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in

Hamdy A. (ed.), Sagardoy J.A. (ed.), Quagliariello R. (ed.), Trisorio-Liuzzi G. (ed.).
Integration of Gender Dimension in water management in the Mediterranean region :
INGEDI Project

Bari : CIHEAM

Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 62

2004

pages 89-91

Article available on line / Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

<http://om.ciheam.org/article.php?IDPDF=6002405>

To cite this article / Pour citer cet article

Venezian-Scarascia M.E. **Integration of gender dimension in water management in the mediterranean region: gender analysis in sustainable irrigated agriculture.** In : Hamdy A. (ed.), Sagardoy J.A. (ed.), Quagliariello R. (ed.), Trisorio-Liuzzi G. (ed.). *Integration of Gender Dimension in water management in the Mediterranean region : INGEDI Project.* Bari : CIHEAM, 2004. p. 89-91 (Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 62)



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INTEGRATION OF GENDER DIMENSION IN WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION: GENDER ANALYSIS IN SUSTAINABLE IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

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At a global level, in general, and in the Mediterranean region in particular, the future challenges to be faced are 1) food production increase as a result of the population growth; 2) environmental and natural resources protection; 3) livelihood improvement, and 4) rural people employment increase.

For high rainfall variability and frequent drought periods, in most of the arid and semi-arid countries, insufficient food to fulfil their nutrition needs can't be reached without irrigation. Irrigation water, as a vital resource for food production is pressed by increased competition from other sectors and requires greater crop yield effectiveness and improved efficiency in irrigation water use.

The key to reach these objectives is the human resources development, especially the participation of rural women to food production process; rural women are supporting education, training, health, nutrition, balancing the household budget, working in the fields; gender-balanced approach in services participation and management information, decision making, resources and benefits can be divided equitable between women and men to encourage an effective and wider socio-economic development.

The International Commission of Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) scientific technical international NGO acting worldwide, supports food security and proposes methods to conserve water increase, water productivity and water use efficiency "*The role of women in poverty alleviation through sustainable irrigation development*", workshop, organized by ICID (51° IEC, Cape Town), established a networking to induce that "voice of rural women" be heard.

The role of women in irrigation management at farm level remains unrecognised as men's decision-making roles are more visible; government policy tended to neglect women's training needs and they continue to remain unskilled workers with uncertain income.

STRATEGIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED

They can be summarized in the followings:

- rural women awareness,
- governmental institutions commitments,
- rural women associations membership,
- rural women participatory training.

Urges to create a policy context where the rural women:

- become proud of their ability to feed their families through traditional practices,
- can realize their self-confidence self reliance and visibility,
- empower awareness of different gender roles and needs,
- strengthen their skills on organization and decision making.

Governments must recognize role and place of rural women in socio economic life of the country and in food production; causes contributing to neglecting this role are:

- the gender blind development policies ,the discriminatory legislation;
- traditions and attitudes, the lack of gender-disaggregated data;
- the lack of participation in policy making and decision making bodies.

Governments must establish basic rural infrastructure and socio economic actions such as school and sanitarian structures, roads, transport facilities, supply of drinking water, water irrigation supply, aimed to improve women and girls working and living conditions.

Rural women must acquire membership in rural organizations as cooperatives, agricultural producers, farmers association, water users' association:

- to gain access to production inputs, training, extension services, credit;
- to represent their interests in relation to government, policy makers and planners;
- to make their views known to policy makers;
- to be activated as member of the water use association board;
- to establish an information network about irrigation among the female members (education, training ,awareness raising are means of rural women empowerment).

In addition, separate meeting for rural women have to be organized, to overcome the women's traditional reluctance to attend meeting together with men and where women can make known their thought and discuss their experiences and decisions where potential leaders of women groups can be identified; participatory training methods with audio-visual presentation material enable farmer women decision on participation in irrigation project implementation; female staff to be prepared by means of practical training on gender issues through the presentation of appropriate material on the information methods adjusted to the women educational level and needs; female staff of the extension service must be trained on sustainable irrigated agriculture as their contribution is currently considered helpful due to their instinctive persuasion faculty; an experience, reported during the 15th ICID Congress, demonstrated that special women training program favoured their participation to the implementation of the tertiary irrigation system.

PROPOSALS

The main proposals are:

- information structure establishment,
- gender disaggregated data collection,
- available gender data utilization,
- data system linkage with local conditions,
- water irrigation data integration in information structure.

An information structure settled on platform of gender-disaggregated data on socio-economic information (rural population, nutrition, education, health, holding, income) related to agricultural data (land, crops yield, seasonality and rotation, employment, field activities) **is crucial to analyse women involvement in food production, their access to resources, training and extension and essential to formulate a more equitable policy.**

Collecting gender sensitive data means incorporating a form of analysis reflecting differentiated situation of men and women and specific contribution to agrarian economy directed not only to food increase but also securing the preservation of natural resources.

A wide range of information is available:

- document of FAO Statistical Div. is covering gender aspects of agricultural survey and census;
- WCA 2000 give special emphasis on various items providing gender related to structural information on agricultural activities.

In rural areas remaining outside of the main stream information channels insufficient knowledge are available to planners and decision making; this and decentralization to small farmers participation in decision making destabilize the existing division of labour in rural areas with consequences on exclusion of rural women from the processes of socio-economic development.

Value of data system is further enhanced by grouping them and linked into a **GIS system**, where, along with the topographic data, information on climate, soil, plant, water of a concern area, are recorded on the base of land units.

Expanding irrigated land or increasing efficiency of irrigated areas is an imperative tool to achieve food security. However, the expansion of new irrigated land is constrained by limited resources, land and water. In addition, most of the irrigation schemes implemented in the last decades are badly performing causing the structures degradation and wasting of water that's why irrigation development and improving efficiency of operating irrigation systems require: participatory training and empowerment of farmers: men and women.

Rural women have **to be encouraged** to become members of irrigation water users to reach access to appropriate field irrigation technologies to accomplish objectives information on irrigation at the basin level, which should be connected with the global information system.

Information on irrigation schemes, irrigation water needed, released and actually used by crops, plot size, major crop irrigated, crop intensity, type of management and irrigation system must be carefully collected, valued and implemented in global data system.

CONCLUSION

Strategies to be accessed:

- accomplishment of a global data system to ascertain real situation of rural women living and working in irrigated areas aiming to identifying action to overcome the gender inequality;
- utilizing the global data system as a framework for:
 - ✓ conducting further support programmes in developing gender strategy;
 - ✓ taking into account of gender equity concerning policy, planning, decision making funding;
 - ✓ assessing whether development initiatives are meeting gender mainstreaming goals and objectives;
 - ✓ producing specific indicators to enable the evaluation and monitoring;
 - ✓ implication of female farmers on the irrigation management projects (FAO/SPFP);
 - ✓ facilitating information exchange to enhance the rural women empowerment through existing networks;
 - ✓ training methodology improvement for gender equity and empowerment.