

Targeting women in a community-driven development project

UNCOVERING GENDER ROLES IN THE FADAMA AGRICULTURE PROJECT IN NIGERIA

Raewyn Porter
Diane Zovighian

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How does 'local context' affect

the targeting and selection of women in community-driven development (CDD) projects? This note explores how local social and economic structures shape the inclusion of female farmers in a CDD agricultural project in Nigeria: the Fadama project. This story is specific to the cultural context of the South West of Nigeria. However, it also invites us to consider the effects of embedding targeting and selection mechanisms in any local structure, as it illustrates how gender relations and socio-economic stratification affect a project's outreach to different categories of women.

THE FADAMA PROJECT: INTERESTING FACTS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

This note is based on broader research exploring the performance and empowerment of female farmers in of the South West of Nigeria under the World-Bank supported Fadama project. The Fadama project aims to reduce rural poverty and increase food security. Beneficiaries are organized in Fadama Farmer User Groups (FUGs), and the project facilitates their access to financial and technical resources through matching grant arrangements.

Due to its emphasis on outreach to women – particularly in an agricultural context marked by entrenched gender inequalities (see Box 1) – the Fadama project presents a valuable case study to explore targeting and selection dynamics for women. More specifically, it provides examples of success with regards to the inclusion of women in the project's FUGs. Indeed, the mid-term review of Fadama IIIⁱⁱ reports a high proportion of women beneficiaries in Fadama, at 41% overall. It also shows considerable variation between the different geo-political zones, ranging from 27% of female beneficiaries in the North West region to over 50% in the South East. The research on which this note is based focuses on the South West region – one of the better-performing regions, where women account for about 45% of female beneficiaries of the Fadama projectⁱⁱⁱ. This is because selecting a region that performs well with regards to women's inclusion unlocks opportunities to investigate the factors and dynamics that underpin female farmers' successful access to the project.

This investigation involves looking at the local socio-economic structures in which the FUGs are embedded. This includes the processes through which female farmers become beneficiaries of the Fadama project, whether as ordinary members or as executive members of the FUGs. The literature on community-based targeting (CBT), including in CDD projects, extensively discusses their efficiency and pro-poor nature, as well as their feasibility and cost. However, the differentiated impact of CBT specifically on women has been under-researched, if not ignored.



Box 1: Gender gaps in Nigerian agriculture

In Nigeria, women play a significant role in rural economic activity, but they face severe constraints that negatively affect their productivity and socio-economic security. 35 percent of women, and up to 44 percent of female heads of households, work in the agriculture sector in Nigeria. Women are involved in the production, processing and marketing of cash and staple crops. Yet a number of factors constrain the expansion and diversification of their agricultural activities, including fewer rights to land than men, less access to credit and inequitable access to inputs, assets, and extension services. For example:

- Male managers harvest land areas that are on average 0.18 hectares larger than female managers'. Furthermore, 31 percent of female managers have the right to sell the plots under their management, compared to 67 percent of male managers.
- Male plot managers are more likely than female plot managers to use inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides, animal traction and machinery.
- 15 percent of male-headed households receive extension services, compared to 8 percent of female-headed households.
- Only 3 percent of female farmers own a formal bank account compared to 10 percent of men.

Source: Oseni, G., Goldstein M. and A Utah. 2013. Gender Dimensions in Nigerian Agriculture. World Bank.

In other words, the effects of the local political economy and social dynamics on women's entry into CDD projects are largely neglected. Yet, our research suggests that the use of community mechanisms to facilitate the targeting and participation of women in Fadama has been associated with a high proportion of female beneficiaries. At the same time, the project's embeddedness within local political and social dynamics shapes the characteristics of women's inclusion. As such, certain women tend to be privileged, in particular:

- women with strong relationships to male Fadama beneficiaries and power holders; and
- women with higher social and economic capital.

INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN THE FADAMA USER GROUPS (FUGS): MEN'S BRIDGING ROLE

The interviews conducted for this research indicate that women's access to the Fadama project is facilitated by men's support or 'bridging role'. That is, women's entry into the project remains highly dependent on and motivated by the support of husbands and male local leaders. In fact, the majority (54%) of women who participate in the Fadama project in the locations under study have at least one male relative (e.g. husband, brother, son) who is also part of the project.

Why is men's support critical to women's access to the project? Different factors, related to the



local political economy and social dynamics, have emerged. Simply put, women face a barrier to entry - partly due to their asymmetrical access to information on the project - which men help them circumvent. Specifically, men have two structural advantages compared to women with regards to accessing and using project information: they are relatively more connected to power structures (through which project information is disseminated), and they tend to be more literate.

Connection to power structures is critical to securing access to information on the process, requirements and benefits of Fadama. Indeed, in order to reach out to rural communities, Fadama has relied on local political organizations and entities such as traditional and religious leaders and unions (e.g. farmers' cooperatives). Staff of the Fadama project informed these groups of the project's application process, requirements and benefits. They also asked them to share information with their communities and to encourage individual male and female farmers to join. As a result, given men's predominant role in political organizations (due to women's lower engagement in the public sphere), information about Fadama has tended to be channeled to women through men.

In addition, gender gaps in education and literacy tend to deepen asymmetries in access to the project. Fadama requires reading, writing and numerical skills to understand and abide by the project's structure and rules (e.g. group registration process, enterprise development plan, financial reporting, meeting procedures). Due to their generally lower levels of education^{iv}, women tend to be dependent on men's support to successfully fulfill these requirements.

These asymmetries explain why men's support is critical to women's inclusion. However, a critical question remains: why would men provide this support and lift the barriers to women's entry to Fadama? There are two reasons:

First, men and women in the area we studied are economically interdependent in the cassava and palm oil value chains. In fact, while men engage mainly in crop planting and harvesting, women do most of the agro-processing, including processing their husbands' and male relatives' crops (e.g. processing of cassava into garri or processing of palm nuts into palm oil).



A woman frying cassava

Simply put, men rely on wives and female relatives to process their crops. As such, the support women receive from Fadama to mechanize their processing methods presents economic advantages for men as it provides them with more efficient (e.g. less crop wastage) and productive (e.g. more oil extracted) processing options.



In addition, by encouraging the participation of their wives and female relatives, men increase their visibility within the Fadama project and their chances to access both assets and services in subsequent rounds of Fadama financing.

ACCESSING EXECUTIVE POSITIONS IN FEMALE FUGS: THE WEIGHT OF INITIAL ENDOWMENTS

Once they are formed, FUGs are managed by executive members, namely a chairman, a treasurer and an executive secretary. Our study revealed the importance of women's own social and economic endowments in gaining selection for executive positions in the FUGs and in their apex organizations, the Fadama Community Associations (FCAs).

Significant socio-economic gaps are observed among female FUG members in terms of education, economic resources and social capital. Education levels, for example, vary widely: some beneficiaries are illiterate, while others have up to secondary (rarely tertiary) education. In the same vein, there are considerable differences in women's initial endowments in capital and assets.

Significant variations are also observed in terms of social capital. Women selected for executive positions were endowed with extended social networks and connection to (patriarchal) power holders such as pastors or community leaders, who themselves play a role in their respective FUG or FCA. This connection can be based on family ties (spouse, sibling, children) or on religious or spiritual bonds (e.g. being an active member of a local pastor's church). Some female executives have built on their position and role in the community prior to Fadama, including, for example, as religious leaders.

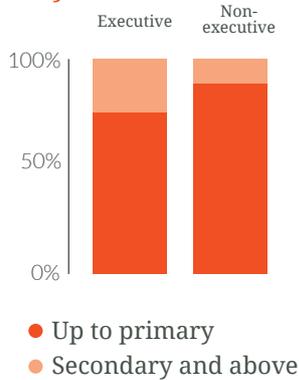
These variations in social and economic capital have a significant impact on the positions women access in the group. Better endowed women have more chances to secure an executive position in the FUG, whether as chairwoman, executive secretary or treasurer. Graph 1 illustrates the variations in education between executive and non-executive female FUG members, while Graph 2 reflects the relations of female executives and non-executives to male beneficiaries of Fadama.

Different factors explain why better-endowed women tend to be selected for executive positions. Among other things, their financial and writing skills sends a positive signal on their capacity to adequately manage the groups' budget and administrative requirements. In addition, economic



Female agro-processors grinding cassava with Fadama equipment

Graph 1: Education levels of FUG members



capital provides them with the capacity to contribute their matching grant to acquire Fadama assets, and in some cases to support other individual female members or the group itself in contributing the matching grant and acquiring assets.

Finally, social capital is critical from both an instrumental and a psychological perspective. First, networks and connections allow women to have privileged access to information on the project and its resources. Second, their position in the community, especially in the case of women in leadership positions (including religious), endows them with the trust of other community members, and has a

legitimizing effect for their selection or acceptance as executive members of an FUG.

EMBEDDEDNESS OF TARGETING AND SELECTION IN LOCAL STRUCTURES: RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S INCLUSION

These conclusions highlight that CDD projects are, by nature, embedded in local social and political contexts. This generates specific risks and opportunities for the inclusion of female farmers in the project.

One risk is the high level of dependence of women on men to access the project. This dependence might be perceived as problematic; it illustrates women's lack of autonomy, and it exposes a mechanism that excludes women who are less connected to male Fadama beneficiaries or power holders. However, from a functional perspective, the research indicates that men's bridging role has had a positive effect in enabling women to access the project in masse; the share of women participating in the Fadama project is indeed substantially higher than in many other Bank-supported Government project, and it contrasts with the significant gender gaps in access to productive assets observed in the agriculture sector in Nigeria.

Another potential risk is that, since the selection of women FUG executives builds on local socio-economic dynamics, the appointment of women with higher human, economic and social capital to executive positions can indicate that the FUGs are controlled by the local elite. This may raise concerns of elite capture. However, this research indicates that in most cases the presence of better-endowed women in FUGs had a number of positive spill-overs for other group members:

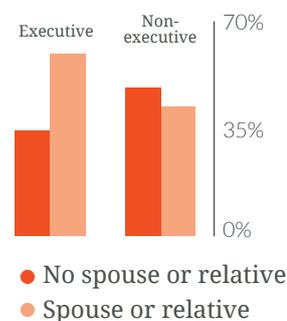
First, in a context marked by low levels of financial literacy and writing skills, their skills are necessary



for the functioning of the group, including for its registration, for the development of its sub-project proposals; and for the management of funds and financial reporting.

Second, better-endowed individuals often provide less-endowed group members with financial support to meet their financial commitments - including their matching grant - thereby allowing them to join or remain in the group and to access Fadama benefits and services.

Graph 2: FUG members with at least one spouse or male relative in Fadama



CONCLUDING REMARKS

It may seem common sense that project implementation happens in a particular local context, and is thus affected by it. However, this local context is often not considered in the way targeting mechanisms are designed. While operating through local structures is often crucial to the effectiveness of a particular intervention, effects are without doubt always differential. How can such differential effects be addressed and redressed in development operations to ensure that women with less information, education or connections are not left out?

As a first step, it is critical to investigate the “black box” of local structures in any given CDD project to understand the dynamics through which, in any given context, different women manage – or not – to access a project and participate in it. Second, once the nature and scope of gaps in information and access to the project among different groups of women are better understood, targeted interventions can be designed. These can include information and facilitation strategies targeted to all or specific categories of women, as well as capacity-building or financial support interventions.

Such steps have been taken in the Fadama project, as a sequel to this research. In 2013, additional financing to extend the Fadama project has provided an opportunity to incorporate in the project design new interventions to improve the targeting of female farmers. These interventions include the development and testing of information and communications strategies targeting poor or more excluded female farmers as well as a series of discreet pilots (e.g. financial literacy, peer learning, and mentoring programs) aimed at supporting the access of female farmers to the Fadama project. Impact evaluations attached to these pilots will generate knowledge on the most effective ways to open opportunities for equitable access to agriculture services for all female farmers. ●

Dr Porter is based in Australia and was a consultant to the World Bank for the Nigerian research. She is currently working on a Land Governance Program in the Mekong Region.

Diane Zovighian is a social development specialist and was previously working in the Africa Conflict and Social Development Unit at the World Bank.

This note reflects on the work undertaken by a larger team from the Social Development Unit. The team was comprised of: Caroline Sage, Diane Zovighian and Raewyn Porter. The background research was conducted by the authors in collaboration with Sola Ojo, Temilade Sesan, Funmi Soetan and Dixon Torimiro.

This Briefing Note was cleared by Ian Bannon, Sector Manager, AFTCS, Africa Region, The World Bank.

This essay is one of several that comprise the series “Perspectives on Social Development: Briefing Notes from Nigeria”. These briefing notes highlight the World Bank’s cross-disciplinary, adaptive and context-specific approach to social development in Nigeria. Topics include gender, social inclusion, violence prevention, social accountability and community-driven development. They are written by members of the World Bank social development team working in Nigeria.

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Endnotes

ⁱ The findings presented in this note are discussed more extensively in Porter, R. and Zovighian, D. 2014. Unpacking Performance and Empowerment in Female Farmers Group. The Case of the Fadama Project in Nigeria. The World Bank. The background research was conducted by the authors in collaboration with Sola Ojo, Temilade Sesan, Funmi Soetan and Dixon Torimiro. The note was reviewed by Caroline Mary Sage (Senior Social Development Specialist, EASID).

ⁱⁱ The Third National Fadama Development Project (Fadama III) began in July 2008 and will run until the end of 2017. It was preceded by Fadama I and Fadama II. Fadama I focused mainly on improving irrigation of fadama lands in the northern Nigerian states. Under Fadama II, the coverage of the project was widened to other geographical regions and the Community Driven Development approach was adopted. Fadama III covers all 36 States in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

ⁱⁱⁱ It should be noted that female farmers are involved in both mixed and female FUGs under Fadama; however, this note refers to female farmers in female-only FUGs.

^{iv} In the South West region, 71 percent of female household heads in the agriculture sector have no formal education, compared to 36 percent of male heads. See Oseni, G., Goldstein M. and A Utah. 2013. Gender Dimensions in Nigerian Agriculture. World Bank.

^v Used as defined by Bourdieu in “The Forms of Capital” (1986): “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”.

