: take care of family, manage classes, fieldwork, and students

Gender-based opportunities from UBB

- Lots of female students want their own farms
- Government scholarships for girls from rural areas (many of whom come from farming families and some of whom want to go back to apply their knowledge and help improve the lives of farmers with better production (and drying and storage methods))
- UBB has a person teaching gender as a short course (one week, with 100 students); can give agriculture students credit for taking them, plus we could support her to prepare a short courser on gender in agriculture

- She thinks gender course should be required first year
- UBB has female dorm
- Bring in women faculty from other countries or RUA for short courses
- UBB is very open to international collaboration; bring in guest speakers for seminars
- Give credit for short courses (Rural Development does not give students credit for anything outside their Department; not sure but it seems someone said Agriculture does. Be sure gender course counts for requirement)
- Hold gender panel with experts from Cambodia private, government, education sectors
- Family support—some girls do have supportive parents; hold orientation sessions for parents in nearby towns
- Go to high schools to promote agriculture studies and overcome the stereotype that it is only about field work (thus opening more possibilities in the minds of parents and students for the opportunities it can provide for girls)
- Girls really appreciated the opportunity they have to go alongside with the boys to a Korean company for an intensive internship; they have safe and separate lodging facilities and find they can exchange ideas with boys and be respected for their abilities

Gender-based opportunities from RUA

- Sometimes more opportunities for women through government policies or incentives to increase women's participation
- Work in extension is viewed as a role that women often hold
- Government policies that promote hiring women
- Technologies and machines that reduce the need for physical strength in fieldwork

Gender-based opportunities from BSMRAU

- Opportunities for women depend on supportive men—some department heads (male) are more supportive than others
- More government programs to encourage girls to go to school over the past 5 years
- Increase general education and gender awareness education for all people (need support from Bangladesh government and NGOs)
- Opportunities for women in research, teaching, government jobs, or extension
- Increase short courses on gender as well as access to PhDs for women

Suggestions, recommendations, and or follow-up items:

- Send female professors as visiting faculty to serve as role models for women students.
- Link women students to USAID –funded or other university research projects such as the CRSPs/Innovation Labs.
- Bring faculty including women to US to observe teaching and research.

- Fund Master’s degrees for women graduates to facilitate and improve quality of teaching and provide role models.
- Need to invest in long-term, doctorate-level training for women, otherwise they will not have the authority and decision-making power to reach high-level positions
- USAID can have a role facilitating visas for our collaborators in order to allow them to visit the US. Dr. Visalsok Touch was denied a visa when he was invited by the World Bank.
- Using the term female or male may make more sense in this project (as per Caren Grown at USAID says) given that we are talking about girls and women and boys and men (at an age that it is not clear which of the two to call them and this is the term commonly used in-country)
- Danger for women: send two or more women together, even if this costs more.
- Visit schools in rural and urban sites to encourage students, especially girls, to study agriculture and to explain the full array of opportunities (beyond working in the field, which many girls and parents are afraid of).
- Build more dorms to provide safe housing for female students.
- Provide safe transportation for women to travel to school from long distances.
- Provide more scholarship to female students (these should include enough for food and lodging in addition to tuition and fees).
- Raise awareness among parents.
- Continued and increased policy-level support for women students and faculty.
- Create facilities for childcare to give women opportunities to work better
- If courses do not address gender, have workshops or seminars to talk about this topic; develop course or seminar to encourage women in particular to study ag

Type	UBB M	UBB F	RUA M	RUA F	Prek Leap M	Prek Leap F	BSMRAU M	BSMRAU F	Totals
Student	9	11	10	10				2	42
Faculty							1	1	2
Teacher		3		1				1	5
Admin	3		1	1				1	6
Alumn						2			2
Totals	12	14	11	12		2	1	5	57

- Administrator (Rector, Dean, Department Head, and others with decision-making power)
- Faculty (Permanent position, Professor, Researcher, Lecturer, usually with Master’s degree)
- Teachers/instructors (full or part time teaching position with no security and often only Bachelor’s)
- Alumn (no longer students, but not working in institution)

List of Contacts Made:

Name	Title/Organization	Contact Info (address, phone, email)
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