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| Designation | : | |
| Title | : | <i>An analysis of a small scale water project in Gopalganj from the perspective of a gender analytical framework</i> |
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1. Background

The National Women's Development Policy 1997 and the National Water Policy 1999 of Bangladesh emphasize the importance of promoting gender equity by involving men and women at different levels in water resources programmes, including decision making and implementation. This study assessed the extent of gender equality achieved in a Small Scale Water Resources Development Sector Project, namely the Balajtala-Kalmdanga Subproject in the southwestern region of the country.

2. Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to assess the extent of gender equality progress in the Balajtala-Kalmdanga water subproject, while specific objectives are:

- i. To assess the extent of gender equality progress in the Balajtala-Kalmdanga Water Subproject; and
- ii. To identify the area of strengths and gaps of water concerned gender equality issues in the subproject.

3. Study area

Balajtala-Kalmdanga Sub-project is located in Barni Union of Tungipara Upazila in Gopalganj District. There is one main khal, namely, Swanirvar khal within the Subproject, which originates from the low land of the Barni Baor to the West of the Subproject, passes through the Subproject area and falls into the Singair River to the East of the Subproject. There are two other khals, namely, Hazir khal and Balajtala khal within the subproject.

Population

The Subproject has 1165 households with 7110 population of which 37.43% are landless farmers and about 25.14% are marginal farmers. The larger farmers comprise only about 4.58 %. The gender participation in the Subproject was ascertained through formation of the WMCA of Balajtala-Kalmdanga Sub-project by 454 members, where 150 were females.

Household economic status information

Agriculture is the major occupation of the farmers. About 44.5% of the poor households in the subproject area live below poverty level and among them, about 63.4% send their children for elementary school. According to field data, about 37.43% households within the Subproject area are landless and among the total households about 25% live below the poverty level.

Water management activity

The subproject is maintained and operated by WMCA. Each of the WMCA comprises of female and male members, both, as beneficiaries and participants of the project. 24 men and 12 women of WMA have taken loan from micro-credit programmes in the Subproject. Women carry out their household activities without difficulty due to easy accessibility to water resources. Along with their male counterparts, women are taking parts in various water management related activities, viz. embankment maintenance, khal re-excavation, etc.

4. Methodology

Primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Reconnaissance survey has been conducted in the Sub-project area in August 2007. The data had been processed, analyzed and presented in a qualitative manner. Primary data were collected through field visits in the study area. A variety of techniques like FGDs, case studies and informal interview were used to extract gender information. The primary data collected as such would be used to develop and analyze different component profiles of the Harvard Analytical Framework. In addition to the above, in-depth case studies of the lives and works of three women respondents have also been completed to have a better insight into the water use problems and their links with women's work and time.

5. Research findings

- .. As per CIDA's scaling criteria, gender equality progress in the intervened area lies in 'ENCOURAGING' category and control area in 'MODEST category.
- .. The water availability in the intervened area brought advantages for the project people with increased irrigation facilities, agricultural production, fish cultivation, rearing of livestock, poultry farming, washing & bathing, sanitation and health, income generation, job opportunities, etc., and enhanced the gender equality progress.
- .. As per access and control profiles, women in the intervened area have improved their status within the household as well as in the community through knowledge, awareness, and mobility.
- .. The participation as well as position of women in WMCA is tokenistic.
- .. Women are more vulnerable in case of decision making in the control area and are less informed about water project programmes by WMCA or LGED officials.
- .. Men and women are deprived of many kinds of water related benefits in the control area (Shingipara) due to lack of water availability and the women suffer more.
- .. The people in the control area get some opportunities for income generation activities due to increase of productive activities in the intervened area.

6. Recommendations

- .. Enhance women's access to financial services through relevant mechanisms and by allocating a minimum quota of loans for women.
- .. Enhance women's capacities by allocating a minimum quota for women in the training session.
- .. Proper selection of men and women should be arranged from both, control area and intervened area for all sorts of training by LGED officials.
- .. Enhance women's primary health care services in the study area by LGED or other NGOs.
- .. LGED officials should give due attention to gender issues in selection of training location.
- .. Ensure equal pay for women through implementation of guidelines and policies for earth work.
- .. Enhance women's capacities by allocating a minimum quota for women in O&M committee and decision making.
- .. LGED female officials should pay frequent visits to the sub-project to give more attention to gender issues.
- .. Ensure neutral selection of WMCA members.
- .. Religious values should be given importance by the Government, NGO and other researchers for further study.