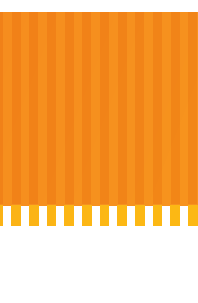




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Empowering women through strengthened dairy value chains: Measuring Impact



Context

Socio-economic empowerment of women is central to CARE's work. In all CARE projects, M&E processes are continually tested and upgraded to measure and understand the impacts of our projects on women's empowerment. Simply put, empowerment means having power – usually the power to make choices and decisions. Since empowerment itself is a process that is complex and multi-faceted, and therefore difficult to measure, monitoring and evaluation processes used to measure women's empowerment are constantly being developed. Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain Project (SDVCP), like other CARE projects, has a focus on measuring women empowerment and has created assessment tools for use in agriculture value chain projects within the context of Bangladesh.

Box 1: Specific objectives of SDVCP were to:

1. Improve milk collection systems in rural and remote areas;
2. Improve access to inputs, markets, and services by mobilizing groups of poor farmers, producers and char dwellers;
3. Improve the artificial insemination (AI) network;
4. Ensure access to quality service at the producer level; and
5. Improve the policy environment in the dairy sector.

CARE-Bangladesh's Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain Project (SDVCP) has been successful in engaging a significant number of women in the dairy value chain. The project aimed to increase the income of 35,000 targeted smallholder and landless milk producer households, and to create employment opportunities for extremely poor households—especially for women in those households—through various activities within the dairy value chain. The project was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented in 9 districts in the Northwestern Bangladesh from October 2007 to December 2012. Over the 5-year project period, the project increased the capacity and capabilities of women: 82 percent of the 36,400 producers; 71 percent of the 3425 farmer group leaders; 22 percent of 201 livestock health workers, 9 percent of the 333 trained milk collectors, 10 percent of 52 AI workers and 21 percent of 150 input dealers.

Though the SDVC project, like other CARE projects, had an important emphasis to increase women's involvement, the project's routine M&E process captured only limited quantitative data that reflected the project's impacts on gender and assets. Data analysis was limited and little could be perceived about the sustainable impacts on women's and men's asset acquisition and ownership, and related impacts on household and community gender dynamics.

There were indications from other project studies such as the

mid-term evaluation that the project was having positive impact on women's asset ownership (physical and natural capital), decision making power, and human, social and political capital. Evidence suggested that these impacts were having ripple effects on household and community gender dynamics. In order to scientifically verify these findings and assess the challenges faced by women striving to make a place in the dairy value chain, the SDVC-GAAP collaboration designed and implemented a series of qualitative tools.

CARE's activities to measure the impact of SDVC project on women's empowerment

Over the project period, different research initiatives have been facilitated and quantitative-qualitative tools were developed and utilized to measure the project's impact on women's empowerment in the SDVC project.

Collaborative research with IFPRI and ILRI researchers:

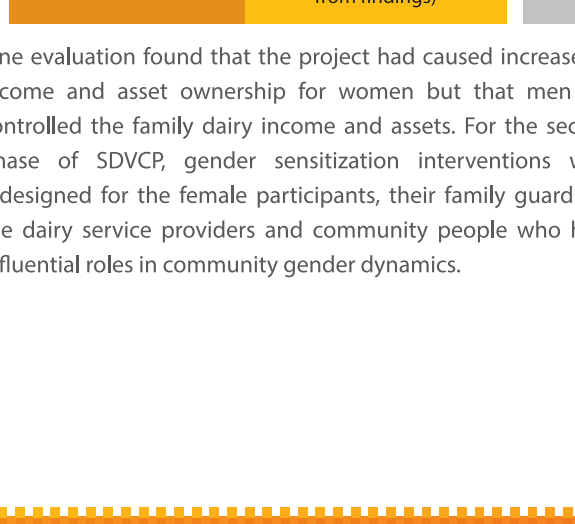
In order to better measure and track the impact on gender and asset ownership, in 2010 SDVC sought a partnership with the GAAP project, which is jointly implemented by IFPRI-ILRI International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). The purpose of this collaboration was to obtain a better understanding of SDVC's impacts on gender inequalities and asset disparities so that these can be dealt within other projects and contribute to better programming and outcomes in the future. This is in sync with the global focus being turned towards women in agriculture. In recent years, more attention has been given to women's role in agriculture. Through the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project, IFPRI and ILRI, researchers are paying more attention to gender differences in rights, resources, and responsibilities in

agriculture projects. The SDVC-GAAP collaboration was designed to use SDVC's existing M&E processes and data, to review these tools and available information, support quantitative analysis and to design and conduct qualitative studies. Over a period of the 38 months from April 2010 to June 2013, the SDVC-GAAP initiative looked at SDVC's ongoing M&E processes and data and introduced further research activities in the SDVC project area.

On-going monitoring on challenges for women and changes in the Women Empowerment (WE) strategy:

From the very beginning, the project had an objective to include women in the dairy value chain and identified the key obstacles faced by women who were participating in the dairy value chain and in developing their own business/ accessing assets. The project conducted further research and developed tools to assess women's empowerment. In phase I, the project was more focused on women's engagement in the value chain and their interactions at agency level. In-depth findings using WE monitoring tools developed in the first phase along with the end

Women Empowerment Strategy in SDVC II



line evaluation found that the project had caused increases in income and asset ownership for women but that men still controlled the family dairy income and assets. For the second phase of SDVCP, gender sensitization interventions were redesigned for the female participants, their family guardians, the dairy service providers and community people who have influential roles in community gender dynamics.

Achievements

Conceptual model on monitoring obstacles at different stages of value chain: The qualitative tools were developed based on a conceptual model (Fig 1), according to which women participating in dairying are perceived to face barriers from three primary sources—within the household, from society, and from other actors along the dairy value chain. Based on this framework, researchers attempted to understand the barriers faced by women inside and outside the home, to identify barriers with respect to gender and asset ownership. These findings also served to help design an outline of recommendations and interventions to address the barriers faced by women.

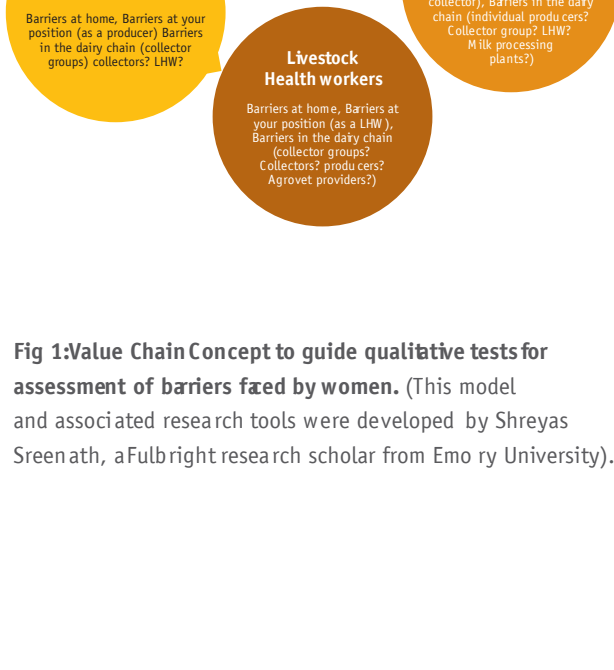


Fig 1: Value Chain Concept to guide qualitative tests for assessment of barriers faced by women. (This model and associated research tools were developed by Shreyas Sreenath, a Fulbright research scholar from Emory University).

The tools used based on the framework include 1) Barrier Tree Analysis, 2) Constructing the Dairy Value Chain Using Participatory Rural Appraisal, 3) 24-Hour Labor Allocation Time Clock and then an open discussion with the focus groups. Each group of participants was guided through these exercises uniformly. The focus groups consisted of producers and service providers and each group had 16 individuals. The discussions and exercises were conducted separately for males and females.

1. The barrier tree analysis – This tool was adapted from the PRA tool used to analyze violence against women. The participants actively participated in this exercise by identifying the different parts of the tree, for example the trunk and roots representing the root causes of barriers and the leaves representing the barriers. This exercise was also beneficial in awareness raising.

2. Constructing the Dairy Value Chain using Participatory Rural Appraisal – A map of the dairy value chain was formed and specific barriers identified in the barrier tree analysis were indicated on the map. This helped define from where the barriers had arisen.

Together, these two exercises helped define the areas of intervention to tackle the barriers.

3. 24-Hour Labor Allocation Time Clock – A major concern identified in the project was that with the introduction of improved dairy management practices, women's workload would increase. The project adapted another tool, which was an exercise that focused on a 24-hour clock and sought to understand the different work done by women and men at different times of the day. During this exercise, various questions about childcare and children are included to determine the workload of children.

The tools were used together and were followed with an open discussion with the participants. These discussions were conducted on an individual basis and served not only to inform the project about women and men's workloads but also to raise awareness about the disparities in their workload distributions.

In general, the main barriers identified were: women's low status because of traditional patriarchal attitudes, women's restriction in mobility, their heavy household workloads and weak control and decision-making power over income and assets.

Multilevel data collection and analysis: The qualitative tools were supported by quantitative data analyses. Multi-level data collection and analyses on project data provided new windows of learning and paved the road ahead for the project. Gender segregated data was used. Analyses of production, consumption, sales, milk quality and dairy income-use helped the project to engage individual progress of men and women dairy producers. Analysis of producer group cohesion, group access to market and services, linkages and group practice level changes on adoption of improved dairy practices gave insight into the progress of men, women and men-women producer group performances.



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Further quantitative analysis of gender segregated data on milk collection volume, milk quality, producers' satisfaction levels in the marketing of milk and producers' engagements with service providers showed changes in farming practices and the income of project trained producers. It also tracked the progress of project-trained female service providers working as livestock health workers, artificial insemination technicians and milk collectors.

Continued challenges

Since the literacy level of most of the participants is low, considerable effort is required to explain women's barriers and the technical issues of dairying that might contribute to creating barriers to WE. Furthermore, probing for barriers at the household level is a sensitive matter and not all participants are frank and honest. Men in particular do not recognize women's barriers and therefore the barrier tree analysis was not always easily conducted in men's groups. For the exercises to be fully effective, expert facilitation and planning is required.

Looking ahead

M&E tools are more effective when they incorporate participation and awareness-raising together. The qualitative tools designed and utilized by the project have proven useful in understanding the

extent of women's empowerment brought about by the project and complements the quantitative data collected on gender specific aspects. More importantly, it provides direction in designing interventions that can bring about greater women's empowerment.

After using this tool over the short period, female participants have reported that in participating in these exercises, men have become more understanding of women's roles in the dairy value chain and especially supportive of women by easing their workloads. Therefore, in addition to collecting information, these exercises have proven to be good awareness-raising activities. These tools can be improved with further testing and expert facilitation and developed into generic training modules that can be adapted for using in other value chain projects where women's participation is a major focus.

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