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Agatha Ampaire

Iowa State University, aampaire@gmail.com

Max F. Rothschild

Iowa State University, mfrothsc@iastate.edu

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Keywords

animal management, gender, small-holder, small livestock

Disciplines

Agriculture | Animal Sciences

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Differences between men and women farmers' experiences with a livestock development program in Kamuli, Uganda

A Ampaire and M F Rothschild

Department of Animal Science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011, USA
aampaire@iastate.edu ; mfrothsc@iastate.edu

Abstract

Women and rural dwellers are in greater poverty than men and people living in urban areas in Uganda. Development programs are therefore increasingly focusing on the rural poor. A livestock development program was established five years ago in the rural district of Kamuli, as a collaborative effort between Iowa State University and a local development organization. A survey was carried out to assess the impact of the program on rural farmers. Gender disaggregation of the data indicated that men and women farmers experienced the program differently because of factors such as inequality in education, access to information and time use differences. These results showed how important it is to consider rural farmers not as a uniform category. It is important to pay attention to gender roles, strengths, and limitations in program implementation. The paper attempts to explain the apparent differences in the experiences of men and women farmers.

Key words: animal management, gender, small-holder, small livestock

Introduction

In Uganda, the majority of the people live in rural areas and many of the rural dwellers (90%) are dependent on small scale farming (Datta-Mitra 2001). In 2002, poverty in rural areas in Uganda was estimated at 41.7% while that in urban areas was estimated at 12.2% (Kappel et al 2005). Women comprise 70-80% of the agricultural workforce yet at least a third of the women in Uganda live in absolute poverty (Lucas 2001). In order to improve the plight of the rural poor the government and many non-governmental organizations are prioritizing the smallholder farmer in the rural areas, especially women farmers in their development efforts.

Livestock rearing has been shown to be a pathway out of poverty (Ehui et al 2005, Randolph et al 2007). Most of the small livestock such as pigs, goats and chickens in Uganda, like in most parts of Africa, are kept at home and raised in free-range, backyard or semi-intensive systems. It follows from this that the bulk of the labor of taking care of the small livestock falls on the shoulders of women who, culturally are expected to take care of the homestead. Since small livestock are generally within the domain of women, they are more likely to be owned by women than larger livestock. Development organizations generally consider rearing small livestock a good way to improve the livelihoods of rural women.

It is generally accepted that improvements in the well-being and incomes of women translate into improvements in the livelihoods of the household and the society at large (Ferreira et al 2005). Empowerment of women is an important aspect of economic development in developing nations. Women are recognized as development partners and increasingly, various organizations are focusing on women and their potential to contribute to their society's development. The World Bank advocates for measuring of women's empowerment as a variable in International Development (Malhotra et al 2002). Improving women's equality and empowerment is not only just, it is necessary for successful development (USAID 2010). There is a need to, in some way, measure the impact of development programs on both men and women. Development programs need to be seen not only through an economic lens, but also through a gender lens. Inclusion of women in development programs needs to go hand in hand with evaluation of how the programs impact them and there is a need for gender-disaggregated data (Guèye 2003). Inequalities between

men and women in society need to be examined closely in order to find ways of correcting them and not perpetuating them. For example, sometimes livestock projects that distribute animals to families do not necessarily benefit the women in the household. Women usually provide most of the labor but may not realize the entire benefits from the activity (Miller 2001) which could reduce their eagerness to participate. In order to have women fully on board as partners in economic development, care has to be taken to create an enabling environment for them to participate.

Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO), a non- governmental organization in Uganda, and the Centre for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (CSRL) at Iowa State University (ISU) have set up a livestock development program in Kamuli district, Uganda. The CRSL/VEDCO livestock development program seeks to help resource poor farmers in that area to improve their household income and nutrition and hence their livelihoods (CSRL 2010). In this program, farmers receive training in animal management before they are given livestock. The farmers who receive livestock are expected to train other farmers in their farmer groups and pass on a certain number of offspring when the animals they receive reproduce. Women play an important role in this program and there are slightly more women than men in the program.

The CRSL/VEDCO livestock development program in its approach treats 'farmers' as a uniform category and assumes that men and women experience the program the same. This study differentiates between men and women farmers to determine if gender plays a role in the farmers' success with the program. This paper seeks to describe and to explain the findings which were found to be different between the men and women farmers.

Data collection and analyses

Open ended questions were used to guide personal interviews which were carried out as informal discussions between the researcher and farmers in the VEDCO/CSRL livestock development program from all the six sub counties in which the program operates. A total of 113 farmers who reared pigs, goats and/or chickens took part in the interviews at their homes 72 of the farmers interviewed were women and 41 were men. The interviews were conducted in the local language and recorded so that the researcher could fill in the questionnaires at the end of the day. This was done to mimic a visit by an advisor that the farmers would ordinarily receive, and ensured that the farmer was at ease, and not disrupted by the researcher constantly having to fill the questionnaire. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency tables to summarize the data on women and men farmers, and cross tabulations to determine relationships between other variables and gender. Relationships between variables were confirmed by Chi square tests using Predictive Analytics Software (PASW).

Results and discussion

Profile of farmers

There were more women (63.7%) than men (36.3%) in the sample (Table 1), but an equal proportion of men and women in the sample had received animals from the program (59.2% of the women and 58.5% of the men). More than half of the farmers of each gender had been with the program for five years, 63.9% of the women and 56.1% of the men. Almost all the farmers irrespective of gender (98.6% of the women and 95.1% of the men) had reared animals before they joined the program.

Table 1. Profile of farmers in the study

Characteristic	Women (%)	Men (%)
Received animals from the program	59.2	58.5
Been in the program 5 years	63.9	56.1
Reared animals before joining the program	98.6	95.1
Primary caretakers of the animals	91.1	65.7
Were married	82.9	95

This study was unable to establish if these farmers owned the animals they had reared at the time of joining the program. More women (91.1% of the women) compared to men (65.7% of the men) were the primary persons taking care of the animals ($p < 0.05$). This was in agreement with findings in other developing countries that women are primarily involved in taking care of small livestock within the homestead in rural areas. Most of the farmers of either gender were married (82.9% of the women and 95% of the men). Of the women, 17.1% were unmarried, either they had not married, were separated or were widowed. This is an important group of women as concerns development efforts since it has been established that unmarried women are often the poorest of the poor due to lack of access to resources (Chant 2007) and female headed households are usually in greater poverty than male headed households. Women had less formal education than men ($P < 0.05$), most of the women (58.6%) had only some primary education, while most of the men (56.4%) had some secondary education. More women (14.9%) compared to men (2.6%) had no formal education at all.

The data were suggestive that more women than men did not have any upgraded pigs (66.2% of the women compared to 48.5% of the men), and men had a higher number of upgraded pigs than women (Table 2, $p = 0.05$). This finding could be an indicator that men farmers are better off economically than women farmers. In Uganda upgraded pigs (crosses between exotic and indigenous pigs) are commonly kept for commercial purposes. Poor farmers generally start with indigenous livestock which are considered to require low or no input as well as less risky in terms of disease susceptibility (Anderson 2003), and later upgrade to crosses and pure breeds as they become more economically secure. Differences in education and financial resources are likely to lead to unequal access to material resources and information, which is likely to impact the day to day choices that the farmers make in running their enterprises. There is a concern that more financially secure and more educated members of groups tend to dominate the others in participatory community programs. It is therefore important that development workers pay attention to the needs of the less educated and poorer women farmers.

Table 2. A higher percentage of men rear upgraded pigs

Number of pigs	Women (%)	Men (%)
0*	66.2	48.5
1-3	30.6	28.3
4-7*	1.6	18
8-12	1.6	5.2

**The data are suggestive that more men than women have upgraded pigs and they have higher numbers of them, p -value=0.053*

Animal management practices

Several indicators of the level of animal management such as animal housing, animal disease occurrence, animal feeding, animal reproduction practices, record keeping and areas in which farmers felt that they needed more training were investigated during the interviews. There was little difference in animal management practices between men and women. This seems to suggest that animal management practices in Kamuli are generally homogeneous as far as gender is concerned. Some studies in other places have found animal management practices to differ based on gender. The sameness in animal management practices could also be due to the fact that women do the actual day to day work of managing the animals even when some men think that they are the primary caregiver. There is a possibility that giving instructions to family members to manage the animals and playing a supervisory role is interpreted by the men as their part in care giving.

Among the animal reproduction practices most of the farmers irrespective of gender (57.4% of the women and 61.8% of the men) let their animals breed freely at home, there is no controlled or intentional mating planned by the farmer. However, more women (34%) than men (12.9%), if they do not have a mating male of their own, depend on their female animals mating when they meet other animals in the neighborhood during free range foraging (Table 3, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Differences in animal reproduction practices by women and men farmers*

Reproduction practice	Women (%)	Men (%)
Animals breed freely at home (I have male and female animals)	57.4	61.8
I take the female to a neighbor's male or borrow a male for a few days	5.6	26.4
Animals bred by random neighborhood animals during free range foraging	37.0	11.8

**If the farmers do not own a breeding male animal, more men than women farmers are likely to borrow or take their female animal to a neighbor's male, p-value=0.036*

The explanation for this could be the fact that women in rural settings spend more time working within the household than men. Therefore the women are less likely to go to a neighbor to borrow a male animal or take their female animal to the male animal if they do not have a male animal at home and if they have to walk considerably long distances. One of the major problems which the farmers, men and women, generally found in animal reproduction was the difficulty to access a male animal and the long distances that are traveled to access one (Table 4).

Table 4. Difficulties faced concerning animal reproduction

Difficulty faced	Women (%)	Men (%)
It is not easy to access a male animal	41.1	71.4
Long distances travelled to get a male animal	41.2	28.6
Diseases	11.7	0
No good breeding animals in the neighborhood	5.6	0

More women than men did not keep records and this cannot be attributed only to the education level difference between men and women. It was previously found that at the same level of education whether a farmer had received training in animal management or not, made a difference in whether the farmer kept farm records or not (Ampaire et al 2010a). The amount of time a farmer has could also be a factor that determines whether the farmer keeps records or not. Women are generally busier than men since they do more household chores, including raising the children. They are thus more likely to neglect taking records as this is an additional demand on their time. Not having time and not seeing the need for records were among the major reasons why the farmers did not keep records (Ampaire et al 2010b)

Although there was no difference based on gender in how comfortable the farmers felt in their ability to raise pigs or chickens, there was a difference in the farmer's comfort level in their ability to raise goats. More women, 51.3% rated their comfort level between 8-10 on a 1-10 scale where 10 was the highest comfort level, compared to 36.8% of the men ($p<0.05$). More men (21.0%) than women (8.1%) were not comfortable with their ability to raise goats. This was surprising since traditionally it was the boys who herded goats (Siefert et al 1994). Many farmers currently have less land to herd goats and the young boys are in school so the goats are tethered near the homestead if they have no housing structure. The goats need to be monitored since they tend to break loose and can destroy neighbor's gardens and hence create quarrels (Ampaire et al 2010b). Probably because men tend to spend less time at home than women, they feel ill at ease to raise goats when they will not be home to monitor them, whereas women who mostly work at home can easily do that.

The greater importance of the CSRL/VEDCO program to women

Most of the men and women farmers felt that the CSRL/VEDCO livestock program was relevant to their needs and met their expectations (90.1% of the women and 92.3% of the men). There was a difference however between women and men in their perception of the program. The majority of the women (72%) rated the program highly whereas the majority of the men (58.8%) rated the program moderately (8-10 and 5-7 respectively on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being the highest rating) ($p<0.05$).

Table 5. Importance/relevance of the CSRL/ VEDCO livestock program to farmers

Rating*	Women (%)	Men (%)
1-4	10.3	10.4

5-7	17.7	58.8
8-10#	72.0	30.8

* Rating 1-4 is low, 5-7 is moderate, 8-10 is high

#The majority of the women gave a high rating while the majority of the men gave a moderate rating, P-value=0.001

These data were suggestive that more women than men (53.5% of the women compared to 28.1% of the men) thought that rearing livestock contributed highly to their livelihoods, a rating of 8-10 on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest rating ($p=0.05$, Table 5). More women than men rated themselves as being very active in VEDCO activities (75.7% of the women and 53.8% of the men, $p<0.05$). More women (19.4%) than men (2.5%) were unaware of other programs in their locality which catered to livestock farmers ($p<0.05$) and fewer women (37.5%) than men (74.4%) ($p<0.05$) were members of other development organizations other than VEDCO. The women probably rated the importance/relevance of livestock to their livelihoods higher than the men perhaps because most rural women have less mobility and hence less access to opportunities outside the home compared to men. The fact that women are more restricted to the domestic sphere than men could also explain why more women are unaware of other programs and why fewer women are members of other programs. One of the reasons that farmers gave for why they thought that VEDCO was better than other programs they knew of or which they were members of was that it did not discriminate against members in that it was easy to join. This is probably why some women were able to join this program and not other programs. The fact that the women rated the program more highly and they were more active in it could be an indication that the CSRL/VEDCO livestock program is a real opportunity for the women and because of that, they have committed themselves and put much effort into it.

Conclusion and recommendations

- Gender disaggregation of data which was collected in a general assessment of the impact of the CSRL/VEDCO Livestock development program on farmers indicated that women and men farmers in some instances experienced the program differently because of different life situations.
- Inequality in education, access to information and time use are some of the factors which bring about different outcomes for men and women farmers.
- There is need for development workers to specifically pay attention to how gender roles, strengths and limitations might impact the outcomes of the development programs.

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