Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Good practices for promoting gender equality through rural advisory services

Case studies from Ethiopia, India and Peru

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ARD	agriculture and rural development
BA	business advisor
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CI	Coffee Initiative
CRISP	The Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (India)
CSO	civil society organization
DA	development agents
DAship	Development Apprenticeship
DAC&FW	Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFG	Field Farmer Group
Foncodes	Social Cooperation and Development Fund (Peru)
FSN	food security and nutrition
FTCs	farmer training centres
FT	farmer trainer
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
GRAST	Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool
HW	Haku Wiñay
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ICT	information and communication technology
IEP	Institute of Peruvian Studies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INEI	National Institute of Statistics and Information (Peru)
MIDIS	Social Inclusion and Development Ministry (Peru)
MKSP	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (India)
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NEs	*núcleos ejecutivos* (executive committees)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NGRCA	National Gender Resource Centre in Agriculture (India)
NRM	natural resource management
PADETES	Participatory Demonstration and Training Extension System
PO	producer organization
PRADAN	Professional Assistance for Development Action
RAS	rural advisory services
RIMISP	Latin American Center for Rural Development
SHG	self-help group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Account keeper of one of the self-help groups that participated in the GRAST validation in India.
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1. Introduction

Authors: Hajnalka Petrics, Kelsey Barale, Susan K. Kaaria and Soniia David, FAO

1.1. Background

Rural advisory services[1] (RAS) play a critical role in agricultural and rural development. RAS connect producers, their organizations and other rural actors to the information, knowledge, technologies, and services they need to increase agricultural productivity. They also support farmers' innovations, their effective linkages to markets, natural resource management and adaptation to climate change. RAS also impact local governance, influencing inclusion and participation of the different actors in the community (Agrawal and Perrin, 2009). Ultimately, RAS have the potential to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods·

Although women are major actors in agriculture and are key to ensuring food security, especially in the context of family farming, they generally have less access than men to RAS. A 1988-89 FAO survey of agricultural extension in 97 countries found that only five percent of RAS resources target women producers (FAO, 1993). The data on women's limited access to RAS compared to that of men from the FAO, and other more recent studies (Alderman *et al.*, 1996; Adesina and Djato, 1997; Horrell and Krishnan, 2007; Kumase *et al.*, 2010; Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2011), suggest that the failure of RAS to effectively address the needs of women producers in most countries contributes significantly to the 'gender gap' in agriculture whereby women producers underperform in family farming. FAO estimates that providing women with the same access to productive resources as men, including RAS, would enable them to increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent, boosting agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, on average (FAO, 2011).

This analysis suggests developing gender-responsive RAS[2] as a promising strategy for closing the gender gap (Petrics *et al.*, 2015). However, to ensure that women producers can access and benefit from RAS, both service users and providers must address and overcome a number of challenges. Culture and gender norms, and perceptions which discriminate against women often result in women not being recognized as legitimate RAS clients and encourage the erroneous perception that service provision is gender neutral.

[1] Rural advisory services (RAS) refer to all the different activities that provide information and advisory services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in the agrifood system and rural development. These include technical, organizational, business and management skills, and practices which improve rural livelihoods and well-being (FAO, 2010). The term RAS emphasizes the move towards more inclusive, demand-driven and participatory service provision. This definition also recognizes the diversity of actors in advisory service provision (public, private, civil society and farmer organizations) and the much broadened support to rural communities, which goes beyond conventional technology transfer and dissemination of information.

[2] Gender-responsive rural advisory services are services that take into account the differentiated needs, constraints and opportunities of women and men farmers based on which relevant content is designed and delivered in a way that women and men can equally access and benefit from it.

Women's time and mobility constraints caused by their productive and heavier domestic workload, social norms and, at times, more limited literacy and education, reduce women's access to RAS. Women's under-representation in membership-based rural institutions (e.g. producer organizations – POs, cooperatives) limits their ability to advocate for their needs and interests, engage in collective action and reduces their access to a range of services provided through those organizations.

At the organizational level, RAS providers face challenges that may hinder them from effectively meeting the needs of women producers. RAS organizations themselves may be gender biased, resulting in "biased decision-making, targeting, employment of staff, service delivery models and content of the services" (GFRAS, 2014). As a result of the structural challenges women face in the workforce and society generally, organizations often find it difficult to recruit and retain women RAS advisors even in contexts where it would be preferable to have women RAS personnel working with women producers. The focus and content of these services, including information and technologies services, are often biased towards male producers and may not necessarily meet women's specific needs. In addition, the use of top-down advisory methods and approaches that requires literacy and access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as radios and mobile phones, can further limit women's ability to benefit from RAS.

1.2. Objective, structure and methodology

To help RAS organizations overcome the above described challenges, and design and provide gender-responsive services, FAO has developed the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool (GRAST).[3] The GRAST offers a comprehensive methodology to analyse the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of RAS programmes and organizational mechanisms as well as the policy environment.

The GRAST has been validated in three countries – in Ethiopia, India and Peru. The main goal of the validation exercise was to try out and improve the GRAST based on the results of field testing. Beyond validating the GRAST, the exercise had the objective to identify good practices for promoting gender-equality through RAS provision and document them in the form of country case studies.

This publication presents these case studies with the intention of sharing good practices for promoting gender equality through RAS. It is intended for RAS providers, field workers and managers as well as policy makers, planners and development investors who work more broadly in agriculture and rural development to help them adopt or support others in adopting the good practices presented.

The case studies focus on organizations and programmes that were known to promote gender equality by providing gender-sensitive or responsive RAS, namely TechnoServe (Coffee Initiative, Ethiopia), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN; Enhancing Farm Livelihoods of Women Self-Help Groups Project, India) and the Haku Wiñay Programme of the Peruvian Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Peru). The in-depth fieldwork carried out as part of the validation of the GRAST has allowed FAO to identify the processes that lead to positive changes and innovations at the study organizations that promote gender equality.

[3] The GRAST is available at: http://www.fao.org/3/CA2693EN/ca2693en.pdf

The publication is organized into five chapters. Following the above summary, this chapter describes the GRAST and the methodology followed to prepare this publication. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 present the case study findings from Ethiopia, India and Peru, respectively. Each case study provides information regarding the national policy context for gender equality and a brief description of the RAS system in the country, the socioeconomic and political context of the pilot areas, and the programmes that were studied and their good practices when field-testing was conducted. The final chapter includes the summary of the recommendations drawn from the case studies. The latter provide insights and details on good practices to address specific constraints in gender-responsive RAS provision which readers can adopt and adapt to their own work. The recommendations are based on the analysis of results related to the seven GRAST assessment questions (see Box 1 and the Annex).

1.2.1. The Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool

The GRAST was developed by FAO based on the recommendations from a 2015 publication (Petrics *et al.*, 2015) which identified the need for a tool that could systematically and comprehensively help assess the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of RAS policies, organizations and programmes, highlighting both good practices and areas for improvement. The GRAST was designed to meet this need, and can be used for both external evaluations and internal programme self-assessments. The GRAST assesses gender sensitivity and responsiveness of RAS programmes at three levels: the enabling policy environment, organizational, and individual based on the premise that the sustainable transformation of rural advisory services toward greater gender-responsiveness requires change in all three of these dimensions (Petrics *et al.*, 2015; GFRAS, 2012).

At the enabling environment level the GRAST assesses the meaningful inclusion of a gender perspective in national-level agriculture, rural development, and extension policies and strategies. It examines national commitments to gender equality, as shown through the ratification and implementation of international treaties (such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW) and the existence of a national gender equality policy.

The organizational level looks at organizations' stated commitments to providing accessible and relevant rural advisory services to women as well as men producers by analyzing organizational policies, strategies, and staff training materials. It also examines the degree of gender sensitivity in the organizational culture and what mechanisms, if any, are in place to recruit, retain and support female employees.

The individual level focuses on both the staff and clients of a given organization. The staff-level assessment explores how staff members understand and implement the organization's policies on reaching and working with rural women. For RAS programmes without specific gender policies in place, the GRAST can be used to explore how staff members engage with rural women in the absence of a formal policy. The tool also explores methods or strategies that staff members have found to be particularly effective in working with women. The client-level assessment uses group interviews to confirm findings from the organizational and staff assessments, and to gain a better understanding of clients' experiences with rural advisory services.

The GRAST can create structured spaces and processes to help RAS organizations critically examine their own practices, beliefs, attitudes and practices around gender roles and relations and identify how these can contribute to women's empowerment and broader social change processes.

By revealing the areas that need improvement, the GRAST is able to help outline the necessary course of action for making RAS policies, organizations and individual service providers more responsive to the needs of male and female farmers. By highlighting what does and does not work, the GRAST can propose gender-responsive actions to put in place to address constraints at policy, organizational and individual levels. In this way, the GRAST can facilitate the identification of the practical changes needed to ensure equality happens.

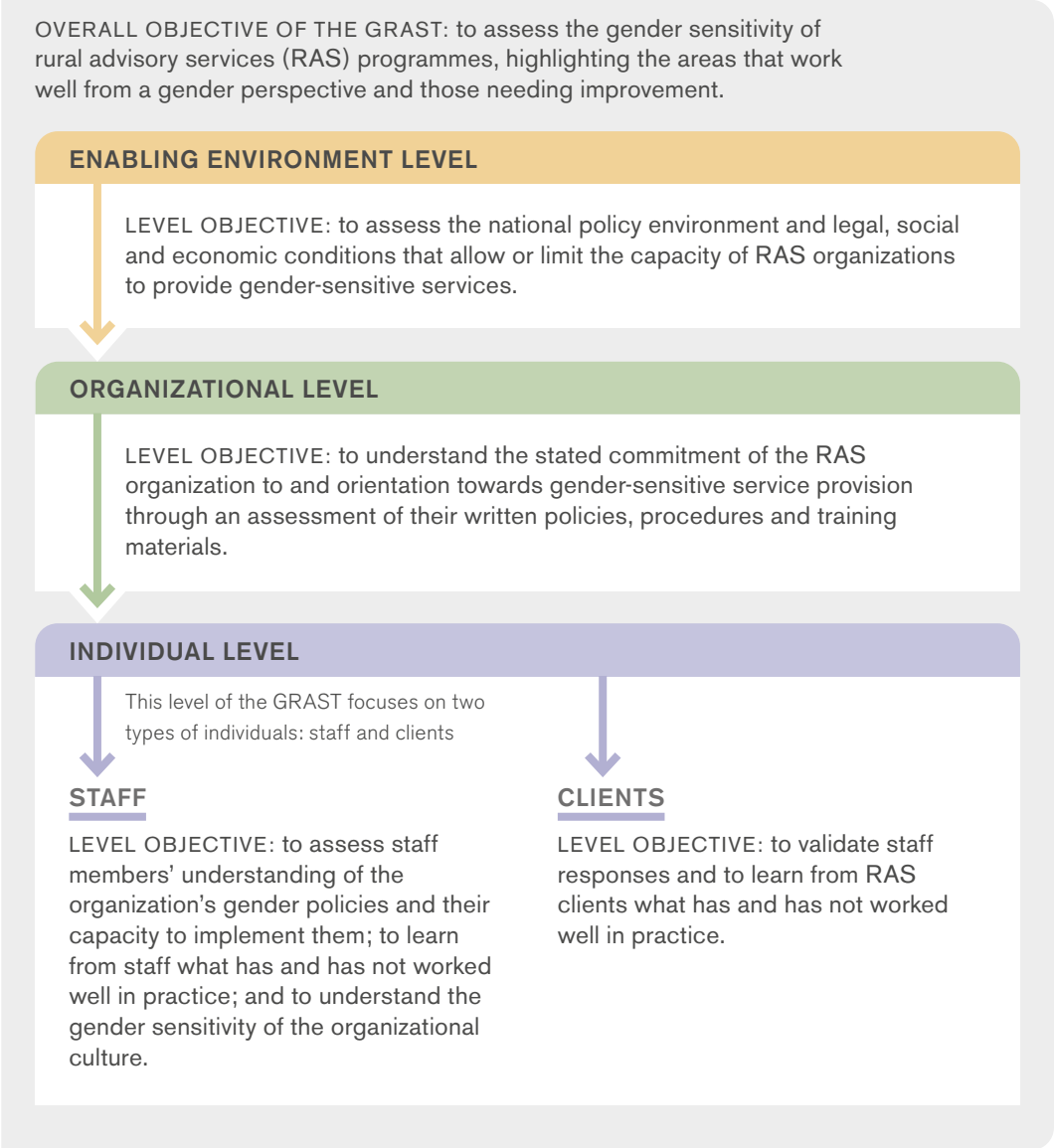
At the organizational and individual levels, the GRAST is structured around seven key assessment questions (Box 1), which are based on the major constraints to gender-responsive RAS as identified by FAO (Petrics *et al.*, 2015).

BOX 1 **The seven key GRAST assessment questions**

1. Are rural women included as legitimate clients in RAS programmes?
2. How are the time and mobility constraints of rural women addressed?
3. How are the literacy and education constraints of rural women addressed?
4. Does the programme facilitate the ability of rural women to represent their interests and voice their demands?
5. Are RAS programmes designed and delivered in a way that allows rural women to effectively participate and benefit?
6. Does the organizational culture enable women to become and effectively function as RAS agents and managers?
7. Are there institutional mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of gender-sensitive RAS and hold to staff accountable?

Source: Author's own elaboration

FIGURE 1 **Using the GRAST: a brief guide**



Source: Author's own elaboration

1.2.2. Case studies

Three RAS providers were purposively selected for the case studies because they were known to be gender-sensitive or responsive and successful in working with women producers. As one purpose of the case studies was to validate the GRAST, these programmes were also chosen because they enabled FAO to test whether the GRAST could effectively capture gender-responsive good practices implemented by different types of RAS organizations and programmes. FAO partnered with local research organizations to plan, coordinate and conduct the case studies.

In Ethiopia, the case study looked at the Coffee Initiative (CI), a programme implemented by TechnoServe, an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that provides rural advisory services on coffee production. The national research partner was Mekelle University, and fieldwork took place in March 2016, in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. In India, the case study focused on the 'Enhancing Farm Livelihoods of Women Self-Help Groups in Mahakaushal Region of Madhya Pradesh' programme, implemented by PRADAN, a national NGO. The research was conducted in partnership with the Centre for Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), and fieldwork took place in Mandla and Betul-Hoshangabad Districts in Madhya Pradesh State in May 2016. Finally, in Peru, the case study centred on Haku Wiñay, a government-supported RAS programme. The Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP) and the Latin American Center for Rural Development (RIMISP) jointly carried out the research in May 2016 in Cusco and Cajamarca Regions.

TABLE 1 **Case study programmes, countries and partners**

PROGRAMME	COUNTRY AND REGIONS	RESEARCH PARTNERS
Coffee Initiative, a programme implemented by TechnoServe, an international NGO	**Ethiopia**, Jimma Zone	Mekelle University
Enhancing Farm Livelihoods of Women Self-Help Groups in Mahakaushal Region of Madhya Pradesh, a programme implemented by PRADAN, a national NGO	**India**, Mandla and Betul-Hoshangabad Districts in Madhya Pradesh State	CRISP
Haku Wiñay, a RAS programme supported by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion	**Peru**, Cusco and Cajamarca Regions	IEP and RIMISP

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Rural women engaging in a participatory activity during GRAST validation group interview in Ethiopia.
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2. To fly well, the eagle needs both wings: a case study of TechnoServe's Coffee Initiative in Ethiopia

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2.1. Policy context

On the whole, Ethiopian policies and legal frameworks strongly support gender equality. The country amended its constitution in 1995 to include Article 35 on "The Rights of Women", which guarantees women's equal rights in marriage, employment, land use, and in access to and participation in development planning and programmes (Gopal, 1998; UNICEF, 2022). Article 35 also promotes affirmative action to redress past discrimination and outlaws harmful traditional practices. In 2000, Ethiopia passed a revised family code which gives women equal rights in inheritance and access to property. The country adopted a new criminal code in 2005 which criminalizes various forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, marital rape, harmful traditional practices (e.g. female genital mutilation, early marriage and marriage by abduction), and trafficking of women and children. Special prosecution units to deal with violence against women exist.

Despite the efforts to improve the situation of women in Ethiopia, in 2015 the country ranked 116 out of 188 countries on the gender inequality index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016). Religious and customary laws in some regions of the country deny women rights they are guaranteed under federal and international law, and implementation and awareness of national gender equality laws is uneven, both within the government and among the wider population (CEDAW Committee, 2011).

Regional land registration programmes initiated in 2003, which give joint land use titles to husbands and wives[4] (Kumar and Quisumbing, 2012; Girma and Giovarelli, 2013), have improved women's access to assets. Although the 1995 constitutional amendment guarantees women's rights to use, transfer, administer and control land on an equal basis with men, custom and tradition often prevented this from occurring in practice prior to the land registration programmes (Girma and Giovarelli, 2013).

[4] The Ethiopian Government is the official owner of all land in the country; it awards titles conferring official use rights (Girma and Giovarelli, 2010).

Preliminary studies show that the registration programmes increased both men's and women's tenure security, created public expectations that land will be divided equitably following divorce or widowhood, and increased the likelihood that women would rent out land and plant tree crops (UN-HABITAT, 2008). However, having a land title does not significantly change women's decision-making power in relation to farm management.

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Ethiopia's national-level gender equality efforts are coordinated by the Women's Affairs Office of the Prime Minister's Office. There are also women's affairs departments within many government ministries, and district-level offices have gender focal points. However, for the most part, gender offices at all levels lack the resources and capacity to implement gender equality plans and policies effectively (CEDAW Committee, 2011). Social and cultural beliefs about male dominance remain strong and many rural women are unaware of their legal rights (CEDAW, 2011).

Ethiopia's national Agricultural Sector Policy and Investment Framework 2010-2020 acknowledges that men and women have distinct needs, priorities and interests, and that women have an additional unpaid home and care work burden that men do not. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development also formally recognizes that gender equality and women's empowerment are both key for agricultural growth. While the Ministry of Agriculture had no specific gender policy, a gender strategy is an integral part of its agricultural growth programmes. The gender equality strategy for the agricultural sector, while acknowledging extant gender inequalities in the agricultural sector, notes: "*removing gender disparity and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment is key to accelerating economic growth and social development*" (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2011). The strategy seeks to adapt agricultural programmes and technical and vocational trainings to the specific needs of women. The Women's Affairs Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development along with gender focal points in regional and district offices serve as the gender focal points in the ministry.

While Ethiopia does not have an agricultural extension policy, an agricultural extension strategy exists (Demese *et al.*, 2010; FDRE, 2001; and FDRE, 2007). The gender mainstreaming guidelines of the Ministry of Agriculture are used to identify the critical gender challenges and indicators for gender responsive extension.

2.1.1. Gender, agriculture and rural advisory services in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's economy is predominantly agricultural, with the sector providing a livelihood for the vast majority of the population and contributing to a significant proportion of the country's GDP (Central Statistics Agency, 2015). A 2010 study carried out in four regions of the country found that the gender division of labour in agriculture varies according to the enterprise, the farming system, the technology used and the wealth of the household (Aregu *et al.*, 2010). Generally, men are the key actors in crop production and control income from most agricultural enterprises. Men and women share the workload and the benefits from a number of crop enterprises, but there are few enterprises where women provide most of the labour and control the income. Studies also show that women and children play an important role in the day-to-day management of livestock (Central Statistics Agency, 2015). Despite their contribution to agriculture, Ethiopian women, especially those in male-headed households, are not typically perceived to be farmers and have less access to resources such as land and RAS than men, leading women to typically produce 35 percent less than men (USAID, 2012). High illiteracy rates among women (57 percent) also impede their access to RAS (UNECA 2020).

Agricultural extension and RAS approaches in Ethiopia have changed over time. The system is largely dominated by the public sector, although NGOs are also involved in service provision. Starting in 2004, the Government of Ethiopia began investing heavily in human resources in the area of agricultural extension and employed approximately 47 000 development agents (DAs or field agents) at the time of the field testing. During this period, annual public investment in RAS amounted to over USD50 million or almost two percent of agricultural GDP and, by 2007/8 public extension programmes reached an estimated nine million farmers (Spielman *et al.*, 2010).

The country's extension strategy is informed by various gender assessments carried out by the government and NGOs, which identify the constraints women face in accessing extension services. The Government's response to some of these constraints can be seen in the design of extension approaches. For example, the use of participatory demonstrations seeks to cater to the needs of women and men with low educational levels. The significant increase in the number of female extension agents (estimated to be between 12 and 22 percent) has also improved women's access to extension services. Other women-responsive features include an emphasis by the Agricultural Growth Programme on establishing and working with women's interest groups, providing gender training for agricultural staff at different administrative levels and setting quotas for women. For example, women are expected to make up 30 percent of extension beneficiaries and 30 percent of common interest groups' members involved in planning programmes.

The major RAS approaches are the Participatory Demonstration and Training Extension System (PADETES) and the farmer training centres (FTCs). PADETES, introduced in 1995, involves DAs making household visits, providing training through farmer-managed demonstration plots, and distributing inputs for different crops and agro-ecological conditions. The programme is intended to be participatory: farmers are involved in identifying problems, analysis, implementation and evaluation. PADETES now reaches an estimated 35-40 percent of rural farm households. In 2012/13, there were approximately 8 780 farmer training centres staffed by DAs who were responsible for carrying out extension activities related to livestock, crop production and natural resource management (NRM).

Notwithstanding these interventions and improvements, critical aspects of RAS and agricultural programmes are still biased toward male producers as heads of households. While female-headed households are given special consideration, women in male-headed households are not specifically included in policies or planning. The PADETES approach focuses on the household as the target unit rather than on individual farmers, with the result that women in male-headed household are less likely than men to receive attention from DAs. Whereas in the past emphasis was on food crops, more recently, extension packages have been developed mainly for crops and enterprises dominated by men, including high-value crops (spices, oilseeds and vegetables), livestock (dairy, poultry and fattening), beekeeping and natural resources (forestry and soil and water conservation). RAS provision through FTCs is problematic for women generally because of the constraints they face in travelling away from home for cultural reasons, and because of their heavy workloads and domestic responsibilities.

2.2. Socioeconomic context of the study area

This case study was carried out in Goma and Gera *woredas* (districts) in Jimma Zone, Oromia Region in the southwest of Ethiopia. These *woredas* (populations of approximately 372 021 and 109 708, respectively) were selected because of their long-term involvement with TechnoServe, the existence of competitive, profit-oriented and professional coffee wet mill cooperatives, and the success of previous gender-inclusive interventions.

Oromia Region is largely rural and agricultural, and 91 percent of the population lives in poverty (OPHI, 2016). According to the 2016 Multi-dimensional Poverty Index from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), illiteracy, especially among women, is also a major issue. In the Jimma area, 71 percent of women and 39 percent of men are illiterate (Central Statistics Agency, 2015) and only 57 percent of eligible children were enrolled in primary school in 2004 (World Bank, 2004). More than 80 percent of the population in Jimma works in agriculture, farming an average of 0.9 hectares (Lemessa, 2000). The major crops are *teff (*Eragrostis tef) and *enset* (Ensete ventricosum), grown for home consumption, and coffee, produced for the market (Lemessa, 2000). Production is typically rainfed, with low use of inputs. As a result, productivity is low and food insecurity is a major challenge (World Bank, 2004).

Typically, women in male-headed households do not have their own coffee trees; coffee farms are considered to be the joint property of husbands and wives but the crop is still seen as a male crop. While both men and women are involved in coffee management tasks, women are largely responsible for weeding, monitoring diseases and for ensuring that the trees are protected from animals. Women are also largely responsible for postharvest activities, both at household level and in coffee wet mills, because they are considered to be better than men at discerning quality characteristics. The bulk of coffee sales (unwashed and wet mill coffee) are controlled by men but women have the right to sell small quantities on their own. It is estimated that while women make up 75 percent of the coffee industry workforce in Ethiopia, they only control 43 percent of the revenue from the crop (African Development Bank, 2015).

The majority of people in Oromia belong to the Oromo ethnic group, which is the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia (34 percent of the population) (CIA, 2016). Oromifa is the working language of regional government and primary education is in Oromifa (CIA, 2016). In Jimma, 90 percent of the population speaks Oromifa as a first language and 85 percent are Muslim (Central Statistical Agency, 2007).

For the case study, the team carried out 25 group interviews (nine with single-sex groups and the rest in mixed groups) with a total of 200 men and women farmers selected in consultation with local cooperative leaders and TechnoServe business advisors. The team also interviewed leaders and members from three wet mill cooperatives, 13 TechnoServe staff members and 18 farmer trainers.

2.3. The Coffee Initiative (CI)

The Coffee Initiative (CI) was implemented in Ethiopia between 2008 and 2016 by TechnoServe, a US-based NGO operating in 29 countries which helps to build competitive farms, businesses and industries. The project, which was implemented in several East African countries, focused on improving farmers' capacity to produce high-quality coffee and increase their income, helping cooperatives improve their processing

Coffee plant, Ethiopia.
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and connect with specialty markets, and strengthening the overall coffee value chain. The project operated in three coffee-producing zones of Ethiopia (Jimma and Illibabo in the Oromia Region, and Gedeo in the Southern Region). Based on lessons learned on developing gender-sensitive interventions in their Tanzanian project, TechnoServe fully incorporated gender as a major component of the CI in Ethiopia.

The CI provided training to mixed-sex groups (referred to as focal farmer groups or FFGs) of 20 to 30 households through monthly sessions. Training focused on coffee agronomy, but also included sessions on maize production, savings and record-keeping, marketing and nutrition. The project established quotas for the minimum number of women FFG participants and farmer trainers (30 percent). Cooperative members participated in the coffee agronomy trainings as individuals, but these trainings were not formally linked to the work with cooperatives. The CI used a farmer-to-farmer extension approach whereby farmer trainers (FTs), who were paid TechnoServe staff, carried out training based on lesson plans backstopped by business advisors (BAs). The two-year training in the Farm Colleges covered 12 modules a year, one module per month in sessions lasting between an hour to an hour and a half.

The CI supported new and existing cooperatives to improve coffee processing and business practices. A TechnoServe staff member worked directly with cooperatives that had been selected to operate wet mills (coffee processing equipment) to help them improve the quality of processing, record-keeping and business management.

The 418 FFGs in the Jimma area targeted approximately 10 000 farmers and approximately 80 cooperatives. There were six senior TechnoServe staff members (business advisors and a gender advisor) working with the CI and 35 farmer trainers.

2.4. Good practices for promoting gender equality through RAS at individual and organizational levels

2.4.1. Are rural women included in the programme as legitimate clients?

The CI specifically identified men and women as their target clientele and set quotas for the minimum number of women they wanted to participate in the programme as trainers (30 percent), service users (30 percent), cooperative members (30 percent) and leaders. The project had no criteria for participation and was open to all coffee-producing households in the target area. The project's decision to work with individuals within the household, rather than treat the household as a unit, was critical for the inclusion of women as service users. This focus enabled men and women to express their individual needs and priorities, rather than having the male household head speak for everyone.

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From the start, the CI sensitized village leaders, district officials, and cooperative leaders on the importance of women's participation. These leaders were then responsible for sensitizing men in the community about the household-level economic benefits of having their wives participate in trainings. Men in the region generally make decisions for their households and control their wives' time and mobility, so it was felt that raising their awareness of the importance of training women would have a major impact on women's ability to participate in the Farm College programme.

The CI had a thoughtful and holistic approach to promoting gender-balanced participation in the Farm College programme, as depicted in the illustration below.

FIGURE 2 **Securing gender-balanced participation – Technoserve**

Source: Technoserve. 2022. Women's Economic Empowerment. In: *Technoserve*. Arlington. Cited 16 December 2022. www.technoserve.org/what-we-do/women/?post_type=resource

It was expected that one man and one woman from each registered household would attend trainings. Following the initial community sensitization, the project used three approaches to changing the social construction of women as housewives and encouraging their participation in Farm Colleges. FTs visited farmers' homes and directly invited women; influential women farmers were asked to rally other women to attend training sessions and husbands were requested to invite their wives to attend training sessions with them. Project BAs invested time to convince both women and men of the significant economic impacts (e.g. increase in coffee production and household income) that would result from training women on coffee agronomy. During gender training, staff asked farmers to identify who is involved in each coffee production task so that they would come to recognize the important role played by women. As explained by a business advisor: "women will break loose from established sociocultural constructs when the economic gains outweigh short-term social pressures".

The project tracked training attendance and results on an individual level, and trainers followed up with all registered participants individually. Home visits provided women, who are taught from childhood not to speak up in mixed-sex groups, with the opportunity

to ask trainers questions individually. The project also maintained that individual follow-up visits helped women understand that their presence at trainings was valued.

Cooperatives were selected to participate in the project and to receive a wet mill on the basis of their potential to produce high-quality, specialty coffee, their degree of market access and whether or not they met the minimum quotas of female members and leaders. These last criteria resulted in many cooperatives proactively reaching out to women and allowing individual, rather than household, membership. Allowing women to deliver coffee beans and receive income in their own names benefitted them financially even though they tend to sell smaller quantities of beans compared to men.

Good practices

- Identifying both women and men as RAS users.
- Targeting service provision to individual farmers, both men and women, rather than to households.
- Encouraging individuals, rather than households, to register as cooperative members.
- Establishing quotas for the minimum number of women as trainers, service users, cooperative members and leaders.
- Requiring no criteria for participation in the RAS programme and related activities, trainings.
- Sensitizing communities, especially men and district officials, village and cooperative leaders on the importance of women's participation in the trainings.
- Using multiple approaches to encourage female attendance of training sessions.
- Including gender training/sensitization, in addition to the technical trainings offered, to challenge the social construction of women as housewives, and helping them and their husbands recognize the important role of women in productive activities.
- Conducting home visits to follow up trainees individually after training sessions and offering women an opportunity to ask questions.
- Using gender-related indicators, such as the number of women members and leaders, as one of the criteria for selecting and rewarding partner organizations such as cooperatives.

2.4.2. How are the time and mobility constraints of rural women addressed?

CI stipulated that monthly training sessions should be scheduled at times that are convenient for service users and in locations close to their homes. The farmer trainers who were interviewed said that training schedules were decided by group consensus, but that the availability of women in the group was a deciding factor, as women have less free time compared to men. As farmer trainers were from the same communities as service users, they were also aware of seasonal variations in women's workload. Furthermore, women were allowed to bring their children to trainings.

Generally, training locations were fairly accessible to women. The CI held trainings at demonstration plots volunteered by a member of the FFG, which were required to be near an all-weather road and within easy walking distance of the community. Encouraging husbands and wives to register for and attend trainings together may have also facilitated women's ability to attend trainings. While women in this part of Ethiopia have limited mobility, it is socially acceptable for them to travel with their husbands.

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In addition to planning trainings in places and at times that work for both men and women, the CI encouraged coffee cooperatives to invest in interventions that lessen women's time constraints and work burdens. As an organization, TechnoServe emphasizes social responsibility and encourages cooperatives to invest a portion of their proceeds in community-level public goods. As a result, cooperatives in the study areas have put in water pumps, improved roads and built a new primary school. These investments, particularly the water pumps, have a major impact on women's workloads and in turn on their time poverty.

Good practices

- Scheduling training sessions and other activities based on women's availability and in consultation with them.
- Conducting training sessions in the community, in a location that is easily accessible to participants, especially women.
- Recruiting farmer trainers from the same or nearby communities who are familiar with rural women's workloads and their seasonal variations.
- Allowing women to bring their children to training sessions or provide childcare for the duration of the trainings.
- Establishing a minimum quota for female attendance at each training session to encourage trainers to schedule activities when women are available.
- Encouraging cooperatives to invest in infrastructure and technologies that reduce women's work burden, such as water pumps, tree nurseries, improved roads, and childcare and schools.

2.4.3. How are rural women's education and literacy constraints addressed?

As literacy rates are low for both men and women in rural Ethiopia, the CI planned its programme on the assumption that most service users would be unable to read and write. Training sessions, scheduled according to the coffee production cycle, were held in farmers' fields and consisted of 50 percent theory (lectures), with the remaining time allocated to practical demonstrations, role play and group discussions. Laminated photographs, diagrams and other visual aids were also used. The CI also promoted learning through farmer-to-farmer information exchange (model farmer and exposure visits) by encouraging early adopters, innovators and those who had adopted practices with good results to share their experiences with others and by organizing field days. Being farmer-based, these approaches were appropriate for reaching women who tend to be less mobile than men. As FTs were in charge of running the coffee agronomy programme, all trainings were conducted in the local language (Oromifa). The farmers interviewed stated that they found the agronomy trainings easy to understand and that literate members of the training group helped others when reading was required. The CI adopted an emblem – an eagle with outspread wings – as a metaphor to explain the importance of gender equality ("to fly well, the eagle needs both wings"). This emblem effectively conveyed the message to both men and women.

Certain staff positions and other roles (FT and cooperative leaders) in the project required literacy. These requirements, though necessary, made the pool of eligible female candidates smaller. In order to ensure that women could compete for these positions, TechnoServe established quotas for the minimum number of women farmer trainers and cooperative leaders.

Good practices

- Taking literacy rates into consideration during programme design and using a combination of advisory methods, including experiential learning approaches such as demonstrations and farmer-to-farmer information exchange (model farmer and exposure visits), role play, group discussions, verbal face-to-face communication, and visual tools such as posters, pictures and diagrams to reach low literacy service users.
- Conducting training in the local language and, where possible, using local people as trainers.
- Adopting culturally appropriate emblems to express gender equality goals to effectively reach all education groups.
- Establishing quotas for the minimum number of women farmer trainers and cooperative leaders.

2.4.4. Does the programme facilitate rural women's ability to represent their interests and voice their demands for RAS?

Social norms in the Jimma region of Ethiopia discourage women from voicing their demands and expressing their opinions in mixed-sex public settings. This created a challenge for the CI to strengthen women's abilities to advocate for their interests. One strategy the CI used to give women leadership experience, build up their confidence and change perceptions about women's abilities was to promote women in leadership positions by establishing quotas for female FTs and cooperatives' leaders. The project also promoted women as FFG leaders by requiring that each group select a woman as either the 'focal farmer' or 'deputy focal farmer'.

Within FFGs, the staff encouraged women to express their needs for services and information. For example, training on infant feeding was requested by women. Feedback was solicited from all participants at the end of each training session and during home visits. The latter gave women the chance to ask questions and make their opinions known in a more private setting. The project did not put in place any specific initiative to organize women to represent their interests and voice their demand for RAS, and staff noted that sociocultural factors continue to limit women's ability to organize themselves.

Good practices

- Providing opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in trainings, cooperatives and field farmer groups by setting quotas for women.
- Soliciting feedback from both women and men after each training session.
- Seeking feedback from women during home follow-up visits and encouraging them to ask questions or seek advice.

2.4.5. Are RAS programmes designed and delivered in a way so that rural women can effectively participate and benefit, including: (i) the approach used; (ii) the type of content provided; and (iii) the technology introduced?

Both male and female groups expressed appreciation of the multiple approaches CI used to provide information and technologies. Women and men worked together in the demonstration plots to implement the techniques they learned, build confidence in their farming abilities and become more comfortable in mixed-sex groups. The focus on hands-on learning in demonstration plots allowed women to learn and participate

even if they were not yet comfortable speaking up in group settings. Surveyed women farmers mentioned their preference for demonstrations and posters, noting that these methods were easy to follow and understand. Attempts by the project to use radio and SMS texting as a means to provide information to farmers were stopped when it was realized that high levels of illiteracy, women's limited access to mobile phones and lack of time to listen to radio made these delivery methods ineffective.

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Farmers' appreciation for technical topics covered in the Farm College coincided to a large extent with the gender division of labour in coffee production and gender disparities in literacy (e.g. men, but not women, appreciated bookkeeping training). Both men and women expressed strong appreciation for training on stumping and pruning, desuckering and handling, compost making and application, and disease and pest control. Men valued training on weeding, erosion and shade tree management more, whereas women appreciated training on mulching and harvesting. The financial management training module was less appreciated because farmers found the topic difficult to understand. Women interviewed for the case study felt that they benefited from the new technologies as many of these were related to the tasks for which they were responsible. For example, women noted that since they had learned to pick only red/mature cherries, their work load had been significantly reduced. On the other hand, some practices such as composting and pruning, increased the workloads of both men and women.

Participants of the GRAST validation in Ethiopia.
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Instead of training women only on female tasks in single sex groups, the CI provided the same training to both men and women in mixed groups. Having mixed groups was intended to show men that women were capable, competent farmers and also challenge and change cultural perceptions about the appropriateness of women speaking in mixed sex groups. One unexpected result of this approach was that women became the main adopters of stumping, traditionally a male task because of the hard, physical labour involved. Women liked this practice because it shortens the height of the trees, making harvesting easier, and increases the production of cherries.

The CI also has a separate, but related, stream of work with coffee cooperatives. TechnoServe staff directly train cooperative members and leaders in good practices in business management, coffee postharvest, and coffee processing through group discussions, hands-on activities, lectures and exposure visits to successful cooperatives. Some of this training is tailored to specific roles: for example, cooperative accountants learn how to use a simple text message-based reporting system to track farmers' coffee deliveries and monitor the cooperative's funds.

Interviewed staff noted that because the previous curriculum used in the Farm College was developed earlier by TechnoServe experts at regional level, with input provided by country-based advisors and field staff, it paid little attention to the specific training needs of Ethiopian women. The CI project corrected this by considering the specific interests of women FFG members, asking them to identify topics they wanted training on. Women requested training on infant feeding and nutrition and this topic was added to the curriculum targeting both men and women.

Good practices

- Providing demand-based training so that they are related to the tasks for which women are responsible.
- Providing, at the same time, training also to mixed-sex groups and the same training and services to both men and women regardless of the gender division of labour to change both men's and women's perceptions about women's abilities and roles, and foster a more equitable distribution of responsibilities and changes in discriminatory gender roles.
- Soliciting and responding to requests for new training topics or interventions, especially from women.
- Using hands-on, experiential methods (e.g. demonstrations) so women can participate, build up their confidence in their farming abilities and learn, even if they are not comfortable speaking up in mixed-sex groups.

2.4.6. Does the organizational culture, including staffing and other human resource policies, enable women to become and effectively function as RAS agents or managers?

TechnoServe's organizational culture and policies put a strong emphasis on gender equality as seen in the organization's efforts to integrate gender into its programmes by collecting sex-disaggregated data, carrying out gender analysis, ensuring that the design and implementation of activities are gender sensitive, and learning from intended and unintended programmatic impacts on women and men. The CI sought to have the gender composition of field staff match the desired gender composition of training groups (30 percent) based on the assumption that hiring women staff makes training more accessible to women, and shows men and women that women can be experts in coffee growing tasks traditionally carried out by men (e.g applying pesticides and pruning trees). At the time of the study, women made up 30 percent of FTs and 29 percent of senior advisors.

To identify and recruit women FTs, CI made efforts to ensure that job notices were easily accessible to women by posting them in locations frequented by women (e.g. churches, community centres, market areas and shops), and distributing them through channels that specifically reach women (e.g. women's groups, school associations and agricultural cooperatives). Nevertheless, the organization found it challenging to recruit women staff at all levels because of the difficulties women face with juggling their productive and reproductive roles, long work days, sociocultural constraints and low salaries. TechnoServe used formal interviews as well as practice training sessions as part of the process of interviewing job applicants, based on the observation that women perform better during practice training as compared to formal interviews. Selected women FTs were given extra coaching and support to help build their confidence in managing mixed-sex groups.

TechnoServe had policies in place to promote gender sensitivity, including an organizational gender policy, an anti-harassment policy, offering maternity and paternity leave, and providing childcare for female staff members during training courses. While both male and female FTs were often assigned to their own communities, the project made efforts to assign female FTs to locations near a main road to ease transportation challenges. Female CI staff noted, however, that gender-specific challenges, notably childcare, family responsibilities and lack of adequate transportation, made it difficult for them to do their jobs and often discouraged women from working for the project.

Good practices

- Establishing a minimum quota for the number of female staff at various levels.
- Making specific efforts to recruit female trainers (e.g. posting job notices in locations frequented by women and distributing them through channels that specifically reach women) and adopting a selection process that mitigates some of the gender-specific challenges women face.
- Providing extra coaching for selected women RAS FTs to help build up their confidence.
- Ensuring that the organization has gender equality policies in place, including policies on maternity/paternity leave, childcare provision and against harassment.
- Putting in place mechanisms/practices to address the specific barriers women advisors face in adequately carrying out their work (e.g. to ease transportation challenges, provide childcare to staff during staff trainings).

2.4.7. Are there institutional mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of gender-responsive RAS and hold staff accountable?

Overall, TechnoServe had institutional mechanisms in place to promote gender-responsive RAS through the CI. The project employed a full-time gender specialist who worked with the trainers and cooperatives to ensure that they were providing gender-responsive services. However, according to the gender specialist, the resources for his activities were often inadequate considering that although the perspective of gender equality was mainstreamed throughout the budget; no specific funds were earmarked for targeted activities.

All TechnoServe and CI staff, FTs and cooperative leaders received gender training, and the organization had a gender policy and clear expectation that services would be provided to women as well as men. The project established clear targets for the minimum number of women who should be involved in all activities and staff positions, collected sex-disaggregated data on registration, attendance, technology adoption and impact, and other monitoring and evaluation indicators. Importantly, FTs were evaluated on the basis of women's participation in training sessions and farmers' adoption of agronomic practices; although staff pointed out that there was no set target for adoption rates. Despite the pressure for high female participation in training sessions, the CI had no budget to finance specific activities to increase women's participation. Advisors and FTs had to use their own initiative and efforts by, for example, visiting homes to talk to husbands and using influential women farmers to convince other women to join the FFG trainings to reach their targets.

Good practices

- Carrying out a detailed gender analysis at the project planning and design stage, and using the findings to design key project interventions.
- Engaging a full-time gender expert to facilitate the adoption of a gender perspective.
- Providing gender training to all staff, farmer trainers and cooperative members.
- Providing gender training directly to service users and partner organizations at all levels.
- Providing a separate budget for gender equality targeted interventions even if gender perspective is mainstreamed in project activities.
- Establishing clear targets for the minimum number of women who should be involved in all activities and staff positions.
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data on registration, attendance, technology adoption and impact, and other monitoring and evaluation indicators.

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2.5. Conclusions

The Coffee Initiative showcased a number of effective gender sensitive and responsive approaches to technical training on coffee and maize production and the development of coffee cooperatives. Based on TechnoServe's gender policy, the project sought to ensure that gender equality constituted an integral part of its programmes. It did so by working with individual men and women within coffee growing households, encouraging husbands and wives to register independently as members of cooperatives, establishing quotas for female participation in training and for project staff and cooperative leaders, and using RAS methods that cater to women's needs. At the institutional level, TechnoServe put in place mechanisms to promote gender-responsive RAS, notably by training all staff on gender issues, hiring a gender specialist for the project, evaluating farmer training on the basis of women's participation in training sessions and their adoption of introduced practices, and making efforts to recruit and retain female staff. In all, the CI had a thoughtful and holistic approach to promoting gender-balanced participation in the project which resulted in a positive impact.

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Participants of the GRAST validation group interview in India.

3. Striving to develop women's identity as farmers: a case study of PRADAN, India

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3.1. Policy context

The Indian Constitution gives a powerful mandate for promoting gender equality and the rights of women, and makes specific provisions for affirmative action.[5] India has also signed a number of international legally-binding conventions related to the empowerment of women and girls, and gender equality, including the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW – ratified in 1993) and other international policy frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action. India also has a national policy framework which recognizes and promotes the rights of women, as well as many programmes aimed at women's empowerment and advancing gender equality, and there is clear official recognition of women's roles in agriculture (see Box 2).

Despite of these promising strategies, policy has not translated into dramatic changes in rural women's lives and opportunities. Although intentions have been good, there appears to be a duplication of efforts, and major gender inequalities persist in spite of decades of effort to redress them. Gender-based discrimination, social exclusion and violence against women remain a major problem in India, and women are often unable to take advantage of their legal rights because of deeply entrenched discriminatory social norms (CRISP, 2016.) The government recognizes that "gender discrimination, which is embedded in [the] social fabric, continues in most spheres such as access to education and to social and economic opportunities" (Government of India, 2016). In 2015, the country ranked 125th on the gender inequality index out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2016).

[5] Affirmative action refers to actions aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men that may, in the short term, favour women. These measures (legislative, executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies and practices) serve a specific goal, have a temporary nature, and must be discontinued when their desired results have been achieved and sustained for a period of time.

BOX 2 **Major policy and programmatic milestones aimed at empowering women and promoting gender equality in India**

- **1985** Ministry of Women and Child Development established, with responsibility for formulating women's empowerment policies, legislation and programmes.
- **1992** National Commission for Women established, with a mandate to protect and promote the interests of women by reviewing proposed legislation, suggesting amendments to existing laws, investigating complaints about violations of women's rights, and taking actions to restore women's rights. The commission is also responsible for conducting research, holding workshops, and running legal awareness- raising programmes.
- **1993** The Indian Constitution was amended to reserve seats for women in local government.
- **2005** The Ministry of Finance gave a mandate to all ministries to establish a Gender Budgeting Cell, and ministries and departments were asked to submit annual reports and performance budgets highlighting budgetary allocations for women.[a]
- **2007** The National Policy for Farmers gave high priority to 'Recognition and mainstreaming of women's role in agriculture', and highlighted the incorporation of 'gender issues' into the agricultural development agenda. It also emphasized the importance of making agricultural education gender-sensitive.
- **2010** The National Mission for Empowerment of Women was created to coordinate the various government programmes and departments working on gender issues.
- **2012** The High Level Committee on the Status of Women was set up to undertake a comprehensive study on the status of women and develop appropriate policy interventions.
- **2013** The Criminal Law Amendment Act included comprehensive amendments to laws to cover the varied nature of sexual offences committed against women.

Source: Author's own elaboration
Note: [a] For more information, visit: http://wcd.nic.in/schemes/gender-budgeting-scheme

3.1.1 Gender, agriculture and rural advisory services in India

In India, women play a pivotal role in agriculture, from planting to harvesting to postharvest operations. They act as labourers, farmers and co-farmers in crop production, are involved in small-scale livestock production and the collection of non-timber forest products.

Although they participate in all activities related to agriculture, women often lack the resources required to transform subsistence-level activities into those that would allow them to earn enough to overcome poverty. The resource that women often lack includes land, information, and access to markets, finance and technologies, knowledge and/or skills as well as decent work. Women are usually the first to be marginalized when agriculture is mechanized and modernized. Rural women are frequently less educated and empowered than rural men, their voices are usually not heard, and they tend to have restricted mobility. Consequently, they cannot articulate their needs, requirements and aspirations for better livelihoods. Scheduled caste, tribal and rural women are the most disadvantaged. Their citizenship is often not recognized and their individual entitlements are denied because their identity is subsumed in the household unit.

The common approach used by development organizations to provide rural advisory and other services to women in India is through self-help groups (SHGs). Once established, SHGs are expected to run on their own. SHG members meet on a regular basis (weekly to monthly) to save an agreed amount of money (half a US dollar to two US dollars per person) which is then available to group members as a loan. However, several studies point out that SHGs are not a silver bullet for reaching and engaging women: if SHGs are not based on the interests or needs of local women, they may not be an effective method of RAS delivery.

Although relevant programmes and projects still need to better take into consideration the needs and priorities of different categories of women by ensuring that they are involved in the policy consultation process, women's roles in agriculture are clearly acknowledged in national policy in India. Since 1985, when women were specifically recognized in the 7th Five-Year Plan, the Government of India has implemented various programmes focused on women in agriculture (Box 3). Many NGOs also have activities and programmes that focus on gender in agriculture, or are aimed specifically at advancing the rights and promoting the opportunities of rural women.

BOX 3 **Major policies, programmes and institutions aimed at empowering rural women and enhancing gender equality in agriculture**

- **1993** Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) was established by the Government of India as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Women and Child Development to provide credit and support income-generating activities, skills development, and housing of poor, asset-less and marginalized women.
- **1996** A National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture was established by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and upgraded to Directorate of Research on Women in Agriculture in 2008. They carry out strategic and applied research on various gender-related issues in agriculture and allied sectors to create a repository of gender-specific data and documentation, technology testing, and refinement and gender-sensitive extension approaches.
- **2007** The National Policy for Farmers gave high priority to recognizing and mainstreaming women's role in agriculture and highlighted the need to incorporate gender issues in the agricultural development agenda.
- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, is promoting mainstreaming of gender concerns in agriculture through the incorporation of 'pro-women initiatives' in various schemes/programmes/missions and the earmarking of at least 30 percent of benefits and resources for women under all such beneficiary-oriented interventions.
- **2005** The National Gender Resource Centre in Agriculture (NGRCA) was set up in the DAC&FW, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. The Centre is located in Directorate of Extension, Krishi Vistar Sadan. It is tasked to coordinate all gender-related activities and issues in agriculture and allied sectors, within and outside the DAC&WF; integrate gender dimension in agriculture policies and programmes; undertake and support training, research and advocacy to mainstream gender issues in agriculture and natural resource management, so as to ensure that the policies and programmes in agriculture are fully engendered and reflect the national commitment to the empowerment of women.[a] The NGRCA is also the unit where a Gender Budgeting Cell was set up to look into the budgetary commitments of various schemes of the DAC&FW, and which sought to bring gender concerns to centre stage in all aspects of public expenditure and policy, and ensure that a proportionate flow of the public expenditure would benefit women farmers. Gender Coordinators in various divisions have been sensitized about the concept of gender budgeting. Formats of all the beneficiary-oriented schemes of the ministry have been revised to generate sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive information.
- **2011** The Deendayal Antodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) scheme,[b] and its subcomponent focusing on empowering women in agriculture, the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), were launched.[c] The MKSP focuses on strengthening community institutions of poor women farmers and leveraging their strength to promote sustainable agriculture.

Source: Author's own elaboration
Notes:
[a] For more information, visit: http://krishivistar.gov.in/Ngrca.aspx
[b] For more information, visit: http://aajeevika.gov.in/
[c] For more information, see: http://mksp.gov.in/ and http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/library/poverty/mahila-kisan-sashaktikaran-yojana.html

3.2. The socioeconomic context of the study area

The case study was conducted in the state of Madhya Pradesh, in central India. In 2011, Madhya Pradesh had a population of nearly 73 million, most of whom living in rural areas (Census of India, 2011). In terms of both poverty and gender inequality, the state fares worse than India as a whole. About 32 percent of its population lives in poverty, compared to the national average of 22 percent (Census of India, 2011). Male literacy stands at 79 percent while female literacy is at 59 percent (Census of India, 2011). Madhya Pradesh is India's state with the largest proportion of people who belong to Scheduled Tribes – more than 20 percent of its population (Census of India, 2011); these groups often face discrimination from the wider society.

The study was carried out in five blocks in three districts: Bhaonra Block in Hoshangabad District, Betul and Shahpur Blocks in Betul District, and Narayanganj and Mohgaon Blocks in Mandla District. These blocks are predominantly tribal, with the majority of inhabitants belonging to the Gond tribe. The terrain is hilly, and there are limited facilities for irrigation. Collecting non-timber forest products is the primary livelihood activity of tribal people in this area. Most households also engage in low-input subsistence farming, mainly producing food grains.

Most households have access to a variety of land resources (lowlands/uplands/forest land, land in the common areas of streams, etc.) and grow a range of crops with little to no irrigation. People live in small villages, and most community members have limited literacy and few employable skills. The situation is worst for women as they do not have access to land, resources and income. Moreover, women are frequently deprived of their self-confidence, status and respect in their villages (PRADAN, 2016). Mandla District is still affected by malaria, diarrhea and tuberculosis, and suffers from a high maternal mortality rate and malnutrition (PRADAN, 2016). As a result of the lack of livelihood opportunities and poor living conditions, many youth migrate seasonally from Mandla District to cities to engage in unskilled labour.

3.3. PRADAN

PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action), a local NGO established in 1983, seeks "to enable the most marginalized people, especially rural women, to earn a decent living and take charge of their own lives".[6] In 2016, the organization employed 611 people and worked with over 580 000 families, reaching approximately 3 million individuals in 5 766 villages across seven of the poorest states in India.[7] A majority of the beneficiary families belong to the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (STs and SCs), which are among the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups in India. Rural women are PRADAN's target clientele, as they are the most marginalized members of these groups.

PRADAN reaches rural women through promoting, supporting and, if necessary, reviving SHGs. SHGs are made up of women from similar socioeconomic situations, and they help them to save money and access credit. In some areas, PRADAN helps the SHGs to federate so they can become producers' companies, producer organizations, cooperatives or mutually-aided trusts. Building, nurturing and strengthening these community-based organizations is one of the strategies used by PRADAN to promote

6 Pradan website: http://www.pradan.net/?option=com_content&task=view&id=211&Itemid=132

7 Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.

sustainability in the developmental processes they initiate. PRADAN builds the capacities of SHGs and their leaders through trainings, and also links them to different agencies and service providers such as banks, government departments and private enterprises so they can access a wider range of resources.

From the beginning, PRADAN's distinctive strategy has been to deploy high-quality human resources for grassroots work. Through a stringent selection process, PRADAN recruits a diverse group of university graduates who are driven by a strong motivation to work with the rural poor. Those selected then go through the one-year-long Development Apprenticeship (DAship) programme, where they gain hands-on experience, mentorship and extensive training. Throughout this process, the apprentices are asked to reflect on their own motivation and aspirations, with the end result that those who ultimately stay at PRADAN are those who are truly dedicated to its work and mission.

PRADAN's activities in Madhya Pradesh include natural resource management (improved agriculture, horticulture, land and water management activities), livestock production (goat rearing) and enterprise activities (poultry, sericulture, mushrooms, vermicomposting, mulberry sericulture and small business development). Mandla and Betul-Hoshangabad districts were selected for the case studies because PRADAN is implementing a project titled, "Enhancing Farm Livelihoods of Women SHGs in Mahakaushal Region of Madhya Pradesh", under the government scheme Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) in Mandla, and because of the diversity of livelihood activities that have been implemented.

The fieldwork encompassed interactions with male and female PRADAN staff at various levels, including the National Manager in Delhi, cluster-level functionaries and advisers, and state-level integrators or managers. On the client side, the research team interviewed approximately 200 women (80-100 women in each location) in ten villages and a total of 23 PRADAN staff and trainees.

3.4. Good practices for promoting gender equality through RAS at individual and organizational levels

3.4.1. Are rural women included in the programme as legitimate clients?

PRADAN works almost exclusively with women. Their strategy document clarifies that they work through women's SHGs made up of 10–20 women, and explains that: "PRADAN focuses on women because they are half the population and yet remain the most disadvantaged among the poor". Interviewed staff reiterated that PRADAN works with women because they believe that working with the most marginalized people in society (in this case, women) ensures that the benefits reach everyone. In addition, staff believe that women are uniquely able to promote change both within the household and in the public domain.

Notably, for the first five to six years of PRADAN's existence, the organization worked with mixed-sex groups. However, they found that men tended to dominate the discussion and decision-making, so they shifted to working with women only in the late 1980s. Men are welcome to attend agricultural trainings if they are interested, but PRADAN does not make specific efforts to solicit men's participation.

When entering a new community, the PRADAN staff members who will be working in that area invest as much time as may be needed to get to know the community and

build trust. In many cases, husbands have control over whether or not their wives can participate in the SHGs and PRADAN activities. By getting to know both the men and women in a community, PRADAN is able to show both women and men that the programme is legitimate and beneficial, as well as build personal connections with people in the community. This enables PRADAN to reach women as clients of RAS.

Although all of PRADAN's clients are rural women, staff members noted that 'rural women' are a very diverse group, and some women are easier to reach than others. SHGs are often only open to married women, as single women leave the village when they marry. In addition, there are large power differentials between women in households, with mothers-in-law having more power, freedom and mobility than daughters-in-law, especially youngest or new daughters-in-law. PRADAN is aware of these power dynamics and makes efforts to ensure that the voices of women of all ages are heard.

3. Striving to develop women's identity as farmers: a case study of PRADAN, India

PRADAN recognizes women as farmers in their own right and helps them to develop their identity as farmers. According to a PRADAN staff member interviewed, it is important that women begin to see themselves as farmers as this can contribute to their involvement in farm decision-making.

BOX 4 **Striving to develop women's identity as farmers**

The farmers' school model is based on a learning cycle that combines technical information with practical demonstration to help women make agricultural plans. As part of the school's methodology, a demonstration plot is selected where lessons are conducted. The purpose of the school is not only to train women in new and better agricultural practices, but also to establish the identity of the individual woman as a 'farmer' for herself, within the family as well as in the community. The practice of displaying the names of women on the school blackboard as a form of validation is an innovative way to gain approval from their families and community.

A total of 664 women have been trained as *Chasi Sathis* (women livelihood friends) as a part of a farmers' school initiative; these, in turn, have helped other 3400 women farmers to make plans related to their agricultural practices.

Source: CRISP. 2016. *Final Report on the validation of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool, Case study on PRADAN. India; submitted in the framework of the Letter of Agreement between FAO and CRISP.* Madhya Pradesh, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy. Internal document.

Members of the sericulture cooperative interviewed during GRAST validation in India.
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Good practices

- Investing as much time as needed to get to know the community and build trust, at the start of community activities.
- Recognizing women as farmers in their own right.
- Supporting women to develop their identity as farmers.
- Introducing ways to change the community's perception of women's role and generating their approval of women as also farmers and not just housewives.
- Targeting women specifically, but recognizing the diversity within women's groups.
- Even if the programme focuses on women, involving and engaging men at some level to obtain their buy-in, trust and support, and showing both men and women that the programme is legitimate and beneficial for the whole family/household.

3.4.2. How are the time and mobility constraints of rural women addressed?

PRADAN staff, including the community resource persons, work closely with a limited number of communities, and are therefore very much aware of their clients' daily and seasonal schedules and able to schedule training activities and meetings based on clients' availability. Often, women prefer to take part in meetings or other activities in the evening. For example, educational videos are often shown in the evenings, after 9 pm, because this is when women tend to have finished their household and agricultural activities and can gather together, most often together with their whole families. SHG meetings are self-scheduled by the groups in a location they prefer, and PRADAN staff typically attend one meeting a month to check in.

SHG meetings are held in the community, often at a member's house. Many agricultural trainings are held in the community as well. For these trainings, mobility is not an issue, as women can easily walk to the location from their homes. PRADAN also holds exposure visits and multi-day, off-site trainings. Exposure visits are generally offered multiple times to enable those who are not available for one visit to have the chance to attend another. Transportation to off-site training may or may not be provided by PRADAN. In trainings where there is a clear economic benefit to the participants, PRADAN feels that participants should value the training enough to invest in attending. In these cases, participants are expected to cover and organize their own transportation. Women interviewed felt that the benefits provided by the trainings made the traveling worthwhile. PRADAN does provide transportation for trainings that do not have a direct economic benefit to attendees (i.e. the gender and leadership training).

Women are allowed to bring their children to trainings. For longer off-site trainings, women generally arrange for care of older children with their husbands, in-laws, or other relatives. If they feel that it is necessary, husbands may accompany wives to exposure visits initially. Interested men can also come to the in-community agricultural trainings. In the communities interviewed, both men and women found PRADAN's trainings valuable, and husbands generally supported their wives in attending the off-site trainings, as they viewed the trainings as beneficial for the entire family. However, this is clearly something that has developed over time, as communities grew to trust PRADAN and see the value of the trainings. When women described the process that had caused this to come about, the key elements identified were the trust and relationship-building that PRADAN staff achieves in the communities where they work, and the power of the women's self-help groups. With the support of the groups, women felt more confident

in challenging norms and standing up to their husbands if they faced resistance in attending trainings.

PRADAN does not have written policies instructing staff members to consider women's time and mobility constraints. However, their staff selection process is aimed at hiring people who are strongly committed to PRADAN's mission and are passionate about working with the communities. As a result, they hire staff who, like all staff members interviewed in these case studies, consider it obvious that trainings should be scheduled at the convenience of the clients.

Women interviewed in the selected communities feel that their overall mobility has increased as a result of the opportunity to attend PRADAN trainings and exposure visits outside of their communities. For some, PRADAN provided their first opportunity to travel away from their community, and it helped both to build up their confidence as well as show their husbands that this was a possibility. Today, SHG members interviewed in the case studies leave their villages to attend SHG federation and producers' organization meetings, go to market and attend trainings.

3. Striving to develop women's identity as farmers: a case study of PRADAN, India

Good practices

- Recruiting and grooming dedicated staff who understand the need to, and are willing to, accommodate women's schedules.
- Ensuring staff members have detailed knowledge and awareness of women's daily and seasonal schedules by assigning them to a small number of communities and/or having them live in the communities.
- Offering agricultural trainings in the same community where women live.
- Offering off-site exposure visits multiple times, so those who are not free for one may be able to attend another.
- Allowing women to bring children to training sessions and other activities.
- Providing transportation to trainings that do not have a direct economic benefit.

Members of the sericulture cooperative interviewed during GRAST validation in India.
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3.4.3. How are rural women's education and literacy constraints addressed?

PRADAN works in communities where many women are illiterate, and trainings are conducted with this in mind. As staff work closely with the communities, they are aware of local literacy levels. Trainings are hands-on/experiential, and often use a demonstration plot hosted by an interested SHG member. PRADAN also uses visual materials and exposure visits in order to show new practices, videos and community theatre (e.g. Theatre of the Oppressed). Female clients interviewed said their literacy levels were not a barrier to participating in and understanding trainings.

Language was also not seen as a barrier by clients. Many PRADAN staff working in these areas have learned the Gond tribal language by working with the communities. At the same time, many of the interviewed women said that their confidence in speaking the official national language, Hindi, increased as a result of working with PRADAN staff. Women's knowledge of Hindi becomes very helpful when they go to the market and need to interact with other, non-tribal people, or when they need to interact with local government representatives.

In addition to PRADAN staff members, local people are hired as 'farmer friends' to provide advice. They serve as resource persons in the community and conduct agricultural trainings. As the farmer friends (also called 'livelihood friends'[8]) and other community resource persons are from the communities, they speak and can deliver trainings in the tribal language.

The SHGs do not require literacy from all members, but there must be someone (either a member or hired) who is able to keep the accounts. In groups where no one is literate, members hire a local person to serve as the account keeper. In groups with literate members, one of the women in the SHG fills this role. In many SHGs, women work on signing their names, and those who need to practice will be given a task that requires them to sign every week.

PRADAN partners with an educational NGO in communities where women have asked for literacy and other educational trainings. Staff also discuss the importance of educating both daughters and sons in all of the communities where they work. Several women interviewed spoke about how their daughters were now attending high school.

PRADAN has specific policy directing staff to tailor training materials to the education and literacy levels of the women with whom they work. PRADAN staff members are dedicated to working with the communities, and use materials that they feel will be most effective for their clients. The head office provides guidance and resources for trainings, but does not mandate how trainings should be conducted.

[8] Ajeevika Mitra: Livelihood friend. These were (earlier/in some places still are) on the payrolls of PRADAN. Each livelihood friend caters to a cluster of villages. Some of these have also become agripreneurs and are selling agricultural inputs to the farmers and providing them with free advice.

Good practices

- Having in place an organizational policy directing staff to tailor training materials to the educational and literacy levels of the farmers, especially women.
- Using approaches and methods that do not require literacy, such as visual materials, videos, community theatre, demonstration plots and exposure visits to show new practices.
- Partnering with and connecting service users to other organizations that focus on education/literacy and thus providing services outside of the mission of the RAS organization concerned.
- Using local resource people to provide trainings delivered in the local language, and who are also aware of the local literacy level.
- Staff speaking the local/tribal language.
- Helping women practice the national official language to enable them to interact with other, non-tribal people, for example, at the market and with local government representatives.
- Raising awareness of the importance of educating both daughters and sons in the communities where the RAS organization works.

3.4.4. Does the programme facilitate rural women's ability to represent their interests and voice their demands for RAS?

Enabling women to represent their interests and voice their demands is one of PRADAN's major goals, and women clients interviewed confirmed that their ability to advocate for their own interests has increased as a result of PRADAN's work.

PRADAN has found that women are more powerful and better able to voice their interests and demand for RAS, among other services, when they are part of a group. When women build their self-confidence and self-esteem in all-female groups, they are more successful at making their voices heard in also mixed-sex groups. This was confirmed by the women interviewed. PRADAN helps women organize into SHGs as part of their approach to mobilize poor communities and improve their livelihoods. PRADAN engages with more than 589 000 women organized into nearly 46 500 SHGs. The SHGs function as women's self-reliant collectives and facilitate women's collective bargaining to claim their rights and entitlements. SHGs go through different stages of evolution: mutual help, financial intermediation, livelihood planning and social empowerment. The SHGs have helped many women to see that they were not alone in facing challenges, and that they have a network of support. This made them feel less isolated and more willing to take action to change their lives.

PRADAN also supports setting up POs, village-level councils and federations of SHGs, as an associative tier of self-help groups. These federations give strength to their members to raise their voices against exploitation and violence. Other women have taken on leadership roles in their SHGs, the SHG federation, or the village-level council. Many women attributed the positive changes in their access to leadership positions to both the support of PRADAN and the sense of power they came to feel from being part of a group.

PRADAN staff also work to link SHGs to local institutions (local government, banks and other service providers) so that women can access entitlements (social transfers, pensions and public work programmes) and begin playing a larger role in public life. Women's groups spoke of attending local government meetings for the first time, standing up to men who said that they should not be at the meetings, approaching government offices to get services and confronting abusive husbands.

Developing women's identity as farmers has been an important part of PRADAN's work in facilitating women's ability to represent their interests. According to PRADAN's experience, when women start considering themselves as farmers they also begin playing a greater role in decision-making about farming and other livelihood issues, and gain greater control over their income.

As an organization, PRADAN is very self-reflective, and its staff have challenged themselves and introduced new approaches as part of their efforts to be more effective in enabling women to represent their interests and voice their demands. They realized that working solely on women's economic empowerment was increasing family incomes, but was not changing intra-household power relationships nor increasing women's decision-making power.

This is why PRADAN now also helps women advocate for their own interests through a new gender and leadership training. This training was piloted through a partnership with UN Women and Jagori, an Indian feminist organization,[9] starting in 2010, and is now a regular part of PRADAN's programming. The training is a four-day-long, off-site training which aims to challenge women to reflect on their roles in society and on gender norms. This involves hands-on activities, such as the 'weighing balance' exercise, where women are asked to pile stones representing the work they do on one side of the scale, and the work men do on the other side. This provides a clear, visual example that, in spite of popular perceptions, women actually have heavier workloads than men. Another exercise, the 'Kamal-Kamali exercise', asks a woman to tie a string around herself for every time in her life she has faced a restriction because she is female. By the end, the women are literally tied up. These exercises are very challenging for many participants, as they call the dominant worldview of male supremacy and women's subordination into question, and some women can have very strong negative reactions. PRADAN staff members work with the women to discuss and reflect on what they are learning, how they feel about it and what they wish to do with what they have learned. Staff also provide encouragement for women who want to begin to challenge taboos at home (for example, challenging the idea that a menstruating woman will spoil food if she touches it).

"Helping women explore and practice roles beyond conventionally-defined boundaries is one of PRADAN's primary mandates. It is a long journey of increasing self-awareness and evolution that begins with acknowledging deeply held beliefs about one's self and progresses towards recognizing one's values and consequently asserting oneself as an equal decision-maker."

Source: PRADAN, 2016

PRADAN recognizes that changing social norms and gender relations is a slow and difficult process, and its staff therefore work with the women at the speed at which the women are comfortable. The primary goal is to first prompt women to start thinking and talking about these issues, as PRADAN recognizes that women also play a major role in enforcing gender roles and upholding taboos and traditions. Staff members make judgement calls about when a community may be ready for, or receptive to, gender trainings, and are careful about the risk of creating conflict or increasing domestic violence as a potential negative consequence of challenging negative social norms.

9 For more information, visit: http://www.jagori.org/.

Good practices

- Working with groups of women by helping them organize themselves and providing support to their functioning.
- Supporting and encouraging women's groups to participate in local government meetings and join or set up other organized groups in the community (producer organizations and federations of SHGs).
- Supporting developing and/or strengthening women's identity as farmers.
- Offering gender and leadership trainings. These trainings help women reflect on gender roles in their communities and how these roles impact their lives. They also give women the tools needed to begin challenging these roles.
- Identifying and mitigating potential risks of creating conflict or increasing domestic violence as a potential negative consequence of challenging social norms.
- Engaging in regular organizational self-reflection on how to improve the design and delivery of programmes so that they empower women.

3. Striving to develop women's identity as farmers: a case study of PRADAN, India

Members of the sericulture cooperative interviewed during GRAST validation in India.
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3.4.5. Are RAS programmes designed and delivered in a way so that rural women can effectively participate and benefit including: (i) the approach used; (ii) type of content provided; and (iii) the technology introduced?

PRADAN works with society's most disadvantaged – poor rural tribal women, who face multiple and multidimensional constraints in their lives. Therefore, in order to help them create their own solutions to live a life of dignity, PRADAN applies a transformational and holistic approach in its work. PRADAN recognizes that in order for these women to be able to benefit from agricultural knowledge and training, several social barriers need to be broken down first, including deconstructing gender stereotypes about men as superior and women as inferior citizens.

"Discrimination based on caste, class and gender restricts the poor and the marginalized people's access to economic opportunities and fundamental needs for basic living."

Source: (PRADAN, 2016)

A significant aspect of the process to bring change that PRADAN applies includes a focus on the "continually evolving self-identity, where women acknowledge and assert their role as farmers and citizens in their own right and identify areas of development for their own selves and their communities" (PRADAN, 2016). The gender training described in the previous section helps address women and men's unequal work burden, the restrictions and expectations placed on women, nutrition, domestic violence and taboos around menstruation.

BOX 5 **Going beyond gender responsiveness: the gender transformative approach of PRADAN**

Over time, PRADAN has realized that it is not enough to focus on income generation for families while women, who are equal stakeholders in the family, face violence or discrimination. It is important to see how its work puts women in charge of their lives. This shift is based on the belief that women are equal stakeholders in the development process. It calls for women to work together on a large scale as collectives and strive to bring about a cultural change in the patriarchal society. Mass rural poverty and the marginalization of women result from imbalanced interactions between and within the three broad constituents: people (individuals, groups and communities), institutions (social, political and economic) and resources (natural and financial). Thus, PRADAN's approach to livelihoods now focuses not only on creating and facilitating access to assets and income but also on reconfiguring the dynamics between people, institutions and resources, leading to a more equitable and just society.

Source: CRISP. 2016. *Final Report on the validation of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool, Case study on PRADAN. India; submitted in the framework of the Letter of Agreement between FAO and CRISP.* Madhya Pradesh, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy. Internal document.

To provide trainings on agricultural and other income-generating activities, PRADAN uses methods that enable them to reach their target groups and make sure that their audiences can effectively benefit. These methods include working through the SHGs and POs and providing training, capacity-building and handholding support to their members.

As mentioned in sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3, PRADAN uses methods that are successful in overcoming women's mobility, education and literacy constraints. Such methods include providing trainings through demonstration plots (hosted by a volunteer women of the SHG or the community resource person), exposure visits to other farmers, and other hands-on methods. An example of this method employed by PRADAN is to run a poultry rearing training in Madhya Pradesh where women 'learn by doing' as they raise chickens at the training centre.[10] PRADAN employs staff, community resource persons and livelihood friends, who speak the local tribal language and know the communities, and women's lives and schedules. These approaches work well for women because they are interactive, hands-on and do not require literacy. PRADAN also uses videos, some of which are produced in partnership with Digital Green,[11] and the awareness-raising method of the 'theatre of the oppressed'.

Based on a participatory and gender-sensitive context analysis, (including, for example, the availability of land, climatic conditions, soil type, irrigation facilities and labour), the

10 The training centre is located in the Kesla Poultry Samiti (KPS), which is a cooperative started by PRADAN in 1990s but now operates as an independent entity.

11 To learn more about Digital Green, visit: https://www.digitalgreen.org/.

local PRADAN team selects training topics and technology that they believe would be successful given the local agro-ecological, market and socioeconomic conditions. They then engage in 'concept seeding', where locally feasible options are introduced to the women through short videos, demonstrations, stories, or exposure visits followed by discussions. The women can then decide which topic interests them. The Village Level Committees also ask communities for feedback on what kind of information they need. As previously discussed, a large part of PRADAN's work with the communities is aimed at increasing women's abilities to express their demands, including their demand for specific RAS content and services.

With the support of their local 'farmer or livelihood friend', SHGs make livelihood plans for the year. This requires members to set concrete production goals and create strategies to achieve these goals. The farmer friend assists with the planning and helps ensure that the goals are reasonable. In the study areas, content covered included poultry production, mulberry sericulture, mushroom cultivation, vegetable production, winter maize cultivation and gender issues.

3. Striving to develop women's identity as farmers: a case study of PRADAN, India

PRADAN recognizes that poor women and their households depend on multiple sources to enhance their income and thus centres its support on different livelihood categories, namely: agriculture and horticulture, forest-based livelihoods, livestock rearing and microenterprises. Two of the most successful entrepreneurship activities that women in the visited communities were trained and supported in were broiler farming and sericulture. PRADAN provides residential training for women in broiler farming and enhances their capacity to set up broiler units on their farms. With guidance from the National Smallholder Poultry Development Trust, PRADAN also supports the grouping of women into cooperatives.

PRADAN trains women to engage in sericulture in contexts where climatic conditions are favourable and where irrigation facilities are available. They facilitate women's access to government support schemes for sericulture with the conditions that setting up the activities include the registration of the needed infrastructure in the women's name. Silkworm producer women are then supported by PRADAN to form cooperatives. The interviewed women reported that having their own income-generating activity meant that they no longer had to take up poorly paid wage labour. Furthermore, they were also freed from long commutes and the risks of being exposed to violence on the road.

Cocoon and sericulture nets of the sericulture cooperative visited during GRAST validation in India.
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Member of the sericulture cooperative interviewed during GRAST validation in India.
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PRADAN does not promote any technology that does not fit with the local conditions and in which women are not interested. Women are not pushed to adopt new practices and technologies; they are instead shown results and allowed to make their own choices. According to the women interviewed, when a new crop or technology is introduced, a few women will adopt it in a small section of their plots, and then others will decide whether or not to adopt it based on their observations of how well it works. Some of the simple, but effective, technologies and practices PRADAN has promoted in the interviewed communities include using a cycle weeder (women could not afford the power weeder), knapsack sprayers, bamboo for staking tomatoes, new and better quality seeds and locally adapted vegetables, grafting tomatoes and line planting with adequate spacing, These technologies and practices have not only increased returns on investment but also reduced women's physical drudgery, and contributed to increased nutritional security and diversified diets.

BOX 6

PRADAN undertakes reliable experimentation before implementing a RAS activity or technology in a new location. Such a phase is vital, so as to avoid massive failures, which the rural poor cannot afford. Based on people's choices, resources and capabilities, PRADAN pilots a livelihood innovation with a few families in order to master and adapt technology, identify training needs, develop training programmes and create a successful prototype before promoting it as a large-scale intervention.

Source: CRISP. 2016. *Final Report on the validation of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool, Case study on PRADAN. India; submitted in the framework of the Letter of Agreement between FAO and CRISP.* Madhya Pradesh, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy. Internal document.

Monitoring of the adoption of technology and good practices is an important aspect of PRADAN's work. Computer data collectors (CDCs) monitor the extent to which new information, technology and practices have been adopted by the women by visiting them in their fields. For example, CDCs collect information about how much seed was sown, pest and disease incidence, fertilizer use, etc. They ask if women are able to follow the best practices taught by PRADAN, how they were trained and by whom.

Another strength of PRADAN is their ability to provide bundled services required by women through partnering with other organizations. If clients are interested in learning about a topic that PRADAN does not offer, PRADAN connects them with an organization with the relevant expertise. For example, PRADAN partnered with the Digital Empowerment Foundation for the creation of Internet connection in villages and the setting up of Internet centres. In these centres, women can access online

education and public services. The staff of the centre also help illiterate women to find the information they need on the Internet. Similar services are offered through the partnership with Digital Green, which has established Community Information Centres to help youngsters, especially girls who dropped out of school, to learn computer skills. There are also partnerships with Gram Vikas development organization,[12] to facilitate women's access to hygienic sanitation facilities and safe drinking water, and with Landesa to help women realize their land rights.

3. Striving to develop women's identity as farmers: a case study of PRADAN, India

Good practices

- Providing support for breaking down social barriers and gender stereotypes as a precondition for women to be able to access economic opportunities.
- Supporting women to develop their self-identity and self-worth to help them acknowledge and assert their role as farmers and citizens in their own right.
- Carrying out participatory and gender-sensitive context analysis to select and propose technologies, new farming practices and other content reflecting local conditions and women's needs. Allowing women to choose and give feedback on proposed training topics, for example, through the method of concept seeding. Provide a mechanism for women to express their demand for specific topics through community meetings.
- Delivering trainings through the most appropriate channels, e.g. SHGs or producer organizations, and providing handholding until it is deemed necessary.
- In addition to agricultural trainings (crop production), offering other types of trainings to enable women to diversify their livelihoods, e.g. on livestock production, forest-based activities, sericulture and entrepreneurship in general.
- Supporting women in creating a yearly plan with concrete production goals and the strategies to achieve them.
- Using methods of RAS delivery that work for women: these include hands-on interactive trainings, learning by doing, videos, etc., that do not require literacy and are delivered to single-sex groups.[13]
- Bundling services by linking clients to other service providers to help women develop other capacities and realize their rights in other areas as well, e.g. gaining access to land and sanitation facilities.
- Monitoring the adoption of technology and new farming practices.

3.4.6. Does the organizational culture, including staffing and other human resource policies, enable women to become and effectively function as RAS agents or managers?

PRADAN believes that their internal policies and processes should reflect their goal of gender equality, and this is why they focus on fostering a gender-sensitive organizational culture. PRADAN believes that in their efforts to transform society, their own organizational culture should mirror the change they want to see take place in the world. They want both male and female staff to feel comfortable, valuable, and able to express their opinions and interests at work and in their personal lives. PRADAN also believes that a diverse staff creates a stronger organization, and that men and women can bring different kinds of efficiency and perspective to their work. PRADAN seeks to recruit and retain female staff members and, as an organization, they are proactive

[12] To learn more about Digital Green, visit: https://www.gramvikas.org/.

[13] Single-sex groups are not a universal 'best practice', as in some areas mixed-sex groups may be more effective. However, in PRADAN's experience where they work, single-sex groups were most effective.

and self-reflective about how to go about doing this. In 2016, 22 percent of staff and 33 percent of team leaders were women, and PRADAN has been working to improve on these numbers. PRADAN's board is half women and half men.

In addition to the federally mandated anti-harassment cell, PRADAN has a separate women's caucus that provides support to female staff. They also have many other policies and procedures in place to support female staff and address their specific needs (e.g. a policy on the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace). Staff is also trained so that they understand and apply these policies as required. For example, as per the requirement of 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, members of PRADAN's Internal Complaints Committee underwent a training to enhance their understanding and the skills required for carrying out this role (PRADAN, 2016).

There is a management team dedicated specifically to gender issues within the organization, and each local team carries out periodic gender audits. Staff can take maternity leave (six months) and paternity leave (15 days). Resources are available for local teams to provide childcare facilities and build or improve bathrooms or housing for female staff, if appropriate facilities do not exist. Female staff can plan their work accordingly during days of their menstrual period by, for example, working in the office and working less in the field. There are also flexible working arrangements available for parents of young children.

PRADAN also has policies in place to address the different conditions men and women may face when working in communities. A budget is available to cover the costs of women's transportation needs, for example, to upgrade train travel. Female staff can also hire cars for evening field visits if they wish to, while men use their motorcycles. Women can also request that a co-worker accompany them to the field if they are traveling far, in the evening, or otherwise feel uncomfortable. However, women are not required to use these special transportation options; it depends entirely on the individual's preferences. None of the male staff members interviewed felt that different transportation options for women were unfair or inappropriate – in fact, all were supportive of the practice. Among the female staff, there did not seem to be any stigma about using or not using the transportation options: some women interviewed used it, while others did not. Some women mentioned that they now rode motorcycles and found it empowering. Women riding motorcycles was a new idea in many of the communities, and had also generated some interest and discussions in the SHGs.

BOX 7 **PRADAN's strategy for female staff retention**

In 2014, PRADAN commissioned external researchers to study the factors that make it difficult for women to become and continue working as PRADAN staff, and how PRADAN could become a better workplace for women. PRADAN funded this study because women make up less than half of their staff, even though PRADAN is an organization that works nearly exclusively with women. While the fact that PRADAN has a large number of male programme staff who believe in gender equality and justice, and are working hard to change society, is an undeniably positive characteristic, PRADAN is nonetheless interested in recruiting and retaining more women.

From the study, PRADAN learned that family pressure is a major factor in women's decisions to join and remain at PRADAN. Parental fear about their daughters' safety while working in remote, challenging areas was an important issue affecting whether or not women who were offered employment at PRADAN decided to accept the offer. Increasing their recruitment efforts at all-female universities, PRADAN is investing in strategic interactions with women's families to help alleviate their safety concerns. Families of all the staff are invited to the PRADAN office to ask any questions they may have, and PRADAN staff members (both from human resources and the local teams) are available to visit families to respond to their queries. At times, PRADAN has also changed female staff members' placement locations if their families expressed concern about the initial location.

In terms of staff retention, PRADAN's research revealed that male staff generally leave the organization in order to advance their careers, while women usually leave because of family pressures, particularly after marriage. In order to change this, PRADAN has started to work with female staff on their negotiation skills. Although all PRADAN staff have a good understanding of gender equality, this does not always translate into the ability to negotiate in their own interests in the context of their personal lives. By working on women's negotiation skills, PRADAN hopes to empower female staff members to be able to make their own choices about their careers.

The study also led to the creation of the women's caucus to provide a place for women to discuss issues and challenges, and to find support. The women's caucus meets every six months, and also has a WhatsApp group for constant contact and support.

Source: CRISP. 2016. *Final Report on the validation of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool, Case study on PRADAN. India; submitted in the framework of the Letter of Agreement between FAO and CRISP.* Madhya Pradesh, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy. Internal document.

Good practices and recommendations

As an organization, embracing the principles of gender-sensitive organizational culture and diversity as preconditions for effective gender-responsive service design and delivery. Putting in place policies and mechanisms that are essential to foster a gender-sensitive organizational culture, for example:

- Introducing supportive policies and mechanisms to ensure their adequate implementation:
  - developing a gender policy and a policy on the prevention of sexual harassment;
  - requiring that staff are trained on the gender and the anti-harassment policy;
  - ensuring that members of the internal committees (e.g. on sexual harassment) are trained to be able to adequately fulfil their role;
  - carrying out periodic organizational gender audits; and
  - encouraging staff to actively discuss and reflect on organizational culture, and how to improve it.

- Putting in place concrete strategies to address the gender-specific needs of staff, which enable women in particular to do their job successfully:
  - setting up a women's support system (caucus) to provide a place for female staff to discuss issues and challenges, and to find support;
  - introducing parental leave and other work-life balance policies and practices, including a childcare facility; enabling women to plan their work accordingly during days of their menstruation period and introducing flexible working arrangements for staff with children;
  - providing a budget dedicated to helping female staff overcome the challenges they face when working in communities (e.g. allowing them to use more secure transportation, and investing in improved bathrooms and housing for women when needed); and
- having a dedicated management team dealing with issues of gender. Proactively seeking to understand what factors make it difficult for women to join and continue working with the organization and introduce strategies to overcome these difficulties:
  - commissioning an external assessment to understand the pros and cons women take into consideration when deciding to join and stay with the organization;,
  - carrying out targeted recruitment of women;
  - investing in strategic interactions with families of female staff to help alleviate their concern regarding their daughters' safety; and
  - enhancing female staff's negotiation skills to help them to be able to make their own choices about their careers.

3.4.7. Are there institutional mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of gender-responsive RAS and hold staff accountable?

PRADAN's work focuses on empowerment and social change, so it is difficult to mandate results or measure these using conventional indicators. The achievement of PRADAN's goals requires self-motivated and dedicated staff who can work with the communities with minimal supervision.

"We believe knowledge-driven professionals who have empathy for the lives of the marginalized are the catalyst in realizing our vision of a just and equitable society. They are central to our functioning."

Source: PRADAN, 2016

PRADAN invests in selecting and training people who believe in, and are motivated to work for women's and community empowerment, and thereby creating an atmosphere of mutual support and learning around fostering social change and promoting gender equality. PRADAN professionals are defined as catalysts of change, groomed by the organization and committed to its mission and values at all levels. PRADAN also believes in having fresh recruits to bring on board new enthusiasm and hence they recruit every year.

BOX 8 **The Development Apprenticeship (DAShip) programme of PRADAN**

The Development Apprenticeship is a formal system adopted by PRADAN for the selection, induction, mentoring and final placement as staff at PRADAN. It targets talented university graduates interested in community development work, and introduces them to the organization, its culture and ethos. Throughout the DAship, the apprentice explores village life, comes face to face with rural realities and learns how village families cope with various hardships. By the end of the DAship, the apprentices learn PRADAN's approach to development where rural women are seen as transformation drivers. They also develop skills to directly engage with women's collectives and understand the causes behind oppressive human conditions. They develop their competencies through perspective building, active experimentation and reflection. The apprentices are also asked to continually reflect on whether or not their personal goals match those of PRADAN, and if they feel the position is a good fit for them.

To select apprentices, PRADAN recruits at 70 campuses across India and advertises on their websites. In recent years, they have started recruiting more at all-women's campuses. Recruitment materials aim to help potential candidates understand PRADAN's approach and philosophy, as PRADAN believes that an informed choice is critical for an effective future engagement with the community. Hence, there is an emphasis on informing the interested candidates at the outset what working with PRADAN would involve and what challenges staff members are likely to face. Candidates must have a minimum of 16 years of formal education. The selection process involves a rigorous testing of candidates' social, intellectual and emotional maturity.

Once the DA is selected, she/he is inducted into a field team and undergoes a structured system of apprenticeship that involves foundation courses, gender training, a two-week village stay, a village-based research project and on-going mentorship. The DAship allows the DAs to see what being a PRADAN staff member is like: they observe their future colleagues' work and life, and are able to determine for themselves whether this is the life they too would want to have. After the first two months, PRADAN pays for all DAs to go back home for one week to see their friends, family and relatives and reflect on whether the work at PRADAN is a good fit for them. Those who do not feel that the work is a good fit are encouraged to quit the DAship. PRADAN makes it very clear that the most important characteristic of a successful staff member is to really want to be there: there is no shame in quitting if the DA does not feel that PRADAN is the right place for them. PRADAN believes that technical skills can be learned, but motivation cannot.

Those who decide to return to the DAship programme then enter the 'learning by doing' phase for the next eight to nine months. During this period they are mentored by senior staff members and receive additional training, as well as feedback from their team and community. They also work in the communities and conduct a study on a topic of interest for the village where they had stayed previously.

PRADAN receives about 3 500 applications for DAships each year. They offer approximately 350 people DA positions, around 110 accept, and 50 successfully complete the apprenticeship.

Source: CRISP. 2016. *Final Report on the validation of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool, Case study on PRADAN. India; submitted in the framework of the Letter of Agreement between FAO and CRISP.* Madhya Pradesh, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy. Internal document.

One of the major institutional mechanisms that supports PRADAN's recruitment of dedicated staff is PRADAN's Development Apprenticeship programme, a year-long programme for new staff. During the DAship, PRADAN puts major emphasis on self-reflection about whether the individual's aspirations and motivations match the mission and vision of PRADAN, including the empowerment of women and the creation of a just society. If a development apprentice (DA) decides that PRADAN is not a good fit, they are encouraged to pursue another career choice that better suits their goals and interests. As a result, the staff members who stay at PRADAN are those who really want to be there. They are dedicated, motivated and hold themselves accountable because they believe in what they are doing. As a result, minimal traditional supervision is required.

PRADAN does not have a traditional system of performance appraisal, but instead has an online 'System of Individual Reflection and Feedback', which provides staff with feedback on areas for improvement. The individual rates his/her own performance, and is in turn given feedback by team members and team leaders. This system is anonymous and intended to be constructive. PRADAN generally does not fire people, but uses the system to help an individual to determine if his/her aspirations match those of the organization. All of PRADAN's staff are required to show interest, initiative and adherence to basic organizational norms. PRADAN feels staff can learn whatever technical skills they need, but if someone does not have a sense of commitment and self-motivation, these are characteristics cannot be learned.

Self-reflection is one of the topmost priorities for PRADAN. PRADAN holds annual retreats, where all staff members gather to reflect and learn from each other, and plan the way forward. Staff can bring their small children with them and PRADAN covers the costs of childcare. This meeting has resulted in concrete programming changes, including complete reorientation and reorganization of PRADAN as an organization, based on staff members' ideas, such as switching from a focus on economic empowerment to a focus on identity and justice. PRADAN sub-teams also meet more regularly (leadership group, management unit, local teams, women's caucus, theme-based groups like those on nutrition, legal aid groups, etc.). PRADAN has also recently started producing an internal newsletter to share practice insights, with the goal of documenting and sharing tacit knowledge so that it becomes explicit.

Good practices

- Periodically recruiting new staff to bring in fresh ideas and enthusiasm.
- Investing in selecting and training staff who believe in and are motivated to support for women's and community empowerment, and in creating an atmosphere of mutual support and learning around fostering social change and promoting gender equality.
- Using a rigorous apprenticeship approach to identify and train dedicated, gender-sensitive staff.
- Organizing regular meetings for staff to meet as teams to reflect, share challenges and successes, and talk about how to improve their work.
- Adopting a self-assessment based performance evaluation system that asks staff members to think about their work. This helps staff to hold themselves accountable for fulfilling their mission.
- Publishing an internal newsletter to allow staff members to document and share lessons learned, approaches and practices that have been successful.

3.5. Conclusions

In addition to ensuring gender responsiveness in its programming, PRADAN designs and delivers RAS in a gender transformative way. They recognize that in order for women to be able to demand and benefit from RAS the social barriers and gender stereotypes need to be first broken down with the support of multi-pronged efforts over a longer period. While PRADAN's entire RAS programme is tailored to be accessible and responsive to women, given the constraints that women face locally, PRADAN does not only focus on addressing these constraints but also their underlying reasons. They aim to trigger cultural change, and change in social norms and attitudes as well as gender roles. Besides working to enable women to have access to resources, they put a great deal of emphasis on helping women develop their self-worth and come to identify as farmers. They do not intend to empower individual women, but their collectives, to attain a more sustainable result. They also strive to create more gender equitable dynamics, not only at household level but also at community level and inside institutions.

The case presented clearly shows one of PRADAN's main strengths is their understanding of the different challenges women face and their ability to provide integrated/bundled services, often by collaborating with others, and to address these challenges.

Other major strengths of PRADAN include the long timeframe they use when working with communities (ten years or more) and their ongoing programmatic self-reflection. By constantly reflecting on their work as an organization, PRADAN is able to adjust approaches that are not meeting their goals, scale up approaches that work well, and continually reaffirm their commitment to their mission.

PRADAN has few written policies about how staff should work in the communities. Instead, staff have the freedom to work in the way they find most effective. In general, FAO recommends that organizations have written policies both to provide guidance as well as to set expectations for staff members. However, in PRADAN's case, guidance and expectations are clearly set through their extensive training process. PRADAN invests substantially in both recruiting and training staff, and their approach adopted in the context of the Development Apprenticeship Programme ensures that they hire staff that are strongly committed to their mission and dedicated to their work. These staff members are then extensively trained, and there is a strong organizational expectation that all work will be driven by the interests and needs of the communities. As PRADAN works almost exclusively with women, this means that women's needs and interests drive PRADAN's rural advisory services.

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Participants of the GRAST validation group interview in Peru.

4. The power of farmer-to-farmer advisors: a case study of Haku Wiñay of Foncodes/ MIDIS in Peru

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4.1. Policy context

Peru provides a good example of formal commitment to gender equality. The Peruvian government has a strong track record of ratifying international agreements and conventions related to gender equality. Peru ratified CEDAW (in 1982) and it's Optional Protocol and the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Violence against Women (in 2001), the Beijing Platform for Action, and several International Labour Organization (ILO) agreements (between 1951 and 2000) related to gender discrimination and women's rights in the workforce. The CEDAW Concluding Observations from July 2014 indicate important advances in legislative terms, but also points to high levels of persisting discrimination and unequal application of standards.

As in many countries, implementation lags behind formal commitments. The 2007 'Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women' is yet to be fully implemented, although it provides a strong formal commitment and framework for gender equality. This law requires the design and implementation of legal mechanisms guaranteeing equal rights for men and women in all aspects of life: work, economic opportunities, culture, society, politics and more. The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Equal Opportunities legislation, with other ministries providing support in their areas of expertise. Thanks to this law, gender equality is a legal and compulsory policy requirement in Peru: all public institutions must promote women's participation in all activities and develop gender-focused indicators and objectives, which are to be monitored and evaluated. Although the policy is unevenly implemented, the recognition of women as legitimate policy subjects represents – in and of itself – an important change in Peru.

The main policy planning instruments in Peru are the 'national strategies', which establish objectives and indicators in areas considered priorities by the government for a period of five to ten years. From 2004 to 2016, Peru has developed eight national strategies that directly or indirectly affect gender-sensitive rural advisory services (RAS).[14] There are many positive elements in these strategies, including women being recognized as farmers, as well as several strategies with a strong focus on gender, which emphasize gender equality as a fundamental right and recognize some of the specific constraints faced by women. However, these strategies are, for the most part, dominated by statements of good intentions about gender equality, but are lacking in both concrete plans and supportive data about rural women's needs and interests. The stated good intentions are also undercut by a lack of a designated budget for gender activities. In 2011, only 1.2 percent of the Ministry of Agriculture's budget was earmarked for gender equality related activities (RIMISP and IEP 2016a). In addition, the activities funded with this budget were part of larger International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Bank projects, rather than projects initiated by the Government of Peru. This has been characteristic of most of the RAS programmes in Peru; most were developed in the framework of a donor-funded programme rather than as initiatives of national institutions.

As a result of the national Gender Equality Policy, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), which took part in the policy formulation, has included gender issues in the goals and objectives of its annual work plans since 2007. These objectives concern both the internal functioning of the ministry as well as its rural development programmes. Goals tend to be modest, but show that ministry staff have increased awareness of gender issues. The ministry has also decided to use inclusive language and incorporate a gender focus into any technology transfer events with men and women farmers starting from 2016. The Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), which houses the RAS programme examined in this case study, created a gender mainstreaming policy in July 2015 (Directiva N 007-2015-MIDIS) and was in the process of developing a concrete implementation plan for this policy at the time of carrying out this case study. A recent MIDIS Resolution (RM 040-2015-MIDIS) also mandates the formulation of performance targets and indicators to biannually evaluate compliance of national and sectoral policies with the National Policy on Equality of Men and Women.

As in many countries, the policy framework for gender equality in Peru is good, but policies have not yet been fully translated to action. However, there are promising signs of change in the MoA and other ministries, and gender equality has more visibility in policy dialogue than ever before.

4.1.1. Gender, agriculture and rural advisory services in Peru

According to the 2012 agricultural census, in Peru there were a total of 2.1 million agricultural producers, 69 percent of whom are men and 31 percent are women. The 2012 Agricultural Census showed a growth in both the absolute number of female agricultural producers and their importance in percentage terms. Their numbers, however, remained much lower than that of their male counterparts. In terms of land tenure, approximately 30 percent of all the agricultural landholders are women (FAO

[14] National Rural Development Strategy, 2004; National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, 2013; National Social Inclusion and Development Strategy, 2013. National Biodiversity Strategy, 2014; National Family Farming Strategy, 2015; National Financial Inclusion Strategy, 2015, National Climate Change Strategy, 2015 and National Strategy for the Promotion and Management of Rural Talents for Family Farming, 2016.

Gender and Land Rights Database).[15] In addition to owning fewer farms than their male counterparts, the properties of rural women are on average smaller than those of men. Moreover, they control only a quarter of the total area of irrigated farms, possibly one of the reasons for lower female productivity. In terms of production orientation, women devote, on average, a slightly higher percentage to home consumption and somewhat less to sales. While the differences are insignificant at national level, farmers in Cusco, one of the regions where fieldwork was carried out for this case study, were more market oriented compared with farmers in Cajamarca, the other case study region. While both men and women have difficulty accessing credit, fewer women (one in fifteen) than men (one in ten) have access to credit.

Although there are still many challenges related to the quality of education, virtually all rural children now attend primary school, and a large number attend secondary school. The gap between urban and rural education remains high but has declined significantly from previous decades. This improvement in education benefits both boys and girls and, as a result, the gender gap in access to rural primary education has virtually disappeared in Peru. While this development is expected to produce a generation of well-educated young rural women, there remains a significant difference in the educational qualifications of male and female adults. Rural male producers have higher secondary education rates, and the percentage of illiteracy is much higher among women agricultural producers (Boyd, 2019; RIMISP and IEP, 2016a).

In Peru, RAS have a long history. Up to the 1980s, initiatives were coordinated by the MoA and its regional offices, and were focused mainly on increased productivity through mechanization and the massive use of agrochemicals. From the late 1980s, the government drastically reduced the MoA extension staff and promoted a market-based, private sector-supported system. This system has always been inadequate in meeting the needs of all producers and the gaps have therefore been filled by international cooperation agencies, especially non-governmental organizations and public programmes funded by IFAD. IFAD in particular has had a profound influence on the evolution of rural advisory services progammes in Peru, working mainly in the southern highlands, including the Cusco area. Over the years, IFAD programmes, which used to be implemented by ad hoc government organizations, have expanded both in terms of number and size. By becoming more complex, they established a style of intervention which has been followed by several government-led initiatives. This style of intervention has been characterized by emphasis on: (i) income generation through linking small producers to local and regional markets; (ii) the incorporation of rural dwellers and their representatives in the decision-making process for the allocation of funds; (iii) 'peasant-to-peasant' training methodologies; (iv) the creation of small POs; and (v) making interventions more efficient (for example, replacing the use of written materials by theatre representations in illiterate communities).

Parallel to IFAD-funded programmes, several other rural advisory services programmes have been developed by the public sector. The most representative public programmes were the Cooperation Fund for Social Development (Foncodes)[16] and the National Watershed Management and Soil Conservation Programme (Pronamachcs). The first focused on the provision of basic services (e.g. potable water systems, fish farms and other productive infrastructure, irrigation systems, drained and latrines, rural electrification, etc.), while the second focused on sustainable management of natural resources and

[15] For more information, see: http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/data-map/statistics/en/

[16] For more information see: http://www.foncodes.gob.pe/portal/index.php

the increase of production through the introduction of irrigation and the improvement of agricultural practices. Local communities participated in these two programmes and applied for funds through so-called executive committees (*nucleo ejecutivo, NE*), composed of a president, a secretary, a treasurer and a legal representative.

Other NGO-funded programmes focused on the transfer of technologies to enable rural households to improve farm and housing conditions. They also applied the peasant-to-peasant methodologies and allocated funds to farmers through competition, but put less emphasis on linking farmers with markets. One of the most well-known examples of an NGO programme is the Sierra Productiva programme which promoted the transfer of a set of simple technologies to help rural households improve their agricultural production and living standards. A distinctive element of the programme was the use of *yachachiques*, women and men farmer-to-farmer advisors, who have traditional knowledge and technical knowhow and are considered to be better able to provide advice being closer to the peasant culture and having a better understanding of peasants' interests and challenges. In 2009, the Ministry of Women and Social Development adapted the methodology of the Sierra Productiva in its new pilot programme, M*y* Productive Farm *(Mi Chacra Productiva)*, which was the forerunner of the programme studied in this case study, the Haku Wiñay.

These different styles of RAS approaches developed in parallel and have coexisted in Peru during the past decades with little interaction. The situation improved in 2010 when in the context of the MIDIS the following important changes took place:

- creation of a new generation of rural technical assistance/advisory services programmes, which integrate elements from the different styles developed in previous years, as described above;
- mechanisms for linking RAS programmes with other social programmes to combat poverty so that the efforts of the various interventions can reinforce each other; and
- incorporation of cross-cutting issues such as gender, territorial approaches, climate change mitigation, preservation of biodiversity, etc. in the design and implementation of RAS programmes.

This has resulted in the creation of a pluralistic RAS system exists in Peru with services provided by the government, the private sector, NGOs and farmer cooperatives. Most of government programmes are run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, although other ministries, like the MIDIS, are also involved. Haku Wiñay, the programme at the centre of this case study, is housed in MIDIS. The private sector and NGOs also provide advisory services, though they tend to work with specific groups of clients. Large-scale agricultural exporters provide advisory services to the farmers who buy their products. NGOs, on the other hand, mainly provide RAS to small-scale family farmers.

According to the 2012 Agricultural Census, both men and women have very low access to RAS, but women have even less access to these services than men. Inequality between men and women exists not only regarding access but also the content of the services, as they tend to be biased towards topics preferred by men. While some improvements can be observed during the last decades concerning efforts to increase the inclusion of women in RAS – for example, increasing the number of female service providers, targeting specifically women's groups, organizing trainings in places where women can easily attend and using rural radio to disseminate information – these have had limited

impact and failed to address challenges represented by the traditional gendered system of the society. There is a conflict between the principles of RAS programmes to respect the traditions and the unique characteristics of the Andean rural populations and the patriarchal culture, which represents the major barrier for achieving equality between men and women. Another aspect the RAS programmes struggle to address is the intergenerational difference between women. There are important differences between rural women under the age of 25 and their mothers and grandmothers. Young rural women are more educated, have more social capital and are more mobile. Consequently, they have different life expectations and aspirations than their predecessors.

4.2. The socioeconomic context of the study area

The case study was conducted in the Condebamba District, in the Cajamarca region, and the district of Ocongate, in the Cusco region. These sites were selected because both had promising experiences with Haku Wiñay from a gender perspective, and because they have different degrees of market integration, different economic dynamics and different types of property ownership. In both regions, individual interviews were conducted with 48 Haku Wiñay local operators, field operators (the *yachachiq*) and members of the local executive units, while group interviews were carried out with 80-100 women and men participants of the programme.

TABLE 2 **Locations where the case studies were carried out**

REGION	DEPARTMENT	PROVINCE	DISTRICT	COMMUNITIES
Sierra Sur	Cusco	Quispicanchi	Ocongate	Chirchir and Otuto
Sierra Norte	Cajamarca	Cajabamba	Condebamba	Llullucha and Lauramarca

Cajamarca, a Spanish-speaking region, is located in the northern mountain range of Peru, in a valley about three thousand metres above sea level. It is a predominantly rural area, with a predominance of family farms. Education levels are low and there is a high illiteracy rate, especially among women over the age of 40. In 2015, Cajamarca had the highest extreme poverty rate of any region in Peru (16.6-23.9 percent) (INEI, 2018a). Over more than half of the region's population lives in poverty, which is much higher than the national average rate of 34.8 percent. Condebamba, the study district in Cajamarca, has even higher poverty levels than the region as a whole. The district is home to 14 000 people (2011), of whom 80 percent live in poverty, and 46 percent in extreme poverty. Nearly half of the population is chronically malnourished, and a quarter is illiterate. Condebamba used to be affected by great precariousness in terms of endowment of basic services: in 2007, 74 percent of the homes did not have electricity, and 14 percent did not have running water (INEI, 2007). By 2017, this situation had significantly improved, and today 75 percent of the homes have electricity and 92 percent have safe drinking water (INEI, 2018b). The district is still not connected to the main regional road and, as a result, market linkages are limited and the economy is stagnant. Most people are informally employed in agriculture, fishing or mining and most small rural producers engage in subsistence farming on privately held land. There are few social institutions, and hardly anyone in the district has had experience with development or RAS programmes. Interviews for this case study were conducted with 24 individuals and five groups (eight to ten participants per group) in the communities of Chirchir and Otuto in March 2016.

The other region selected for this case study was Cusco, which is a primarily Quechua speaking region in the south-central mountains. The regional and district indicators are fairly similar to those of Cajamarca and Condebamba. The regional poverty rate for Cusco is 51.1 percent (2009). The study district, Ocongate, has a poverty rate of 73 percent, with 37 percent in extreme poverty. In Ocongate, 60 percent of the population is chronically malnourished and 26 percent are illiterate. Fifty-three percent of homes do not have running water, and 56 percent do not have electricity (RIMISP and IEP 2016b). However, in spite of the similarities in poverty indicators, there are some important differences between Condebamba and Ocongate. Indigenous social structures predominate in Ocongate: property is held communally, and people access resources and services through their local peasant community organizations. Although poverty rates remain high, the local economy has grown in recent years as a result of improvements in roads connecting the communities to larger markets. The local government also earns money by selling mineral rights, and uses this money to fund community development programmes. Most families produce for self-consumption and for local or regional markets. Development programmes have worked in the area since the 1980s, and most community members have participated in development and RAS programmes in the past. Interviews for this case study were conducted with 18 individuals and four groups (eight to ten participants per group) in the communities of Llullucha and Lauramarca in May 2016.

4.3. Haku Wiñay

Haku Wiñay (*Noa Jayatai/Vamos a crecer* – We will grow/Let's grow together) is a rural productive development programme that was founded by the Peruvian government in 2012. Its objective is to promote economic inclusion, overcome poverty and improve the quality of life and food security of rural families living in extreme poverty, by developing rural dwellers' productive and entrepreneurial capacities so that they can generate and diversify income.

The four focus areas of Haku Wiñay (HW) are:

1. strengthening family farming by providing tailored technical assistance, training and productive resources to facilitate the adoption of locally appropriate technology packages (e.g. small-scale sprinkler irrigation, small animal husbandry, family gardens, Andean grain and tuber production, postharvest processing, etc.);
2. a 'healthy home improvement' component, aiming to improve living conditions through training and education on improved cookstoves, safe water and solid waste disposal;
3. promotion of inclusive rural businesses through provision of technical assistance, training and asset allocation through competitive awarding of funds; and
4. fostering financial capacity through financial literacy training and the promotion of savings.

Haku Wiñay activities are implemented in communities over a three-year period, using farmer-to-farmer methodologies. The first two years include intensive support while the last year focuses on consolidating capacities and monitoring. In February 2016 the programme reached approximately 110 000 rural households in twenty regions. The trainings are delivered by farmer trainers known as *yachachiq*, while the financial trainings are delivered by permanent HW programme staff. The *yachachiq* are from the local area, speak the local language, have a strong background in agriculture, can provide ongoing training and support to farmers in their local area, and as such give Haku Wiñay legitimacy in the local communities.

Haku Wiñay participants in each community form 'executive committees' (*núcleos ejecutivos*, NE), where they collectively decide on the technical topics to be covered in their area by HW. The NEs can make financial, legal and administrative decisions about the development of business plans (focus area 3), distribute funds from the programme to participants and channel participants' demands back to the programme. At least one representative from each participating family is required to attend monthly NE meetings.

Haku Wiñay is overseen by Foncodes, the Peruvian Cooperation Fund for Social Development, which is housed in MIDIS. Foncodes has existed in various forms since 1991, when it started as a rural infrastructure development programme (see section 4.1.1.). Since then its focus has changed and the successful elements of earlier Foncodes and other agencies' programmes were combined and incorporated into the design of Haku Wiñay. Foncodes' special status as a state body with the capacity to transfer public funds to associations of rural people, including the NEs, has been incorporated into Haku Wiñay.

Foncodes was, from its inception, an institution with a deep male bias, both in terms of personnel and in its concept of what rural development means. This situation, however, has changed as new members joined the team and Foncodes was influenced by MIDIS, a ministry focused on gender equality, with an implicitly different institutional culture when it comes to gender issues. "The traditional Foncodes was an institution of men, male engineers and women secretaries," said one of the interviewees, who held a senior position in MIDIS at the time of creation of this ministry.

"This has changed with Haku [Wiñay]; [this is] a new team, with male and female professionals, with new rules, and a staff that [partly] came from previous work experience in IFAD and other projects, where the relationship between male and female professionals was different". (RIMISP and IEP, 2016a).

This vision was shared by a professional of the technical team of Haku Wiñay, who serves as supervisor of one of the territorial units of Foncodes, and highlights both the male dominance in the institution and its recent evolution:

"Foncodes has been men's club, but I feel that in the last five years there have been changes, even if they are not written. At least within the UGOE team, there are more women, we all participate equally. Now there is a female manager [...] A few years ago that would have been unthinkable in Foncodes! [...] I believe that this, however, is not part of a policy, but much has had to do with people, personal initiatives." (RIMISP and IEP, 2016a).

BOX 9 **Haku Wiñay Project – Technical Justification, 2012 (Internal document of MIDIS**

Gender equity means respect for the rights of human beings in all areas of life in social, as well as economic and political life. The benefits of development must reach all people equally. In this sense, social and local development plans, programs and projects must concretely show the benefits for men and women. Strategies, plans, programs and projects should create equal opportunities for both men and women. It also implies the implementation of affirmative action policies facilitating women's access to economic, political, social and cultural opportunities.

Source: RIMISP and IEP. 2016a. *Validación herramienta de genero FAO para servicios de asesoramiento rural en Perú. Dimensiones 1 (ambiental) y 2 (organizacional)*. 31 de marzo de 2016. Lima, Instituto Nacional de Estadistica e Informatica and Instituto de Estudios Peruvianos.

Haku Wiñay is implemented at district level in areas with a high level of poverty and high levels of participation in Juntos,[17] a MIDIS cash transfer program for extremely poor mothers of school-aged children. Although participating in Juntos is not a requirement for participation in Haku Wiñay, about 70 percent of households participating in Haku Wiñay are also enrolled in Juntos. The fact that Juntos is specifically for women helps increase women's participation in Haku Wiñay, and the financial literacy trainings of Haku Wiñay are particularly important for Juntos transfer recipients.

While formally Haku Wiñay does not have a strong gender focus, it is gender-sensitive in practice. Analysing Haku Wiñay's intervention strategies reveals that although there is no policy to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach, several efforts have been made in recent years to encourage the participation of rural women in the services offered by the programme. There are two aspects of the latter to highlight: (i) efforts to break stereotypes to enhance the participation of rural women in programme activities; and (ii) 'microstrategies', unique context-specific practices invented/developed by the field advisors to promote women's participation in programme activities.

4.3.1. Haku Wiñay in the study districts

The weak economy, limited human capital and isolation of Condebamba constituted challenges for Haku Wiñay to realize its full potential there. For example, the business development aspect of the programme has not been very effective in Condebamba, where there are very few market links. Local gender norms are also a constraint, as there is strong pressure for women to remain in their traditional roles. In Condebamba, Haku Wiñay chose to emphasize the 'healthy home improvement' component of the programme because they thought that this would be the area where they could most quickly help clients in a concrete way. However, in this way they risked reinforcing the traditional division of labour, with household improvement trainings being held for women, and agricultural trainings primarily for men.

In Ocongate, local socioeconomic conditions enable Haku Wiñay to be both more effective and more gender-sensitive and responsive. The region is economically dynamic, and there is sufficient human capital in the communities for people to take advantage of what Haku Wiñay can offer them. Local conditions also enable Haku Wiñay to engage more with women. Most agricultural activities in Ocongate are managed by women, as men typically migrate seasonally or work in off-farm businesses or public

[17] For more information, visit: http://www.gob.pe/ juntos

works programmes. As a result, women are the primary clients of Haku Wiñay, and local *yachachiq* used the flexibility of the programme to adapt it so that it is accessible and useful for their female clients. In Ocongate, Haku Wiñay emphasizes small business development programmes, as this was also the focus of previous development interventions and there is already some local knowledge and experience.

4.4. Good practices for promoting gender equality through RAS at individual and organizational levels

4.4.1. Are rural women included in the programme as legitimate clients?

There are no formal barriers in the Haku Wiñay programme which exclude or hinder women's participation. Haku Wiñay staff consider women to be clients, although Haku Wiñay's client definition and selection procedures do not explicitly require that services should also target female farmers. The programme focuses on rural households, which it treats as homogenous and indivisible units with shared interests. The result of this policy is that most of the officially registered programme participants are men. However, this does not exclude the participation of other family members, mostly the women, in programme activities. In fact, in Cusco it is mostly women who attend Haku Wiñay activities even though their husbands are often the household members who have officially registered.

BOX 10

Haku Wiñay conducts registration for participation in the programme by holding a public meeting in the targeted community. Local authorities and Haku Wiñay staff jointly call the meeting, and gather as many community members as possible. The only criteria for registration are having an identification card, but only one person per household may register. This decision is typically negotiated within the household. There are no formal barriers preventing women from registering, but there are no formal mechanisms in place to encourage them to register either. If both the husband and wife are present, the husband typically registers as the head of household. This is especially true if the wife does not feel confident with the role because she cannot read, write or speak Spanish. Generally, a woman will register as the household's designated participant if her husband has migrated for work, or if she is unmarried or widowed. The wife may also register if the husband is uninterested in the programme, not involved in agriculture, or migrates seasonally.

Source: RIMISP and IEP. 2016b. *Validación herramienta de genero FAO para servicios de asesoramiento rural en Perú. Informe de resultados trabajo en campo.* 30 de junio de 2016. Lima, Instituto Nacional de Estadistica e Informatica and Instituto de Estudios Peruvianos.

Given the absence of institutional measures to guarantee that women participate, the role of the *yachachiq* is crucial in engaging women as Haku Wiñay clients. This is why, in practice, many women participate in Haku Wiñay activities. *Yachachiq* often include and reach out to women as clients, even when their husbands are formally registered. They also invite women (officially registered or not) to join the executive committee and the business groups. Both the *yachachiq* and programme participants interviewed said that women were major participants in Haku Wiñay, with some regional variations. However, women's inclusion as clients depends heavily on the individual initiatives of the *yachachiq* in their area.

Once participants are registered, they can select which programme components they want to participate in. In both regions, the participation of women is the highest in the healthy home improvement programme, inclusive rural businesses and financial training. In Cusco, women also participate in agricultural trainings. As a result of the heavy male outmigration or their engagement in the service sector, women often stay in charge of the family farming activities.

The 'inclusive rural business' component of Haku Wiñay has a mechanism for affirmative action intended to increase the number of women participating. In order to participate in 'business idea competitions'[18] to win seed funding, a business group must include at least one woman. The Haku Wiñay Toolkit, a document for local programme operators which functions as an operating manual, states that in inclusive business contests the score of the proposals should be in line with the number of women in the groups: zero points if there are no women and up to three points if the group includes three or more women. The *yachachiq* also enrol additional interested women in the business group, even if the women's husbands are the official programme participants. The members of the group set the criteria for additional group members, which are usually based on geography (those who live nearby), kinship or on suggestions from the *yachachiq*.

As for the executive committee, which is the representative body of the general assembly of Haku Wiñay's potential clients, the project framework document states that "The members of the NE are: President, Treasurer and Secretary, preferably at least one of whom must be female." (RIMISP and IEP, 2016b).

These efforts to incorporate women in the NE, and in the inclusive rural businesses component, show an interest in having women as clients of Haku Wiñay. In neither case, however, is there an in-depth discussion of the role that women must play in the NE or in the businesses. Nor are there discussions or requirements around the position they must occupy. Nevertheless, these initiatives show that in the traditionally masculine system of service provision, there is an awareness that is growing regarding the need to include rural women among the clients.

Good practices

Even where women are not formally recognized as clients, gender sensitivity of field staff is critical for making sure women are targeted. The local farmer-trainers (*yachachiq*) reach out to and also include women whose husbands are registered for the programme.

- Introducing measures or mechanism of positive discrimination to include more women as clients: two of the programme components require that at least one member of the group (business group and executive committee) must be a woman.

[18] This approach includes a competitive assessment of business proposals from the executive committee of community members to determine eligibility for seed funding.

4.4.2. How are the time and mobility constraints of rural women addressed?

While the programme has no formal policy or guidelines about considering rural women's time and mobility constraints, in practice, trainings are generally accessible to women in terms of both location and timing thanks to the efforts of the *yachachiq*, based on their knowledge of women's seasonal and daily schedule. With the exception of financial trainings, programme activities take place in participants' homes, fields, or in community spaces in the village, and are generally scheduled according to the preferences of participants. In order not to add to women's already heavy workload and activities, there are relatively few group meetings organized. The programme components on improved cookstoves, raising small animals and planting family gardens take place in individual homes, and the *yachachiq* and the programme participant decide on what time the *yachachiq* should organize training and follow-up visits. Women interviewed said that they particularly valued the possibility to schedule trainings so that they did not interfere with other activities.

Meetings of the general assembly of the NE are also held in the village, at a time decided by the group. In the Cusco region, most programme participants are women, so they are the ones who decide on timing. In Cajamarca, men dominate the NE and agricultural trainings, and women's scheduling preferences for assembly meetings are not necessarily heard. The case of Cajamarca indicates that there may be places where women's preferences are more difficult to ascertain because of local social dynamics. The programme has no guidelines or procedures designed to address this type of situation, so the solutions depend on the sensitivity and ability of the individual *yachachiq* and Haku Wiñay field operators to ensure women's viewpoints are also heard. As *yachachiq* are community-based, they tend to be familiar with the times that work well for women, and can take this into consideration even if women are unable to speak up during scheduling.

Participants of the GRAST validation group interview in Peru.
©FAO/Hajnalka Petrics

The component of Haku Wiñay which is least gender-sensitive in terms of time and mobility is the financial training. Financial training is the only required programme component for all programme participants, and is held in the district capital and scheduled according to the availability of the Foncodes territorial unit. Participants have to travel to these meetings. Both *yachachiq* and female programme participants said that the financial trainings were difficult for women to attend because of location and scheduling, and in many cases women only attended half of the sessions.

Overall, rural women felt that their mobility had increased as a result of their participation in Haku Wiñay, especially because of the inclusive rural business groups. They now go to their business locations, and to nearby stores to buy inputs or sell products. Although these locations are generally close to home, they are outside of the house, farm and school, which are the only places most women go regularly. Business groups have also provided women the opportunity to engage, for the first time, in activities different to those strictly related to their household duties.

Good practices

- To avoid adding to women's already busy daily schedule, the Haku Wiñay organizes few meetings or other group activities.
- Trainings are primarily held at individual participants' homes and farms, which are locations that are accessible to both female and male clients.

Yachachiq are familiar with women's schedules and work burdens, since they work closely with the women. They also make follow-up home visits.

The *yachachiq*, who are aware of the local social and gender dynamics, schedule trainings or meetings based on women's availability and on previous consultation with them.

4.4.3. How are rural women's education and literacy constraints addressed?

Many women in Haku Wiñay's intervention zones, particularly women over 40, are unable to read or write and have not completed primary school. Women under 40 generally have attained a higher educational level and are literate. However, neither men nor women in these communities read or write in most cases, and thus even people who are literate typically have low reading comprehension. The primary spoken language varies from one case study region to another. Spanish is the primary language in Cajamarca, while Quechua is the primary language in rural Cusco. In Cusco, many women have limited fluency in Spanish.

Haku Wiñay does not have a policy or staff training regarding women's specific literacy or language issues, but the programme was designed with the awareness that many users do not read or write comfortably. *Yachachiq*, who are from the communities they work in, speak and use the language of their local area in all activities, and trainings generally do not require literacy. Also, the business idea competitions are held in the local language.

The only exceptions are the financial trainings, which use written materials and are conducted in Spanish. Haku Wiñay has tried to make user-friendly, picture-based materials for these trainings, but the materials still include some Spanish-language text which makes them less accessible to women, particularly Quechua speakers. To overcome this difficulty, staff members often read aloud to illiterate participants, or allow literate family members (mostly older sons) to join the programme participants at financial trainings. However, these solutions depend on the initiative and willingness of the individual Foncodes staff member, as these requirements are not institutionalized into the programme.

Good practices

- Design programmes with an awareness of the literacy limitations of clients.
- Local languages are used in most trainings and activities, based on the assumption that participants have low literacy levels. Yachachiq speak the local language, and use it in trainings.
- The majority of the trainings delivered by Haku Wiñay does not require literacy, and use primarily hands-on methods.
- Introduce measures to overcome difficulties arising from illiteracy: trainers read aloud to illiterate participants and allow literate family members to accompany the programme participant at the financial training.

Participants of the financial training delivered by Haku Winay.

4.4.4. Does the programme facilitate rural women's ability to represent their interests and voice their demands for RAS?

Haku Wiñay requires that at least one leadership position in all local executive committees be filled by a woman. Generally, women take on the role of the treasurer,[19] but there are also a few female presidents. The president is elected by the group, and has tasks that require him or her to read, write and speak Spanish and travel locally. As a result, women often self-select to take on the treasurer position, which does not necessarily require travel or speaking Spanish. However, regardless of the position taken, the Haku Wiñay requirement has resulted in women taking on public leadership roles for the first time in many communities. Although as many women as men attend the monthly general assembly meetings of the NEs, female clients say that they are often afraid to participate or share their opinions. Women explained that they fear that men will make fun of them, making them look as if they did not have enough knowledge to have an informed opinion. Such behavior discouraged women to participate and made them feel ashamed to speak during public discussions.

While there are no institutionalized programme-wide guidelines or procedures on how to ensure women's and men's equitable participation in these meetings, local Haku Wiñay staff and the *yachachiq* use 'microstrategies' to encourage women to participate. For example, *yachachiq* act as moderators of discussions and make sure that women are able to voice their interests and demands in mixed-sex groups, and express their opinions out loud.

4. The power of farmer-to-farmer advisors: a case study of Haku Wiñay of Foncodes/ MIDIS in Peru

Yachachique couple interviewed during GRAST validation in Peru.
©FAO/Hajnalka Petrics

[19] There is a widespread prejudice in Peruvian society that men are bad managers of money. That is why almost all development interventions usually insist that women should be the administrators of money.

Haku Wiñay programme staff interviewed felt that the formal opportunities for mixed-sex interaction provided by the programme helped increase women's public participation. For example, business groups require members to coordinate and interact, so they provide a space for women to participate and share their opinions outside of their homes or the school cafeterias. Staff believe that participating in mixed-sex groups has also helped change men's view of women: previously, men only interacted with women regarding home and childcare topics, but the business groups have men and women work together for a different purpose, that of starting and running a business. The business groups have also both helped increase women's confidence as well as their economic empowerment. In Peru, it is common for husbands and wives to keep their money separately, so women control the extra money they earn from their business group activities.

Programme staff said they have seen a gradual increase in women's participation and confidence in expressing their opinions at the executive committee meetings, but that this has progressed more slowly than in the business groups, since the executive committee meetings are much larger and can be more intimidating.

Good practices

- There is a quota for women in leadership in the executive committees of programme participants.
- The programme implements activities which can result in women's increased self-confidence and, in turn, better ability to express their opinions. For example, Haku Wiñay field staff proactively implement microstrategies to encourage and enable women to speak up and express their concerns in mixed-sex groups.
- The programme promotes men and women's interaction around the achievement of a shared business goal, which is something that has not previously been common in this culture. This has an impact on how men view women's role and the topics in which women should have a say (not only on home- and childcare-related topics, but also on how to start and run a business).

4.4.5. Are RAS programmes designed and delivered in a way so that rural women can effectively participate and benefit, including: (i) the approach used; (ii) type of content provided; and (iii) the technology introduced?

Approach

Haku Wiñay field staff carry out participatory rural appraisal (PRA), which aims at identifying community and household assets. These assets include infrastructure, irrigation or other sources of water, as well as the type of soil, livestock and cookstove the household has. Field staff members also assess local conditions like climate and altitude, etc. While Haku Wiñay encourages the participation of all members of the household in the PRA, the focus on the household tends to limit the capacity to disaggregate women's and men's needs, interests, differentiated time use and the division of labour.

As for the delivery of services, the farmer-to-farmer method (through the *yachachiq*), on which Haku Wiñay is based, is very well received by the participants of the programme. The farmer-to-farmer approach favours the effective participation of rural women in the programme activities. The *yachachiq* may provide RAS by coming to individual homes (for example, for the improved stoves and family garden training), or by holding meetings or group sessions (e.g. business development) in the community. According to interviews and focus groups, women consider this method beneficial for a variety of reasons, such as:

Women feel closer to and trust the *yachachiq* since they are locals.

Since the *yachachiq* coordinate with participants regularly, women said that they had become comfortable with having the *yachachiq* in their home, whether they are female or male.

In addition, since *yachachiq* are from the areas where they work, they are familiar with the culture. They are also readily available to the community, and can follow up with programme participants on a regular basis.

As trainings and activities are generally hands-on and participatory, it is easier for women to understand the contents because they are taught through practice, in each dwelling and plot. Women are taught in a 'simple' language that is easy for them to understand or in their own language, in Quechua-speaking areas.

Content and technology

The programme includes among its technical options several elements which, from the point of view of their promoters, are 'for women'. Some of these programme components are family gardens for vegetable production, the raising of guinea pigs that allows a greater consumption of proteins by household members, guinea pig production and small business development for additional income generation, and improved cookstoves.

Woman with her alpaca interviewed during GRAST validation in Peru.
©FAO/Rafael Nova Arismendi

However, women also participate in agricultural trainings traditionally offered only to men. The traditional gender roles consider that the female domain is the garden (small-sized parcel near the house, where vegetables are grown and guinea pigs and chickens are raised), while the male domain is the farm (a more remote and larger plot, where he grows potatoes and other products on a larger scale).

The participation of women is notable in the rural business component. This may result from the fact that these projects often focus on new areas of family activity. A division of labour usually takes place in Andean areas, according to which men engage in consolidated businesses, while women engage in new businesses. As a result, the effort to implement the new initiatives often falls on women. The

productive business training groups have five to six members. The choice of the business line is a decision made by the participants, depending on the possibilities suggested by the *yachachiq*. Women tend to take a greater interest in raising guinea pigs, vegetable production or vegetable gardens in domestic greenhouses, and handicrafts (especially woven fabrics). Women also tend to be most involved in business groups that target new crops in the communities, such as *aguaymanto* (Physalis peruviana) in Cajamarca.

While all programme participants are required to attend financial trainings, the participation of women is especially intense in the financial training component. In many cases, this is almost an exclusively female component. Although not planned as such, and there not being any restrictions on the participation of men, activities are usually carried out in conjunction with the pay dates of the Juntos programme to take advantage of the fact that women from different communities are concentrated in the district town, where branches of the National Bank are located. Furthermore, most financial inclusion efforts made in Peruvian rural areas are directed at women, partly because of the link with Juntos, and partly because of the persistence of stereotypes of women as being more likely to save and be cautious with money, in contrast to the 'wasteful and careless' attitude characterizing men. Although an effort has been made to make this training relevant to the programme participants, its teaching methodology should be more interactive and further involve the *yachachiq* in the learning process in order to help women, for example, learn to use automatic cash machines or how to open a savings account.

Good practices

The content and technologies offered by Haku Wiñay include small sprinkler irrigation, improved cookstoves, small animal husbandry, installation of cultivated pastures, installation of family gardens (in fields or in greenhouses), technologies for cultivating Andean grains and tubers, agroforestry, agricultural product processing technologies, technologies for forage production, hay production, silage, organic fertilizer production, technologies for breeding and management of South American camelids (llamas, alpacas, vicuñas, and guanacos), and technologies for managing natural pastures. Haku Wiñay presents users with these topic options, based on the characteristics of the area identified through the PRA. Families can decide which technologies they are most interested in implementing based on their resources and assets (how much land they have, if their plots are close to a source of water, if they can implement irrigation or not, among other considerations).

- Participatory processes were used to identify community and household assets, and select the content and technologies covered by the programme, although these processes need to be made more gender-sensitive and responsive.
- Use of the farmer-to-farmer method: farmer advisors come from the same or nearby communities and this is one of the reasons women trust them more and feel closer to them.
- Farmer advisors are familiar with the local culture and women's schedules.
- The advisory methods used are accessible to women: they are participatory and hands-on, and involve trainers from the local community who speak and can hold trainings in the local language.
- Some of the content provided is specifically aimed to meet the needs of women.
- The programme allows women to participate in trainings on topics that are culturally related to male activities.

4.4.6. Does the organizational culture, including staffing and other human resource policies, enable women to become, and effectively function as, RAS agents or managers?

Haku Wiñay's placement within MIDIS helps ensure a more gender-sensitive organizational culture in RAS, which is traditionally a male-dominated field in Peru. MIDIS, which is largely responsible for social programmes, has a strong track record of considering the impact of gender inequaliteis in its activities. The ministry also has many female staff members, including women in managerial positions. While Haku Wiñay is still male dominated, MIDIS' leadership and organizational culture provide a good model for change.

While it is still challenging to incorporate a greater number of *yachachiq* women into Haku Wiñay, the fact that there are a several of them, indicates a change in the paradigm of RAS being a strictly male-dominated sector. This represents a major change in the RAS experience in Peru. In this sense, it is important to highlight the openness of Haku Wiñay to hiring *yachachiq* women and including them not only in healthy home improvement topics, but also in the programme component on agricultural trainings and productivity enhancement. However, women *yachachiq* face barriers similar to those faced by HW female staff, when they have to travel to the very remote communities for which they are responsible.

Good practices

- The programme employs female farmer-to farmer advisors.
- The female *yachachiq* provide services not only on healthy home improvement topics but also on improving agricultural productivity.

4.4.7. Are there institutional mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of gender-sensitive RAS and hold staff accountable?

Overall, Haku Wiñay does not have explicit institutional mechanisms in place to guarantee a gender focus or gender sensitivity in the project's implementation. The two programme elements in which the inclusion of at least one woman is required by the programme is the inclusive rural businesses component and the local executive committees. Basically, there is no protocol or training related to gender issues and no mandated focus on women as clients, so the degree of gender sensitivity in implementation depends mainly on the awareness and sensibility of individual staff members.

However, Haku Wiñay's materials implicitly present women as farmers and legitimate clients. The technical manuals and training guides used by the *yachachiq* feature images of both men and women actively involved in agricultural production and RAS, rather than featuring women only in their traditional roles. These materials show that Haku Wiñay considers women to be legitimate clients, a factor which may encourage *yachachiq* to invest efforts in reaching and working with rural women.

One of the strengths of the programme is that it allows staff a high level of flexibility to adapt to the local conditions, and this has enabled staff members to implement programme activities that are gender-sensitive in practice. Staff at all levels expressed awareness of the importance of considering gender issues in Haku Wiñay's services even

though it is not formally required. This, combined with the flexibility offered by the programme, is one of the key reasons that Haku Wiñay is gender-sensitive in practice.

Public RAS in Peru are beginning to focus more on gender, and are mainstreaming gender into all of their projects, including Haku Wiñay. The *Guidelines for Mainstreaming the Gender Approach to Social Programs in MIDIS* was released in July 2015, and the ministry has been in the process of developing concrete gender indicators, objectives and performance targets.

Good practices

- The ministry where Haku Wiñay is housed has developed gender mainstreaming guidelines and a process, which includes the use of gender indicators and performance targets.
- Staff is aware of the importance of considering gender issues in the implementation of the programme.
- Training materials and technical guides use images showing women and men as farmers and they do not feature women solely in their traditional roles.
- The programme allows staff members the flexibility to adapt their foci and ways of working to meet the needs of women clients.

Participants of the GRAST validation group interview in Peru.
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4.5. Conclusions

Haku Wiñay is designed to be participatory and demand-driven, and it is effective in responding to clients' demands. Despite the lack of formal mechanisms supporting a gender focus in the programme, Haku Wiñay has been reasonably successful at reaching and engaging with rural women, as it addresses many of the constraints that prevent rural women from accessing rural advisory services. In some regions, the programme primarily serves female clients, and it is able to successfully respond to their needs in practice. Haku Wiñay's implementation rests heavily on the *yachachiq*, farmer-to-farmer advisors, who link the programme to its users and, to a large degree, determine the level of gender-sensitivity and responsiveness of the programme activities. *Yachachiq* are allowed a great deal of flexibility in the way they work, and this enables them to provide services that are accessible and relevant to female clients. They can emphasize different programme components, depending on the local context, and develop 'microstrategies' to address local and gender-based constraints. The lack of policy and institutional guidance around promoting gender equality through RAS means that Haku Wiñay is only gender-sensitive when local conditions allow for it and mainly when individual staff members take the initiative. The programme, in fact, would also benefit from institutionalizing a way for staff members and *yachachiq* to share the good practices they have found when reaching and working with rural women.

Taking all of this into consideration, Haku Wiñay has great potential to transform from being relatively gender-sensitive in practice, but with no institutionalized mechanisms to support or guarantee gender sensitivity and responsiveness, into a more intentionally and fully gender-responsive programme.

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5. Summary of recommendations

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Rural advisory services (RAS) have the potential to play a critical role in improving the livelihoods and well-being of rural people and to enable them to maximize their contributions to sustainable agricultural and rural development. However, RAS are often not equitably accessible to all farmers, which creates a considerable gap in their productive capacity.

Evidence shows that globally women have less access to RAS than men, and that when they do have access to services the information, technologies and practices are usually tailored to the needs of men. As a result, the rates of return of RAS are often lower for women than for men because of gender bias in both the information supplied as well as in the way the information is delivered. It is therefore crucial to improve both access and relevance of RAS for both women and men.

Improving women's access to rural advisory services can help close the gender gap in agriculture by making information, skills, knowledge, new technologies and other productive resources more accessible to women farmers. It can also empower women by providing new economic opportunities and enabling them to gain new skills and confidence. RAS may improve women's decision-making power with effects on family well-being in terms of nutrition, education and health.

While the challenges women face to access RAS have been widely documented, there is a dearth of information regarding the good practices for designing and delivering fully gender-responsive RAS.

This paper addresses this gap by presenting three case studies of gender-responsive RAS from Ethiopia, India and Peru. The cases provide insight into experiences of three RAS programmes and show differences in the number and the depth of the good practices the three RAS organizations have developed and adopted to design and deliver gender-sensitive and responsive services.

The three case studies confirm that to provide truly gender-equitable rural advisory services holistic approaches are needed, and that the larger societal context must be considered along with the specifics of a given programme. Systematic change is needed in order for this to happen: the entire RAS system, including national and institutional policies, institutions (formal and informal) and RAS staff attitudes and capacities must be challenged and changed. The perspectives of gender equality and the empowerment of women need to become integral guiding principles within the enabling policy and organizational environment, and the culture of organizations providing RAS.

The case studies have shown that, when adequately designed and delivered, RAS can play a decisive role in advancing more gender equitable relations, women's status – in terms of their position in the household, institutions and society – and women's empowerment. They have the potential to challenge and trigger change in constraining gender norms and antiquated practices that keep women in disadvantaged positions and hinder their participation in productive activities, and thus resulting in an adverse impact on their own and their family's food security and nutrition.

5.1. Summary of good practices and recommendations

5.1.1. Recognize women as legitimate clients of RAS programmes

Gender norms which discriminate against women often result in women not being perceived as farmers and, in turn, as legitimate RAS clients. The work done by women can be obscured by the view that they are 'helpers' on a family farm rather than farmers, which minimizes the diverse and critical roles that women play in agriculture. Thus, RAS are often not tailored to women's needs. The following good practices demonstrate ways for RAS organizations to ensure that they target women as legitimate clients of their programmes.

Good practices and recommendations

- Recognize women as farmers in their own right.
- Identify both women and men as RAS clients.
- Have no discriminatory criteria for participation in the RAS programme and related activities and trainings.
- At the start of community activities, invest as much time as needed to get to know the community and build trust with local people, particularly community and religious leaders.
- Sensitize communities, especially men and district officials, village and cooperative leaders on the importance of women's participation in the trainings and other RAS activities.
- Target service provision to individual farmers, both men and women, rather than to households: establish measures or mechanisms of positive discrimination, e.g. minimum quotas for the number of women as trainers, service users, cooperative members and leaders; recognize the diversity of women's groups.
- Support women to develop their identity as farmers.
- Even if the programme focuses on women, involve and engage men at some level to attain their buy-in, trust and support, and show both men and women that the programme is legitimate and beneficial for the whole family/household.
- Introduce ways to change the community's perception about women's roles and generate their approval of women as being also farmers.
- Use multiple approaches to encourage female attendance of training sessions. For example:
  - visit farmers' homes and directly invite women;
  - ask influential women farmers to rally other women to attend training sessions; and
  - request husbands to invite their wives to attend the training sessions with them.
- Include gender training in addition to the technical trainings offered, to challenge the social construction of women as housewives and help them and their husbands recognize the important role of women in productive activities.
- Conduct home visits to follow up trainees individually after training sessions and offer women an opportunity to ask questions.
- Be accountable: use gender-related indicators such as the number of women members and leaders as one of the criteria for selecting and rewarding partner organizations such as cooperatives.

Building trust with target communities can help RAS providers overcome barriers to women's participation by demonstrating that the programme is legitimate and beneficial. This is especially important in contexts in which women may not be able to participate without the consent of their husbands, family or other community members.

Home visits may help RAS staff to better understand the constraints of potential programme participants, solicit feedback in a way in which they feel more comfortable, and to gain the understanding and support of family members for women's participation in RAS activities.

5.1.2. Address women's time, mobility and educational constraints

Women's roles and responsibilities as defined by social norms and culture often mean that they face time, education and mobility constraints participating in RAS activities that take place far from home, when these activities conflict with other responsibilities (such as caring for family members) or when they require literacy. There are many ways that RAS staff can help women farmers overcome these barriers to participation.

Good practices and recommendations

Time and mobility

- Recruit and groom dedicated staff who understand the need for, and are willing to, accommodate women's schedules.
- Ensure staff members have detailed knowledge and awareness of women's daily and seasonal schedules by assigning them to a small number of communities and/or having them live in the communities.
- Recruit farmer trainers from the same or nearby communities who are familiar with rural women's workload and its seasonal variations.
- Schedule training sessions and other activities based on women's availability and in consultation with them.
- Conduct training sessions in the community, in a location that is easily accessible to participants, especially women.
- Offer off-site exposure visits multiple times, so those who are not free for one may be able to attend another.
- Provide transportation to trainings that do not have a direct economic benefit to attendees.
- Allow women to bring their children to training sessions or provide childcare for the duration of the trainings.
- Establish a minimum quota for female attendance at each training session to encourage trainers to schedule activities when women are available.
- Invest or advocate for investment in infrastructure and technologies that reduces women's work burden and frees up their time to attend RAS activities, such as, for example, water pumps, tree nurseries, improved roads, and childcare facilities and schools.
- Introduce programme activities that can contribute to increasing women's mobility.

Education and literacy

- Have in place an organizational policy directing staff to tailor training materials to the education and literacy level of the farmers, especially women, with whom they work.
- Take literacy rates into consideration during programme design and use a combination of advisory methods that do not require literacy, including experiential learning approaches such as demonstrations and farmer-to-farmer information exchange (model farmer visits, exposure visits), role play, group discussions, verbal, face-to-face communication, videos, community theatre, and visual tools such as posters, pictures and diagrams to reach low-literacy service users.
- Introduce additional measures to overcome the difficulty arising from illiteracy, e.g. RAS staff members are to read aloud to illiterate participants, or allow literate family members to join the programme participant at trainings, which require literacy.
- Hire staff who speak the local/tribal language or enable them to learn it.
- Conduct training in the local language and, where possible, use local people as trainers who are also aware of the local literacy levels.
- To effectively reach all education groups, adopt culturally-appropriate emblems to express gender equality goals.

- Establish quotas for the minimum number of women farmer trainers and cooperative leaders.
- Help women practice the national official language to enable them to interact with other, non-tribal people, such as those at the market and with local government representatives.
- Raise awareness of the importance of educating both daughters and sons in the communities where the organization operates.
- Partner with and connect RAS clients to other organizations that focus on education/literacy or other services, and thereby provide services outside of mission of the organization concerned.

5.1.3. Foster women's ability to represent their interest and voice their demands for RAS

Women's under-representation in membership-based rural institutions (e.g. POs and cooperatives) limits their ability to advocate for their needs and interests and engage in collective action, and reduces their access to a range of services provided through those organizations. Strengthening women's ability to represent their own interests and provide feedback to RAS staff would facilitate the design and delivery of services that are more appropriate in meeting women's needs.

Good practices and recommendations

- Provide opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in trainings, cooperatives and field farmer groups by setting quotas for women.
- Solicit feedback from both women and men after each training session.
- Seek feedback from women during home follow-up visits and encourage them to ask questions or seek advice.
- Work with groups of women by helping them organize themselves and provide support to their functioning. For example, support and encourage women's groups to participate in local government meetings and join or set up other organized groups in the community (POs and federations of self-help groups).
- Implement strategies which can result in women's increased self-confidence and, in turn, their ability to express their opinions by, for example, encouraging and enabling women to speak up and express their concerns in mixed-sex groups.
- Promote men and women's interaction around topics which are culturally associated with the male domain. This has an impact on how men view women's role and in which topics women should have a say (e.g. not only home and childcare topics, but also how to start and run a business).
- Support developing and/or strengthening women's identity as farmers.
- Offer gender and leadership trainings to help challenge gender roles.
- Identify and mitigate risks of creating conflict or increasing domestic violence as a potential negative consequence of challenging social norms.
- Engage in regular organizational self-reflection on how to improve programmes so that they empower women.

Providing opportunities for women to take on leadership roles helps them gain leadership experience, builds their confidence and contributes to transforming perceptions about women's abilities.

5.1.4. Tailor RAS methods and content to meet rural men and women's needs effectively

Women and men often grow different crops, have different production priorities and face different constraints in production and marketing. The content of RAS should be appropriately tailored to address women farmer's specific needs.

Good practices

- Provide support for breaking down social barriers and gender stereotypes as a precondition to women's ability to access economic opportunities.
- Support women to develop their self-identity and self-worth so that they can acknowledge and assert their role as farmers and citizens in their own right.
- Deliver trainings through the most appropriate channels, e.g. SHGs or POs and provide handholding until it is necessary.
- Carry out participatory and gender-sensitive context analysis to identify community and household assets, and select and propose technologies, new farming practices and other content that reflect local conditions and women's needs.
- Solicit and respond to requests for new training topics or interventions, especially from women: allow women to choose and give feedback on proposed training topics through, for example, the method of concept seeding. Provide a mechanism for women to express their demands for specific topics through community meetings. Provide demand-based training with content specifically aimed to meet the needs of women.
- In addition to agricultural trainings (crop production), offer other types of trainings to enable women to diversify their livelihoods, e.g. on livestock production, forest-based activities, sericulture, etc. and entrepreneurship in general.
- Support women with creating a yearly plan with concrete production goals and strategies to achieve them.
- Use methods of RAS delivery that work for women: these include the farmer-to-farmer method, hands-on interactive trainings, learning by doing, experiential methods (e.g. demonstrations), videos, etc. that do not require literacy, delivered to single-sex groups, so women can participate and build up their confidence in their farming abilities.
- Involve trainers from the local community who speak and can hold trainings in the local language, and are familiar with the local culture and women's schedules.
- At the same time, provide training to mixed-sex groups and provide the same training and services to both men and women, regardless of the gender division of labour, to challenge and change both men's and women's perceptions about women's abilities and roles, and to foster a more equitable distribution of responsibilities and changes in discriminatory gender roles. Allow women to participate in trainings on topics that are culturally related to male activities and vice versa.
- Bundle services by linking clients to other service providers to help women develop other capacities and realize their rights also in other areas, e.g. learning to read and write, and gaining access to land and sanitation facilities.
- Monitor the adoption of technology and new farming practices.

Having mixed-sex groups helps to show men that women are capable, competent farmers and contributes to challenging and changing cultural perceptions about the appropriateness of women speaking in mixed-sex groups.

5.1.5 Develop a gender-equitable organizational culture and introduce institutional mechanisms which ensure the implementation of gender-responsive RAS

At the organizational level, RAS providers face challenges that may hinder them from effectively meeting the needs of women producers. RAS organizations themselves may be gender biased, resulting in biased decision-making, targeting and employment of staff, as well as in service delivery models and content of the services. Organizations with procedures, institutional frameworks and an organizational culture that promote gender equality enable the delivery of gender-responsive RAS.

Good practices

Organizational culture

- As an organization, embrace the principles of gender-sensitive organizational culture and diversity as preconditions for effective gender-responsive service design and delivery.
- Ensure that the organization has a gender equality policy and policies on work-life balance in place, including policies on maternity/paternity leave, childcare provision and against harassment.
- Require staff to be trained on these policies.
- Ensure that members of internal complaints committees (e.g. on sexual harassment) are trained to be able to adequately carry out their role.
- Have a dedicated management team dealing with issues of gender.
- Carry out periodic organizational gender audits.
- Encourage staff to actively discuss and reflect on organizational culture and how to improve it.
- Put in place mechanisms/practices to address the specific barriers women advisors face in adequately carrying out their work (e.g. ease transportation challenges by assigning women to their own communities or locations near the main road, provide childcare facilities and services to staff members including during staff trainings, enable women to plan their work accordingly during days of their menstruation period and introduce flexible working arrangements for staff with children).
- Dedicate budgets to help female staff overcome the challenges they face when working in communities (allowing them to use more secure transportation, and investing in improved bathrooms and safe housing for women when needed).
- Establish a minimum quota for the number of female staff at various levels.
- Commission an external assessment to understand the pros and cons women take into consideration when deciding to join and stay with the organization, and introduce measures accordingly.
- Make specific efforts to recruit female trainers (e.g. posting job notices in locations frequented by women, such as market areas, shops, churches and schools), and distribute job notices through channels that specifically reach women, such as women's groups and school associations, and adopt a selection process that mitigates some of the gender-specific challenges women face.

5. Summary of recommendations

- Ensure that female advisors can work on topics other than those traditionally considered female topics (e.g. healthy home improvement).
- Provide extra coaching for women RAS advisors to help build up their self-confidence.
- Set up women support systems (caucuses), to provide places for female staff to discuss issues and challenges, and find support.
- Invest in strategic interactions with the families of female staff to help alleviate their concerns regarding their daughters' safety.
- Enhance female staff's negotiation skills to empower female staff members to be able to make their own choices about their careers.

Institutional mechanism

- Develop and introduce gender mainstreaming guidelines that help establish gender objectives, targets and indicators at programme level.
- Carry out a detailed gender analysis at the project planning and design stage and use the findings to design key project interventions.
- Engage a full-time gender expert to facilitate the adoption of a gender perspective.
- Sensitize staff about the importance of considering gender issues in the implementation of the programme and provide gender training to all staff, farmer trainers and cooperative members.
- Provide gender training directly to service users and partner organizations at all levels.
- Provide a separate budget for gender-targeted interventions even if the gender perspective is mainstreamed in all project activities.
- Establish clear targets for the minimum number of women who should be involved in all activities and staff positions.
- Collect data disaggregated by sex and other socioeconomic factors (e.g. age, class, ethnicity, marital status, disability, etc.) on registration, attendance, technology adoption and impact, and other monitoring and evaluation indicators.
- In training materials and technical guides, use images showing both women and men as farmers and do not feature women only in their traditional roles.
- Allow flexibility for staff members to adapt their foci and ways of working to meet the needs of women clients

The following guides can be very helpful in carrying out an organizational gender audit:

- *Gender audit handbook* (InterAction, 2010): https://www.interaction.org/blog/gender-audit-handbook/
- *A Manual for gender audit facilitators: the ILO participatory gender audit methodology,* 2nd edition (ILO, 2012): https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_187411.pdf

Ocongate district, Peru.
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6. Annex

Criteria to assess the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of rural advisory services (RAS) programmes and organizations along the seven key questions of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool (GRAST)

Assessment question 1:
Are rural women included as legitimate clients in rural advisory services programmes?

- The organization has a stated mission to supply RAS to women.
- The organization's written definition of RAS clients specifically includes women (and recognizes different categories of women: women-headed households, women in households headed by men, landless, etc. as relevant; and female youth).
- There are no formal criteria for receiving advisory services that may exclude women's participation (i.e. landholding, being 'head of household', growing certain crops, literacy, etc.).
- RAS beneficiary selection process is written, transparent, and equally accessible to both men and women.
- The organizational budget dedicates resources specifically to reach women.
- If the organization uses farmer extensionists, they have a policy or quotas in place to ensure that also women are recruited for this role.
- Pictures used in training materials used by the organization depict women not only in homemaking and caregiving roles, but also as farmers.

Assessment question 2:
How are the time and mobility constraints of rural women addressed?

- The organization has a policy (either a stand-alone policy or as part of a larger gender policy) to analyse men and women's seasonal and daily schedules, and their roles in agriculture, at home and in the community (analysis of the gender division of labour) in order to address time constraints.
- The organization has a policy that advisors schedule training and other interactions with women based on women's schedules and availability.
- Policy states that trainings/activities should be modified as needed (i.e. split up into modules) to work in practical terms for women.
- Policy states that training locations should be selected so that women can safely, comfortably and easily attend.
- Resources are earmarked in the organizational budget to enable women to attend trainings (provision of childcare, transportation, etc.) or state of the services and infrastructures to enable the latter are assessed to understand if and how they affect women's time and mobility.

Assessment question 3:
How are the literacy and education constraints of rural women addressed?

- The organization has a policy of analysing local women's education and literacy levels in order to tailor trainings appropriately.
- The organization has a policy that unwritten communication material should be used to share information and in training (e.g. photos, drawings, recorded voice messages, videos, etc.).
- The organization has a policy that trainings and information should be provided in the locally preferred language.
- The organization links less literate, less educated women (or girls) with education and literacy programmes.

Assessment question 4:
Does the RAS programme facilitate rural women's ability to represent their interests and voice their demands?

- The organization has a written policy detailing how they support women's equal participation in meetings and in rural organizations (e.g. POs), especially if RAS are also disseminated through rural organizations.
- If the organization disseminates information through POs, they require staff to analyse barriers to women's participation in these organizations.
- The organization does awareness-raising and advocacy work with POs to change membership requirements that discriminate against women.
- The organization has a written policy stating that they help organize women to receive or demand RAS.
- If the organization provides services to groups/organizes farmers into groups, they have targets for the percentage of women as members and in leadership.
- The organization works with female clients to increase their abilities to represent their interests and voice their demands, for example, through gender or leadership training.

Assessment question 5:
Are RAS programmes designed and delivered in a way that allows rural women to effectively participate and benefit?

The organization delivers information in ways that are inclusive of and effective for women farmers.

- The organization uses tools to understand knowledge/information flows for men and women, and uses this information to design programmes.
- The organization has policy and training materials on how to use participatory methods, plan with women's input and structure trainings to enable women to participate.
- If ICTs are used, RAS organization carries out a gender analysis of ICTs in their region and seeks to address and resolve gender-related constraints to access/use of ICTs.
- There is a mechanism in place where RAS clients can provide feedback on methods used, as well as a mechanism by which this feedback is considered in future decisions and planning.
- The organization has policy to address social and gender inequalities and build women's identities as farmers.

The organization provides information and services that are relevant and useful to women, as determined by women clients.

- The organization conducts analysis of the following gender dimensions to inform the design of its programmes and services:
  - differentiated needs and interests of women and men
  - the major roles women and men play in agriculture and in the household, and maps key labour contributions
  - men and women's access to resources, control over assets, intra-household resource allocation
- There are mechanisms in place where RAS clients can request content and provide feedback on content, and there is also a mechanism by which this feedback is considered in future decisions and planning.
- The organization has policy that RAS staff should collect data disaggregated by sex and other socioeconomic factors (e.g. age, class, ethnicity, marital status, disability etc.) on adoption rates, and gather feedback from women on reasons for adoption or non-adoption.
- Monitoring and evaluation data disaggregated by sex and other socioeconomic factors is used in organizational reports and incorporated into planning.

The organization promotes the adoption of technologies that are relevant and accessible to women.

- The organization has a policy that gender division of labour analysis should be conducted before introducing a new technology.
- The organization takes into account women and men's differentiated technology needs, including maintenance needs.
- The organization acknowledges that women have a role in selecting which technology should be introduced and that they should participate in their development.
- The organization prioritizes technologies of interest/priority to women.
- The organization collects data disaggregated by sex and other socioeconomic factors on adoption rates and gathers feedback from women on reasons for adoption or non-adoption.

Assessment question 6:
Does the organizational culture enable women to become, and effectively function as, RAS agents and managers?

- Gender parity in staffing has been achieved or is a stated goal, and the organization is making demonstrable progress towards increasing the number of female staff at all levels.
- RAS organization has policies or mechanisms in place to recruit more women as staff (for example, quotas).
- Number of women and men RAS advisors, by seniority, positions (management and field level).
- Both women and men work as all types of RAS advisors (i.e. women are not only 'home economist' types of agents).
- Women are represented in RAS organizational management.
- Organization has antidiscrimination and anti-harassment policies in place.
- The organization's human resource policy specifically promotes women RAS advisors' career development.
- The organization has policies or mechanisms in place to address the specific barriers women advisors face in adequately carrying out their work and advancing in their careers (childcare facilities, transport, separate boarding and sanitary facilities, etc.).
- If organization subcontracts staff (i.e. from a different RAS providers/lead farmers), they have a policy of actively recruiting women.
- Organization's materials (training for staff and clients, publicity materials, etc.) depict women as farmers: this reveals the organization's implicit view of women.

Assessment question 7:
Are there institutional mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of gender-sensitive RAS and hold staff accountable?

- The organization has a corporate gender policy or there is evidence that gender mainstreaming has been institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanisms and processes in all parts of the organization.
- Organization requires their staff to have gender sensitivity and basic gender knowledge and capacities.
- The organization's monitoring and evaluation system is designed to capture the extent to which staff provides gender-sensitive and responsive services.
- Organization has a means to measure their staff's performance which assesses their capacities to reach and provide services to women, based on their needs.
- There is a policy that all RAS advisors and managers receive gender training.
- Organization allocates part of their budget to gender training for staff.
- The organization encourages the documentation of best practices in addressing women's needs and the learning and exchange of knowledge.

Rural advisory services (RAS) have the potential to play a critical role in improving the livelihoods and well-being of rural people and to enable them to maximize their contributions to sustainable agricultural and rural development. However, RAS are often not equitably accessible to women and men farmers, which creates a considerable gap in their productive capacity.

The case studies in this report have shown that when adequately designed and delivered, RAS can play a decisive role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. They have the potential to challenge and trigger change in unequal gender relations, constraining gender norms and practices that keep women in disadvantaged positions and hinder their participation in productive activities, ultimately resulting in an adverse impact on their own and their family's food security and nutrition.

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