

What Has Gender to Do with Vegetables?

Or: How can the full potential of a horticulture family be exploited in order to increase the family income?

by Barbara von Glutz¹

Gender is not equal to women and working with gender in development projects does not simply mean empowering women. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life. Unequal power relations and unequal participation in decision-making are seen amongst the structural causes of social and political instability that can generate poverty. The aim of 'gender in development' is that opportunities and life chances of men and women become and remain equal, because gender-equality is an important prerequisite for sustainable development. But achieving gender equality does not simply mean equal numbers of women and men in development activities, nor does it necessarily mean treating women and men exactly the same. Still, gender issues and empowerment of women are very frequently confused with each other. The following example shows the possibilities and difficulties of introducing gender issues in project work based on the example of a horticultural project in Kosovo.



Traditional rural family where decisions are made by the head of family, usually the oldest man.

Theoretical background

Traditional development approaches were designed by men who talked to men who worked with men. The projects were implemented by men who assumed that the projects would automatically meet women's needs, too. Women very often were left out of development discussions. A reaction to this approach was to look at women as a separate group. The WID approach (Women in Development) stressed the importance of the productive role of women. The main target of this approach was the integration of women in the development process and, as a consequence thereof, the catching up of development of women. However WID rapidly became a sector of its own, and it was a clear drawback of the approach that it viewed women in isolation, targeting them in special programmes and projects. At the beginning of the 90ies, WID was replaced by GAD (Gender and Development). This

¹ Barbara von Glutz is working for KEK-CDC Consultants in Switzerland. She was a trainee at the Cooperation Office of the Swiss Government in Kosovo from October 2003 to May 2004. email: vonglutz@kek.ch

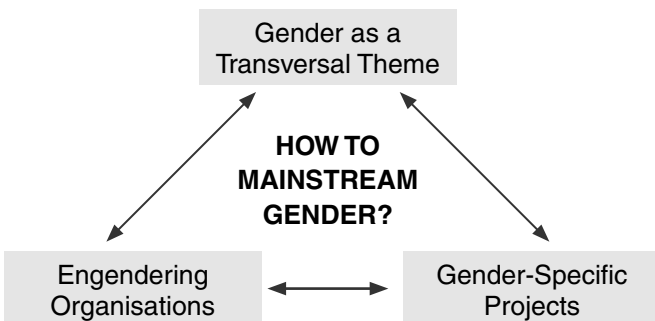


The participants visited a training for preparing the topical PRA.

socio-political approach considers the causes of gender-inequality and questions existing power relations between men and women. It implies that the issue cannot be addressed through isolated actions but requires a so called gender mainstreaming. This means assessing the implications of any planned action for women and men, making their concerns and experiences integral dimensions of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all social spheres. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming in Kosovo

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC pursues a three-fold strategy in order to mainstream gender in its programmes and projects: Gender as a transversal theme, gender specific programmes and the engendering of organisations. The Co-operation Office in Pristina decided to follow this approach.



Gender-specific projects are initiatives addressing specific gender issues. They are an effective means to support the reduction of the existing gender gaps, addressing specific gender issues. Gender-specific projects do not automatically or exclusively target women.

An important aspect of engendering organisations is to enable staff to implement gender as a transversal theme by procuring specific competences. It requires measures to integrate gender aspects in procedures, budgets, partnerships, organisational culture, etc. Engendering organisations does not simply mean gender equality within an organisation.

Working with gender as a transversal theme is a planning approach, a methodology. It consists in engendering all steps and processes of Project Cycle Management (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). This means recognising that women and men often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways. This approach increases the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of interventions and its main objective is not necessarily gender-equality.

Implementation of gender as transversal theme

The Co-operation Office Pristina has decided, that gender shall be integrated as transversal theme in 2-3 selected projects as a starting point. The Swiss Project for Horticultural Promotion – Kosovo (SPHP-K) has been chosen as one of these pilot projects. In order to introduce gender as a transversal theme in a project, an assessment on the gender relations and the so called practical and strategic gender needs in the specific context is conducted. For gender in the SPHP-K, the following question turned out to be the key question: How can the full potential of a horticulture family be exploited in order to increase the family income? The method of a topical PRA has been selected so as to provide this information, which finally led to a number of possible leverages of the project.

Practical gender needs: Access to resources/opportunities to perform existing gender roles better.

Strategic gender needs: Access to resources/opportunities to challenge, change the customary gender division of labour and power relations, strongly linked to decision-making and empowerment.

Procedure and major findings of the PRA

The PRA took place in May 2004 and lasted for 8 days. Overall 24 family talks all over Kosovo and two gender focus-group discussions with different families of one village were conducted. All the visited families are beneficiaries of the horticulture project. In order to set a frame for the semi-structured interviews the following key issues were identified: a) reach an overview of the family farm system, b) go through the workload/work

distribution between women, men and youth as well as the decision making in the family throughout the whole production chain and c) collect ideas and visions of family members how they can improve and develop their horticultural branch/business themselves.

Having received an overview of all the information, the qualitative elaboration of insights started. In order to have a first clue of the analysis, the team divided the range of different families that have been visited into four types: traditional rural family, mixed/traditional family, horticulture family enterprise and the widow-led farm. In a second step theses to gender in horticulture were formulated based on the information from the talks. Eventually seven final theses on gender in horticulture compiled. They were then used to screen the four farm types for leverages to improve family efficiency in horticulture in general. The PRA stopped

Table 1: Types of farm families

	Traditional rural	Mixed/transitional	Horticulture family enterprise	Widow-led
Relevance of horticulture	Horticulture only one branch of livelihood-base, mainly seen as element to survive.	Horticulture as viable investment opportunity, but just one among many. Mix in ventures.	Horticulture business as main activity.	Horticulture for economical survival.
Labour division	Women mainly involved in production and post-harvest activities. Men mainly in pre-production and production. Marketing almost exclusively by men.	Tendency to follow traditional distribution, transition (gender, generation) can be observed.	Gender-roles less fixed. Women and men more evenly involved in production as well as marketing.	Widow engaged in all stages of horticulture, often supported by younger generation.
Access to resources	Almost exclusively by men.	More by men.	Evenly distributed between gender.	Usually lies with widow.
Decision-making	Done by head of family (usually man of oldest generation).	Male head makes management decisions.	Management decisions by both, women and men.	Done by widow, mostly also marketing decisions.
Know-how	Know-how on traditional horticultural techniques and marketing connections with older generation.	Often limited.	Higher technical know-how. Cross-gender transfer of skills and knowledge.	Often limited, as newly engaged in horticulture.
Innovation potential/willingness for taking risks	Little willingness to take risk and little ideas and visions. Families often stick to traditional techniques.	More than traditional rural families, less than horticulture family enterprises.	Usually very innovative, entrepreneurial and business-oriented. Take risks.	Depends on available resources and knowledge.

Seven theses on gender in horticulture

1. In traditional farm families, the full potential of the family is not exploited.

Mainly because women are not involved in decision-making and on the managerial level, they don't have a lot of ideas or visions and their potential is not considered. Women's involvement is restricted due to family obligations, traditions, and lack of contact to the outside world. The younger generation too, very often, has no chance to implement their own ideas.

2. Financial decisions based on entrepreneurial analysis can increase the family income.

Skills in simple recording and book-keeping are largely lacking, and family decisions for innovations often do not take the workload into account.

3. Economic activities near the farmhouse can improve the work efficiency of the whole family.

Often activities near the house (processing, ornamentals, etc.) are more appropriate for women because they can combine them better with their other tasks in the household.

4. Informal networking among women in farm families is an efficient way for innovation.

When women have the chance to exchange amongst each other, it can improve their position. On the other hand, women might be more innovative while networking than men.

5. Improving the technical and managerial knowledge of women improves the income of a family.

This thesis evolved from different insights linking the education of women and their involvement in planning and decision-making.

6. Women involvement depends on education, skills, personal interest and time available.

It is important to understand the constraints and potentials within the family regarding education, skills, personal interest and available time.

7. Whatever you do, you have to keep the work distribution in the whole production system in mind ... even if there is an economical potential.

Project activities targeting women can lead to an increase in the workload of women if not properly adjusted to / balanced with other activities in the system.

at this stage of processing the data. Some of the identified leverages are already being carried out by the project. It will be up to the project staff to formulate concrete actions and project goals related to gender in horticulture.

Conclusions of the PRA

The major difficulty during the discussions in the team turned out to be the danger of a shift from a gender-perspective to a women-perspective. In the context of Kosovar horticulture families gender means to discuss with the whole family the best combination of the skills, knowledge and working capacities of its members for increasing the family income with horticulture. The division of labour, distribution of workload, access to resources and decision-making

and to knowledge/skills within a family defines its horticultural potential. As these aspects are very different in every type of family, the gender-strategies and project activities need to be tailor-made for the different farm types.

The PRA reconfirmed the experience that working in mixed teams (women, man, multidisciplinary) leads to more precise information because of the different perspectives. In contexts like the Kosovo, where gender roles especially in rural families often are very traditional, it can also be useful to apply gender-segregated tools. One example are focus group discussions, where women and men of different families are gathered to groups. Another possibility is to look for opportunities to address women directly (e.g. when cooking coffee or walking through the fields with them). This helps

Identified leverages for each type of family

For traditional rural family farms

- Design an analytical tool for assessing the potentials and constraints of traditional family farms.
- Organise specially designed exchange events.
- Facilitate investment into horticultural operations in the family.
- Introduce simple record keeping in order to become aware of their income situation.

For mixed/transitional farms

- Conduct SWOT-analyses with the whole family.
- Help to make and implement business plans for single crop operations or new activities, jointly with both women and men.
- Organize exchange events, particularly amongst women.

For horticulture family enterprises

- Train best suited person, but keep internal distribution of responsibilities in mind.
- Ensure involvement of women in the professional horticulture networks.
- Showcase successful women as examples/best practice.
- Initiate professional mentoring/coaching.

to ensure that women really express their opinion or ideas, because in the presence of the head of the household he would dominate the talk.

During the PRA the team gradually moved from a gender-focussed to a gender-sensitive approach. It means that gender questions were indirectly assessed by talking about the subject of horticulture whereas the gender-focussed approach would have addressed gender-issues more directly. The gender-sensitive approach proved to be more appropriate, as focussing on specific gender questions tends to corner family members.

Having defined possible leverages for horticultural projects, qualitative indicators for monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of exploiting family-internal synergies for increasing the income through horticulture still need to be developed. Participants agreed that monitoring the effects of a project on gender relations and disparities within the family might itself be a challenge.

Conclusion for gender and development

A shift in paradigm from an isolated targeting of women in development to an integrated gender-approach has been achieved. However, the risk of turning the gender-approach into women-empowerment still exists.

Furthermore a difference needs to be made between gender-specific projects and gender as transversal theme within general projects. Gender-specific projects often become women-specific projects, which may be appropriate for filling specific gender gaps. Examples are credit-lines tailored to the needs of women: Women often have considerable difficulties to get credit-lines because they hardly have the possibility to meet the general requirements (collaterals etc.). A project can offer credit-lines with special conditions for women in order to help them in developing their business.

The transversal aspect of gender goes further, as shown by the example of the horticulture project in Kosovo. Here, the inherent risk is that gender is not systematically looked at as a transversal aspect and therefore one may end up with isolated women activities again. The

reasons are on the one hand that gender often is still confused with women-empowerment, and, on the other hand, that it is far more difficult to apply gender as a cross-cutting issue than implementing women-specific projects. Often projects introduce some women-specific activities and think that the task of considering gender is fulfilled, which is apparently not true. Gender as a cross-cutting issue means analysing every step of the project cycle from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation through 'gender lenses'. For the planning phase this means for example analysing the gender relations, which in the horticulture project retroactively has been done through a topical PRA. For the implementation phase gender as transversal theme means for example checking whether project activities consider the needs of both genders, or have a negative impact on men or women, etc.

However once specific gender needs are defined in a project, this automatically leads to a women-empowerment component. In most parts of the world women are still the underprivileged part of society, and therefore the transversal aspect of gender can and should also have aspects of women-empowerment. Two of the four leverages identified for horticulture family enterprises, i.e 'to ensure women-involvement in the professional horticulture networks' and 'to showcase successful women as examples/best practice' clearly have a women's empowerment component. Last but not least an important detail is that these leverages did not emerge out of the idea of reaching gender-equality. But in the context of horticulture in Kosovo it has become evident, that the potential of farm families often is not sufficiently exploited without considering the potential of women.



Family constructed, traditional greenhouse.



From project financed greenhouse.