

Project Information

- **Country:** Kenya
- **Project Name:** Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project: SHEP, Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion Unit Project: SHEP UP (Technical Cooperation)
- **Cooperation Period:** 2006 - 2009/ 2010 - 2015
- **Implementing Organization:** Ministry of Agriculture

women do not receive any benefits in payment for their contribution to the farming activities, so that they obtained small earnings from growing traditional vegetables and beans in home gardens and selling them. In general, men have the decision-making power in the households. Women have limited access to land, technical trainings, credits and extension services. Under the circumstances, women's motivation for farming tends to decline, which hinders effective farm management.

1. Background and Project Summary

The agriculture sector plays an important role in Kenyan economy. It contributes to 24% of the GDP and employs over 80% of the labor force. As more than 75% of agricultural produce traded in the market is produced by smallholders, it is essential for smallholders to "earn" from agriculture for promoting agriculture as a vital industry. JICA implemented "Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project: SHEP" for three years from 2006 targeting smallholders who had been left behind by the remarkable growth of the horticulture sub-sector, with the aim of capacity development of the smallholder horticulture farmer groups and improvement in livelihoods of smallholders by increasing their incomes. SHEP encouraged farmers to engage in market-oriented production and farming management and improve rural infrastructure for transportation all by themselves through a series of trainings and a range of activities. This resulted in increasing the incomes of 2,500 farmers around twofold on average in two years. In light of the success of the SHEP, the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya set up a new unit, known as the SHEP Unit, to expand the project approach nationwide. "Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion Unit Project: SHEP UP", which is now under implementation, promotes horticultural farming by smallholders through supporting the nationwide activities implemented by the Unit.

2. Socio-economic Situation of Rural Areas in Kenya from the Gender Perspective

Women undertake 70-80% of the agricultural productive activities in horticulture farming. They also carry out most of the reproductive tasks including domestic duties and childrearing. Women's heavy burden of productive and reproductive work causes agricultural productivity to deteriorate and has an adverse effect on the quality of life in a household. Men are more engaged in production of cash crops on a large scale such as coffee, tea, maize and sugarcane, while women are more involved in production of sorghum, bananas and vegetables in addition to the above-mentioned cash crops. Men control their incomes from the sale of the agricultural produce, while

3. Gender-responsive Activities

Various gender-responsive activities have been implemented for effective farm management and improvement in productivity and incomes.

(1) Identification of issues related to the roles and decision-making by gender

The first gender-responsive activity was to identify the issues related to the roles and decision-making power between men and women in the project areas. While experts conducted a survey to identify the issues that hinder effective farm management, male and female farmers themselves discussed and identified the gender-related challenges they faced through participatory trainings. Sharing gender-related issues among male and female participants in the trainings using participatory gender analysis tools contributed to seeing the gender roles and decision-making in a new light.



(2) Measures against the identified issues related to the roles and decision-making by gender

a. Women's participation in the trainings:

Women have limited access to the opportunities of trainings though they are engaged in a wide range of farming activities. There is a clear division of labor by gender in farming in Kenya, so that the information and techniques conveyed to men are not necessarily shared with women. The projects ensure equal opportunity of participation for men and women in the training.

b. Family budgeting by a husband and a wife:

In rural areas in Kenya, a husband and a wife manage their incomes separately and never share with each other. It leads to a waste of money and duplication of spending. The projects introduced a family budgeting training and encouraged husbands and wives to manage their incomes together.

(3) Assistance for sustainable gender-responsive activities

a. Capacity development of extension officers and related staff on gender: A series of trainings on gender is provided to extension officers and related staff of agricultural offices. After the trainings, follow-up activities are also conducted for the effective provision of gender-sensitive extension services.

b. Women's participation in farmer groups: The project introduced a system to assess the level of cohesiveness in a farmer group in terms of three essential factors: leadership, cooperation among members and gender. Through this self-assessment by the farmers themselves, women's participation in farmer group activities is facilitated. Additionally, the project encourages the selection of more than 30% women as group officials.

4. Positive Effects of Gender-responsive Activities

(1) Consciousness-raising of men and women farmers as co-managers of farming

Husbands never used to treat wives as respectable farmers. However, they came to listen to the opinions of their wives on farm management since their incomes from horticultural farming have increased through working hand in hand with their wives. Only men used to make decisions on dispersion of agrichemicals, selection of crops to grow, investments in agriculture, etc. Since women started participating in the technical trainings, they have also taken part in the decision-making in farming. The growing sense of men and women as co-managers in farming contributes to building trust between a husband and a wife and improving their relationship.

Voice of a male farmer

Previously, I used to count my money in the toilet to avoid being watched over by my wife. After attending the SHEP trainings on gender, I started valuing the role my wife played and started to include her in the management of our income. We are all happy since we now respect each other and also because our livelihood has actually improved a lot from horticultural farming.

(2) Reduction of women's heavy workload through the behavioral change

Husbands who had realized the advantage of working together with their wives to improve productivity and incomes gradually began to pay attention to the heavy workload women bore and started to help wives with domestic duties and childrearing. Women could then allocate more time to farming activities due to the mitigation of their heavy workload.

(3) Increased income due to effective farm management

Farmers who had participated in the project activities saw their incomes increase because they manage farming activities effectively with a long-term vision. Women of women-headed households, who used to have had limited opportunities for trainings, took part in the farmer groups and trainings as well, and they too have increased their incomes with newly learned management skills.

(4) Enhancement of women's motivation for farming through reallocation of benefits

Men used to control incomes and women used to earn little money from farming, so that women's motivation for engaging in productive work declined. With the support of the project, women acting as co-managers of farm management have received a part of the profits generated from farming in payment for their contribution to the farming activities. It enhances women's motivation toward the improvement in productivity.

Voice of a female farmer

I didn't know what I worked for. But now I know that I play an important role in increasing our income from farming. I can work with my husband more positively since the more I work, the more I earn an income.

5. Positive Impacts of Gender-responsive Activities on the Community

(1) Improvement in living standards in a community

Improvement in incomes and efficient family budgeting exercises have contributed to the improved living standards in households including sending children to a private school and purchasing a water pump. Improvement in the nutritional conditions of children was also observed.

(2) Women's participation in decision-making in a community and economic empowerment

Through participation in the project activities, women confidently express their opinions in community meetings. The number of women elected as farmer group officials has increased. In addition, some women save money out of their improved incomes and start small-scale businesses.

SHEP/ SHEP UP demonstrate that gender-responsive activities contribute to improvement in agricultural productivity and farmers' incomes. It is expected that agricultural extension services in Kenya will be practiced with the gender perspective and such effects will be disseminated all over the rural communities in Kenya.