

ture students stipends that cover transportation and stationery, or other similar incentives, would encourage greater involvement of women in the sector. In the short run, MAIL should collaborate with MoLSAMD and the Ministry of Education to encourage greater attendance of female students in agriculture courses at vocational training centers.

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Authors: Jennifer Solotaroff, Nadia Hashimi, Asta Olesen



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The World Bank in South Asia

Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series, No. 2

Gender in Developing the Agriculture and Livestock Sectors



Women in Balkh Province participate in the nursery component of MAIL's Horticulture and Livestock Project (HLP).

Increasing Women's Opportunities along Value Chains of Farm Products

The Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series disseminates the findings of sector work in progress and best practices to staff of the Government of Afghanistan, its implementing partners and agencies, and other practitioners, all of whom are responsible for developing and implementing government programs. The objective of this particular Note is to explore means of enhancing Afghan women's involvement in farm product value chains so that they experience increases in both financial returns and control over production decisions. The Note discusses some of the barriers to a more rewarding role for women in agriculture and livestock production and concludes with recommendations to overcome these barriers.

Background

Agriculture is central to Afghanistan's economy, contributing more than 38 percent of real gross domestic product (Central Statistics Office 2009). The 2005 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment found that almost half (47 percent) of households earn income from agriculture – whether in urban or rural areas – and 23 percent from livestock (Central Statistics Office 2008). Developing the agriculture sector is a central pillar of Afghanistan's national development strategy, and yet government programs within the sector tend to leave an area of enormous productive potential untapped: women comprise up to 65 percent of the agricultural workforce in rural areas, but their participation is primarily family-based and without remuneration, as it is not accorded a monetary value. Although women are rarely compensated for their labor, in terms of time allocated they make the majority of labor contributions to a range of marketed products (World Bank 2005). Compared to Afghan men, moreover, Afghan women have little access to and decision-making control over agricultural inputs, outputs, and product markets (Rojas and Aziz 2004).

The Master Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) conveys MAIL's commitment to mainstreaming gender in its programs, as it recognizes women's high existing involvement and even higher potential participation in the agriculture and livestock sectors (MAIL 2008, Chapter 12, pp. 5–9). Its projects, however, are just beginning to consider interventions that overcome barriers to women's productive and profitable participation in agriculture, and – by enlarging the pool of project participants and beneficiaries – bringing more rapid, widespread, and sustainable growth to the sector. Increasing the culturally appropriate participation of both men and women in agricultural labor is critical to such growth. Before discussing these barriers and means of overcoming them, it is important to better understand women's role in the sector, with particular attention to their workload along product value chains.

Afghan Women's Role and Workload in Agriculture

Most constraints to women's participation in activities outside the household are governed by longstanding cultural notions of honor and shame. These cultural mores primarily restrict women to work that is performed within the private space of the household. Men, on the other hand, operate in the public domain and are supposed to protect and provide for their family, interacting with the outside world on the family's behalf (MAIL 2008, p. 2).

These gender roles play out in the division of labor in the household, the basic unit of economic production in agriculture, and in gender segregation of tasks along product value chains. Women and girls are delegated tasks that can be performed in or around the household on a recurrent daily basis, including farm-based activities (for example seedbed preparation, weeding, horticulture, and fruit cultivation) and crop processing activities (cleaning and drying vegetables, fruits, and nuts for domestic use and for marketing) (World Bank 2005). Men, on the other hand, are responsible for tasks that are comparatively less time consuming or are performed once a season, such as land preparation, planting and sowing, fertilizer application, and harvesting (MAIL 2008, p. 8).

Contrary to popular misconception, women contribute significant amounts of time to agriculture and livestock production, and to a broad range of products in both areas. In Northeast Afghanistan, such as in Badakhshan, women's contribution to agricultural activities, in terms of time allocation, equals that of men (World Bank 2005). Horticulture generally involves women more than grain production, and poor households require greater involvement of women in income-earning activities than do more wealthy households. Women generally participate in more than just the horticulture sector of farm production, however. They also play a key role in caring for household cattle, sheep, and goats, and in the production of livestock products (eggs, dairy produce); in fact, women comprise approximately 93 percent of backyard chicken owners in Af-

Table 1: Women's and Men's Responsibilities in Animal Husbandry (percent)

	Cattle		Sheep		Goats	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Work Responsibility						
Feeding	69.14	19.46	59.70	26.60	63.86	23.37
Grazing	11.44	21.89	7.67	32.17	10.74	27.72
Watering	63.32	17.90	51.22	26.36	51.81	23.80
Tending young	81.86	4.86	58.54	16.49	70.68	13.50
Milking	84.13	1.87	57.49	4.88	77.94	4.93
Treating	22.73	74.44	38.21	56.91	33.82	59.22
Decision Making						
Purchasing animals	33.65	65.63	28.69	68.76	33.96	60.23
Purchasing feed	28.95	70.37	24.39	73.05	27.29	66.91
Selling animals	37.60	61.64	35.31	61.56	42.96	51.09
Selling milk	52.31	19.06	35.89	17.65	47.61	18.58
Selling wool			34.03	25.90		
Selling fiber					40.35	21.92
Treating	34.09	64.63	46.23	50.41	38.61	54.57

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock 2008, p. 9.

Note: The percentages for men and women do not always total 100% because sometimes children are involved (notably in animal grazing), and because some respondents did not answer some questions in the survey associated with collection of the data.

Box 3: Conservation Agriculture in Tanzania

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) in Tanzania, started in 2004, aims to help small-scale farmers in five districts in Tanzania adopt profitable Conservation Agriculture (CA) practices, including energy-efficient agricultural production technologies combined with participatory methodologies. The adoption of these practices has enabled farmers to reduce labor needs while increasing yields and income. Women, who are the main providers of agricultural labor in Tanzania, have benefited most from the reduced labor requirements. Women and men farmers have received equal training and extension opportunities to achieve better results (World Bank, 2009b).

Improving Female Access to Education and Information

Take advantage of available technology and training programs to reach women already involved in agriculture and livestock production (Box 3). In the short run, women can be provided with mobile phones that put them in touch with others who have useful information (regarding quantities and prices in product markets, for example). In the long run, when electricity is more prevalent in rural areas, women could make use of communal computers located in community centers. In addition, exposure visits to other communities where women are more involved in controlling production would be beneficial for learning and information sharing. For example, MAIL has arranged veterinary training courses for male veterinary doctors and para-veterinarians. Similar training should be arranged for women, following the example of training the first female para-veterinarian (para-vet) under the Livestock, Health, Production and Marketing Program of the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (USAID 2006). Participants in such courses could be identified through women's CDCs. Vocational training for women, particularly in provincial and urban centers, also would help enhance the skills of women farmers.

Ensure that the training and technical support offered by a project is aligned with the needs, capacities, and demand of rural men and women. A recent study of animal health service delivery in Afghanistan indicates that private providers of animal health services offer a reliable service of adequate quality to livestock owners in Afghanistan (World Bank 2008). These veterinary doctors and para-vets are trained through and supported by the Afghan Veterinary Association and are deployed in remote areas where government delivery of animal health services is not available. In addition, private providers recognize that their income earned depends upon the level of business they seek. They therefore actively pursue business possibilities and are ready to make house calls. To capture these benefits of private provision of animal health services, MAIL is working on making the transition from public to private provision of animal health services through a package of incentives that includes the provision of medicines, motorcycles, and refrigerators.

Acknowledge that rearing and managing livestock activities are undertaken primarily by women. It is essential that women and their families become more comfortable with the concept of women accessing veterinary services. Interviews with livestock owners, para-vets, and doctors in Balkh, Kabul, and Parwan reveal that women typically are better informed than men about the medical problems of animals and thus are more useful in consultations (World Bank 2008). Most livestock owners accept this and are pragmatic about it: in particular, in areas where doctors and para-vets have been recruited from within the community, women are allowed to visit their clinics. Women are also allowed to meet doctors making house calls to discuss the medical condition of animals. In cases where women are not allowed to meet doctors, it is usually because the para-vets and doctors are not from the community. Private delivery of veterinary services implies better accessibility for women because doctors, assistant doctors, and para-vets who operate privately are recruited from within the communities they serve. Those doctors who practice in areas they are not from tend to be government employees.

Promote the agriculture sector among female students at high schools and universities. MAIL should work with the Ministry of Higher Education to promote attendance at university degree courses in agriculture among female students in high schools or those taking the university entrance exam. Giving female agricul-



Increasing Women's Access to Agricultural and Livestock Inputs

Provide women with seeds, fertilizers, and animal health services. Increasing access to resources is very important for women, but equally important is what women do with these resources. Usually, an asset or resource is treated as a household product, and the benefit derived from the asset is jointly utilized. Female ownership of this asset may result in greater respect for women within the homestead, but does not necessarily increase their mobility. There is a need to augment these resources with training in relevant fields, particularly enterprise development training, and to link women with microfinance programs and, if possible, business development services that heighten their awareness of input costs and potential revenue streams.

Working Around Gender Bias and Constraints on Female Mobility

Use culturally appropriate ways to increase female participation in marketing and other latter stages of value chains. More research is needed to understand women's access to trade and markets, given that many women are trapped in disadvantageous trade relationships that deprive them of opportunities to move out of poverty.

Collect gender-disaggregated data to reflect the role women play in agriculture and livestock production. Communities' recognition of women's role in agriculture will encourage monetization of their contribution to the sector, as greater recognition will mitigate perceptions of women as inactive, unemployed or unemployable members of society. When more market trend information and gender-disaggregated data are available, sectors can adopt interventions that increase women's gainful participation in economic activities. For example, women can continue to manage livestock, but with greater involvement in delivering animal health services.

Strengthen female community-based organizations to help women articulate their needs and identify solutions. The primary example of such organizations is women's sections of Community Development Councils (CDCs), created by the National Solidarity Program. Regular meeting of women's CDCs would allow women to step out of their homesteads and meet other women to discuss common problems. Even if a woman's CDC has not yet developed to the point where its members are influencing major decisions about community development issues, it at least provides a venue for discussing priorities that are distinct from those of men. In the longer-term, it will be important to develop decision-making and leadership skills of women's CDCs to enhance their involvement in broader decisions about community development as well.

Work with villagers to create women-only work spaces outdoors. Past practices in Afghanistan have demonstrated that, even in more conservative areas — such as Helmand — where women's mobility is highly restricted, landowners and fellow villagers are receptive to creating walled-off areas in which women can work. As a part of the perennial horticulture component of MAIL's Horticulture and Livestock Project, farmers are encouraged to forgo some production of staple crops and instead create an orchard on part of their land, on which women can work exclusively. In Herat and Samangan, women were trained to weave gabions, an activity they undertook from within a compound. This was an initiative of women's CDCs, but was warmly received and accepted by male members of the villages. The women chosen to work on the program were identified through a transparent process of wealth ranking undertaken at the village level and overseen by the women's CDCs. Clusters of women producers should be formed so that women can work and learn in groups, and they also should receive training in basic numeracy, literacy, and technical skills. In addition, raising awareness about women's contribution to the sector would increase their self-esteem.

Increase the number of female staff of Facilitating Partners (FPs). There is a gender imbalance among the staff of FPs. Before design and implementation of a project, Government of Afghanistan Ministries, FPs, and relevant agencies should aim to employ equal numbers of male and female staff to work in projects. This includes promoting women to senior and decision-making positions to achieve gender balance at all levels.



ghanistan (MAIL 2008). In parts of the Northeast, women even interact with veterinarians. Yet, household decisions about livestock are made primarily by men (*Table 1*).

Men predominate in later steps of value chains, including activities in the public sphere, away from the household and closer to markets. Their activities capture greater portions of products' value added; they are more tied to money-related decisions (for example price), and thus financial compensation is more generous. Perhaps because it occurs in or near the household, women's work is limited to the early steps of product value chains. It tends to be less visible than men's and is accorded lesser value. Goods produced by women are often bartered rather than sold, which is both a cause and result of their perceived lesser contribution to the rural economy, compared to that of men (World Bank 2005, p. 55). Cultural constraints, poverty, poor physical health, and low educational attainment are hindering factors that limit women's access to an agricultural paid economy. Women also have limited access to agricultural inputs such as capital, market information, and new farm technologies. Improving their opportunities in agricultural production must therefore involve some increase in women's decision-making control, influence, and benefits derived from their contribution to the household economy.

Barriers to Women's Involvement in Value Chains: Remuneration and Decision Making

Lack of Female Staff

The most commonly recognized obstacle to increasing female productivity in Afghanistan's agriculture sector is the lack of female extension workers and field monitors in development projects. This lack makes it very difficult to access women in rural areas, who tend to be more restricted from any type of contact with males who are not family members than women in urban areas. For cultural reasons, women do not tend to study agriculture in higher education, and related vocational training programs also lack female students. Yet, women are highly involved in agricultural work. It is critically important that agriculture and livestock development projects have female extension workers to impart training and knowledge to women; however, projects are often hard pressed to recruit female staff, even when making concerted efforts to do so.

Limits on Property Ownership and Decision Making

Women's lack of secure land tenure is another serious impediment to improving the productivity and income of women working in agriculture. While Islamic law grants women the right to inherit family land (generally half of what men have the right to inherit), Afghan women's awareness of their Islamic rights is very low, and their legal right to inheritance is typically bypassed (World Bank 2005). When women technically do inherit land, they rarely have control over it, which is a constraint on their active participation in production decisions (MAIL 2008). Recent survey data suggest that although an average of 30 percent of women claim land ownership, they typically do not make decisions regarding the land and access to land income (Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov 2008, p. 42). Women frequently give up their share of inherited land to brothers as a 'guarantee' of continued family support in case of future need, such as in the event of widowhood or divorce. Male family members (usually fathers or husbands) may sell land that falls under the ownership of a woman through marriage or inheritance without involving her in the decision-making process or allowing her to control any income from the sale of the land. Although the de jure position is that women own land, the de facto position is that they rarely exercise their rights related to ownership, even in joint decisions with male family members, primarily because women do not have access to the information, education, and networks at different levels to make such decisions. To act upon these rights is to risk censure and even punishment from family members, as doing so challenges the customary notion of men as the breadwinners and protectors of the patriarchal family, on whom women and children are dependent for livelihood and protection.

Women's Separation from Financial Aspects of Value Chains

Although women play an important role in livestock, dairy, vegetable, and fruit production, they are for the most part excluded from the financial aspects of agricultural (including livestock) inputs and outputs. As they

tend to be unaware of how much inputs cost (male household members take care of purchasing), they are deprived of a sense of what the product should cost, or even what their labor might be worth relative to the cost of inputs. This leaves women with few reference points regarding how to maximize income from any part of production. Women's separation from these aspects of inputs – such as seeds, fertilizer, and animal health services – is another constraint on their ability to make decisions about production. Control over the use of credit is also a major issue for women in rural areas, even for women entrepreneurs who have the necessary knowledge of how to run a business. Money is often borrowed in the name of a female household member, but controlled by men in the household (Lyby 2006).

Gender Bias and Restricted Female Mobility

The degree to which women and girls are excluded from the higher value-added ends of production chains varies by region. Not surprisingly, exclusion is positively correlated with restrictions on female mobility. In most parts of the country, women participate in the early stages of horticultural production: planting, weeding, and watering. As horticultural products move down the value chain and closer to sale at market – through harvesting, food processing, packing, and finally marketing – women's involvement tends to diminish, particularly in the South, Southeast and some provinces in the West (given variation within provinces) (World Bank 2009). These also happen to be the areas in which women's physical mobility and ability to participate in activities outside the household are most constrained.

Limited Access to Education and Information

Rural Afghan women's access to formal schooling services is very limited; their literacy rate is estimated to be as low as 10 percent in rural areas (MoWA 2007). Low educational attainments imply severe limits on the degree to which women can access and absorb information on new agricultural technologies and techniques for more efficient and lucrative production. In addition, women are not sufficiently targeted by extension training in agriculture and livestock production, which could help them learn new techniques and expand their knowledge despite lack of schooling.

Recommendations for Gender-Sensitive Interventions in Agriculture and Livestock Development Programs

Based on Afghan (pre-conflict) best practices, and research conducted for this Implementation Note, the following are recommendations that the Government of Afghanistan, implementing partners, and other practitioners can use not only to create more gender-balanced programs, but to bring greater and more sustainable benefits to a broader pool of rural Afghan men and women.

Increasing Numbers of Female Staff

Train and use more female extension workers. This action would lead to greater inclusion of women in consultations and decision making regarding project activities. Although the long-term returns will more than compensate for the initial costs, the training and employment of female extension workers may be more expensive and difficult than for male workers because (a) female extension workers may need to be accompanied by a male escort (*maharam*) in the field, potentially increasing transport and other costs; and (b) it is harder to find Afghan women who are qualified for the training (that is, literate and with a fundamental knowledge of the subject), are allowed to travel to the field, and can converse in the local language in the covered area. In such cases, it would be best to hire couples to work in the same area to keep the costs down. Agricultural extension training programs therefore should prepare for the following:

- Include the cost of male escorts early in budget planning.
- Advertise to train married couples as extension workers.
- Recruit and train female extension workers in urban centers of project-covered provinces, as they are more likely than those recruited in rural areas to have basic literacy and other skills needed for training; in addition, they are familiar with customs particular to that province and can better relate to local communities regarding their culture, market characteristics, and religious issues.

- Consult work registry bureaus of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled (MoLSAMD), ACBAR, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), where female job seekers from many different provinces are registered.

Raise awareness about gender issues in agriculture. Female extension workers should be provided with sufficient training before deployment in order to raise public awareness about female agriculturists and sensitize community leaders to gender issues (*Box 1*). The study of agriculture should be promoted among female students at high schools and at the higher education entrance exam.

Enhancing Women's Involvement in Household Decisions about Land and Other Property

Encourage recognition of women's property rights. The prospect of legal reform to remove gender inequities within inheritance and other aspects of family law is a long-term solution to an immediate challenge. It is worth considering short-term measures that may encourage women's involvement in household decisions regarding use of land and other factors of agricultural production – without offending other household members (*Box 2*). This is possible if religious leaders, media, and local imams are involved in raising awareness

about women's property ownership rights.¹ In addition to awareness-raising, it is critical to encourage communities to enforce women's property rights in Islam, which is mostly undermined by customary laws.

Establish self-help groups. Group production or self-help groups should be established in communities in order to enhance women's voice and decision-making opportunities. These self-help groups should then be linked to microfinance opportunities so that women can become more self-sustaining. Facilitating Partners could also promote the establishment of women's markets to improve women's control over income. Extension workers should raise male farmers' awareness about women's role in agriculture and encourage them to include female family members in decision making.

Box 1: National Agricultural Services Project in Côte d'Ivoire

Projet National d'Appui aux Services Agricoles (PNASA: National Agricultural Services Project) in Côte d'Ivoire proved to be successful in raising awareness among project staff by giving different workshops to managers and field staff and acquainting all staff with the project's gender-mainstreaming strategy. Prior to the workshops, field staff had argued that women producers were integrated into the program, but once monitoring and evaluation started, it was evident that the majority of field staff were working with men producers and women were excluded. As a result of training staff, the proportion of women receiving agricultural advice increased from 8 percent at the start of the project in 2001 to 30 percent in 2003. At the request of women, new technologies such as pedal pumps, oil presses, and solar dryers were introduced and adopted to reduce women's time burden (World Bank 2009b).

Box 2: Awareness Raising in Honduras and Nepal

The Land Access Pilot Project (Proyecto Acceso a la Tierra [PACTA] 2001-09) in Honduras has helped poor people – especially women – with acquisition of land and has increased communities' awareness about joint property rights. Among women participants, 20 percent not only have acquired land, but also have received the training and technical assistance necessary to manage the land (World Bank, 2009b).

The Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project (HLFFDP) in Nepal, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has had success in providing complementary training in sustainable land management, basic literacy, and awareness of women's legal rights. In addition, local women's group promoters have been hired to make sure that women's voices are heard and that women play leadership roles. These group promoters are trained in gender and leadership issues and then linked with professional women to build supportive networks. Consequently, women participants have emphasized that the workshops and trainings better equipped them manage land and increased their self-confidence and decision-making abilities (World Bank, 2009b).

1. In 2005 the Asia Foundation produced educational material on women's opportunities and rights in Islam, including property rights (Asia Foundation 2005). This material could be used to train communities and women themselves on property rights in Islam.