Lesson Learnt

Promoting Gender Equality for MDG Achievement

Joint Programme: Ethiopia
Topics: Gender

Summary
It is evident that pastoralist women are more vulnerable than their counterparts to climate change effects during dry seasons. This is because the women cannot move from their place of origin, while men travel to seek areas of better feed resources for animals.

Ethiopia's Environment JP has addressed that situation by improving awareness about climate change adaptation. As a result, several women have engaged in training in the area and are being supported in livelihood enhancement activities in seventeen pastoral community villages in the most vulnerable areas.

To this end, lives of pastoral women in the JP's project areas are changing significantly. That is, women have already formed their own cooperatives, engaged in a range of income-generating schemes. As a result, women in the intervention areas have significantly reduced inequality and increased their independence through livelihood changes.

Submissiveness of women to men was a big challenge initially. That is, initially it was really a big challenge to engage women in the JP activities due to cultural barriers around pastoral communities. There was a culture that restricts women meeting with men to discuss on common issues. For instance, during the JP's baseline survey and the participatory income generating activities assessment, women were not willing to take part in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted together with men. Even worse, representations of women headed households (after death of husbands) in meeting of social issues still reject women. However, following regular awareness creation works (e.g. community training, reorienting community leaders the benefits of women's involvement in all socio-economic endavours etc)on women's equality later on women started to actively participate in JP activities. To this effect, many women have been engaged in livelihood activities of the JP.

Purpose of the activity
The major purpose of the activity was to mainstream gender in all programme activities and to make sure women equally benefit from the programme.

Original issue addressed by the activity
Pastoralists in Ethiopia have strong traditional systems and cultures which has been developed and shaped through time to fit to the pastoral way of life. Rangeland

resources degradation, loss of biodiversity, increased invasive plants, unreliable rainfall patterns are some of the major environmental issues in pastoral areas. Overall climate variability and change are major threats. The Joint Program (JP) planned to develop inclusive adaptation options to reduce community vulnerability to such threats. There are clearly defined differentiated roles and responsibilities for women and men, which to certain extents have manifested themselves into gender inequalities.

Strategy chosen to address the issue

The JP has designed a special programme for women empowerment by creating additional income source for women. Women already organized into groups will be supported with seed money and will get training to start their own small businesses. The programme will also mainstream gender in all programme activities and make sure women equally benefit from the programme. They will be also encouraged to be involved in all community decision-making meetings

Implementation of the strategy

Due to historical marginalization of pastoralists, there are significant human right gaps in pastoral areas. Pastoralists' right to have access to education, clean water, health, information, security, access to adequate food and development are some of the major gaps that have been identified with both duty bearer and right holders. The government is aggressively working towards reducing some of the gaps in social services through its development programmes and MDGs, although it is unlikely to achieve the MDGs in pastoral areas due to effects of climatic changes. The JP has designed strategies to enhance government efforts and thus improve the possibility for meeting MDGs with a special emphasis on women empowerment.

The JP has introduced mechanisms to increase livestock productivity and access to better markets for pastoralist community, with particular emphasis on women. Moreover, alternative income generating schemes were identified and/or have already been designed to be implemented particularly by women of the pastoralist community over the project life & beyond. For this, an Income Generating Activities Assessment has been conducted recently. For example, activities of bee keeping, milk processing, small irrigation for garden farming, petty trades, animal fattening, skin and hides preparation and the like.

Challenges/Innovations

There was an initial cultural challenge due to women being submissive to men. That is, initially it was really a big challenge to engage women in the JP activities due to cultural barriers around pastoral communities. There was a culture that restricts women meeting with men to discuss on common issues. For instance, during the JP's baseline survey and the participatory income generating activities assessment, women were not willing to take part in the FGDs conducted together with men. Even worse, representations of women headed households (after death of husbands) in meeting of social issues still reject women. When faced with this challenge, the JP

implemented rigorous awareness creation activities. For instance, there were various community training activities provided in areas of the JP implementing pastoral communities emphasizing women's real participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation activities. In addition, there were regular reorienting activities conducted for community leaders at each JP implementing areas. These resulted in attitudinal changes thus allowing greater participation of women.

Results and Impacts

- Access to functional water schemes improved in a sustainable manner in the selected villages of the pastoralists communities. Unlike times before the intervention, women have benefited from this for the reason that the long distances they used to travel for fetching water have been significantly reduced in some of the project areas where activities are accomplished. In other project areas similar activities are underway being hoped to be successfully achieved to serve the intended beneficiaries.

- Systems and technologies that enhance availability of feed resources promoted. The usual unsettled search for feed resources for animals was found to affect women more than men pastoral communities in the project areas. The main reason for that is women are usually forced to stay around with limited household needs during draught seasons with household additional responsibilities while men move to better places with their animals. Now thanks to the intervention by the JP, these have been significantly improved availability of feed resources in some of project sites whereby women's household burden could obviously be shared with their counterparts.

- Mechanism to increase livestock productivity and access to better market for members of the community put in place. Many women beneficiaries have been grouped and formed cooperatives in seventeen project sites. So far in due course of the project implementation period there are a total of 21 animal marketing cooperatives. Seventeen cooperatives are composed of men and women pastoralist household heads whereas four cooperatives involve all women pastoralist household heads. This indicates that the MDG-F Environment JP has created better opportunity for women in terms of income generative schemes for livelihood changes.

Evidence

- There are a number of joint monitoring mission reports carried out by a mission team of different JP partners (government implementers and the three UN Agencies). All the reports show that women pastoralist communities are benefiting more from the JP's intervention

- There have been reports produced and submitted by the regional implementing partners quarterly since the beginning of the implementation of the JP.

Next Steps

The selected pastoral communities for the JP will directly participate/ undertake through CBOs all activities indicated in the results framework. Their involvement will encompass planning, implementation and evaluation process of the JP such as supplying desired information for enhancing their coping mechanisms, will be involved in relevant training prepared for them, and undertake the activities indicated in pastoral community coping mechanisms /sustainable livelihood. The communities will be involved highly in the interventions from the beginning up to the monitoring and evaluation.

Potential replication / application

The lesson learnt is meaningful enough to guide practice regionally and nationally. Income generating activities demonstrated through livestock marketing cooperatives can be the best practices in changing lives of pastoral communities, especially women who have been more vulnerable to climate change effects as they are always in their places of origin accepting gifts of nature in any case. That is, it is applicable to pastoralists' communities who are in similar climate change vulnerability status in the country.

In addition, as shown by the JP's response to the challenge faced by the traditional role of women in pastoralists society, which generally disallows them to take an active part of group consultations, it is possible to conduct awareness raising and culturally sensitive activities which allow for greater input and participation of women. Based on our experience, we suggest that others trying to replicate similar activities should first plan as to how they can create awareness on practical basis among the community where a culture men's suppression to women is manifested. For this, community trainings should be provided and thereby regular reorienting system should be employed.

Information products

Publication works for information products in progress.

Images

The following photographs show the results of the intervention around pastoral communities where the Environment JP is operating.

Pastoral communities benefit from functional water structure developed by the JP