Promoting gender equality and empowering women through livestock

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Focus on women and livestock to reach MDGs

- Food and income from livestock can help reduce hunger and poverty (MDG 1)
- Livestock-keeping can give women a chance to control more income, reducing gender inequality (MDG 3)
- Higher livestock production, diversified income from livestock, and stronger position of women as livestock owners help reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other diseases (MDG 6)

“Poverty has a woman’s face”
(ILRI 2008)

Women still often overlooked in livestock interventions

Assuming that men are main actors in animal production may:

- deprive women of traditional realms of responsibility and social recognition
- prevent women from benefiting equitably from development
- constrain women from fulfilling their potential to contribute to development

Impacts of livestock interventions on women and vice versa depend on gender differences in:

- Roles and responsibilities in household and community
- Ownership and control over livestock
- Access to livestock services
- Decision-making about use of inputs and outputs
Gender inequality, HIV/AIDS and livestock

- HIV/AIDS stems from gender inequality and can worsen it
- Woman without rights to livestock can completely lose access to them when the husband dies
- She thus loses her family’s source of food, income, draught power and fertiliser for farming
- If she may keep the animals, she may not be able to manage them well because of her poor access to extension and credit
- Livestock services need to address these gender dimensions that can lead to even more inequality and vulnerability of women in AIDS-affected households.

Yes, we can improve gender equality through livestock

- Helfer: WiLD (Women in Livestock Development) gave women chance to own more animals; training in literacy and strategic planning
- FARM-Africa: Small-scale credit for women to own goats; training women as paravets and in marketing
- PARIMA: Pastoral women learn from each other how to organise selves for small enterprise development to generate income from livestock

Recognising women’s innovativeness

PROLINNOVA
(Promoting Local Innovation)

- Giving recognition to and stimulating women’s creativity in agriculture and NRM
- Raises women’s esteem in their own eyes and those of community and outsiders
- Village women lead experiments to develop innovations further
- Village women in selection committees that allocate innovation grants to farmers

Lessons for promoting gender equality and empowering women through livestock

Lesson 1: Gender analysis is a must to gain understanding of:

- gender relations in households, division of labour; differences between women and men in access to and control over resources
- women’s and men’s needs, and opportunities to support them in an equitable way
- constraints to women’s involvement in livestock keeping and how to overcome them
- different impacts of livestock-related interventions on women and men, and how to address the consequences
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Lesson 2: Focus on women

- Livestock interventions with positive impact on women were those that focused on women and dealt with:
  - milk marketing
  - building capacities to manage stock
  - improving women’s access to livestock services and information
- Most promising interventions for women in resource-poor households:
  - small-scale, low-external-input activities involving goats, cows, poultry and other small stock
  - production, processing and marketing
  - reducing women’s workload for fetching water and feed, cleaning pens, processing livestock products and transport to market
  - making small-scale credit available to women’s groups

(ILRI 2008)

Lesson 3: Strengthen local women’s organisation

- Local women gain power by organising themselves around production and/or processing of animal products
- Usually easier for women’s groups than individuals to access production resources and achieve economies of scale in marketing
- Groups offer “safer” setting for male researchers and development agents to work with women
- Existing informal groups provide good starting points for enhancing women’s managerial and leadership skills

Lesson 4: Improve women’s and girls’ access to education and training

- Women and girls need better access to:
  - general education
  - specific training and info about livestock-keeping
  - training in literacy, small-enterprise management, and leadership
- Female extension agents trained in livestock production and marketing can help enhance local women’s capacities
- Extension staff trained to facilitate community discussion on gender issues impacting on family welfare, e.g. livestock inheritance rights
- Rural women can more easily join extension activities if these are close to home
- Women’s access to livestock services can be improved e.g. by training both men and women as “paravets” (community animal health workers)

Lesson 5: Recognise and support local innovation by women

- Poor households develop coping mechanisms and innovations, including innovations in livestock-keeping
- Recognise how women and men in poor households are innovating, to discover entry points for pro-poor development
- Women more likely to develop low-external-input innovations that suit resource-poor households
- Women often lack confidence and undervalue their own achievements
- To empower women: raise awareness how resource-poor women contribute to livestock development through own innovation, and support this process
Lesson 6: Seek gender equality in livestock services and organisations

- To achieve gender equality at the grassroots, we need to seek gender equality in livestock services and organisations.
- Women still in minority among graduates in animal and range science and in livestock research and development organisations.
- CGIAR Gender and Diversity Program, FAO, IFAD etc have tried to improve the situation, but we are still far from gender equality at international level.
- Irene Hoffmann, Chief, FAO Animal Production Service: “Women make up no more than 10% of participants in professional and inter-governmental meetings related to animal production.”
- This imbalance could partly explain the weak interest at lower levels to give due attention to gender equality.

Conclusions and action – 1 –

- If roles & responsibilities of women in animal production are recognised
- If women have more rights of ownership over livestock
- If women have better access to livestock services and markets
- If women have more say in decision-making about inputs and outputs in animal production and more control over the income
- Then basic needs of women and their families can be better met, thus reducing poverty and hunger
- Then women’s strategic needs can be better met:
  - giving them higher status in family and community
  - increasing their self-confidence to contribute more to development

Conclusions and action – 2 –

- Spread powerful images of women who use livestock to meet family and community needs:
  - who innovate
  - who take collective action to solve their problems
  - who openly express their views about the changes they seek
  - who take active part in livestock project planning and R&D
- High-profile documentation to give strong messages to women and men at all levels about women’s actual and potential contributions to animal production, to help change perceptions
- Deliberate efforts in livestock R&D institutions to give attention to women in their policies and to translate these policies into day-to-day practice

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But we’re getting there!