

Project Information

- **Country:** Madagascar
- **Project Name:** Project for Rice Productivity Improvement in Central Highland (Technical Cooperation)
- **Cooperation Period:** 2009 - 2015
- **Implementing Organization:** Ministry of Agriculture

1. Background and Project Summary

The people of Madagascar eat rice as a staple and their per capita annual consumption of rice is almost double that of Japan, reaching 120 kilograms. 70% of the farmers in the country grow rice. However, domestic production of rice is prone to fluctuations due to climate effects such as cyclones, and as a result, 10% of rice consumption relies on imports. The government of Madagascar has aimed to increase production by 300% within 10 years of 2008, and it also aims to become an exporter of rice. To increase rice production in the densely populated highlands area, JICA started the Project in 2009 and has been working on the development of an “integrated technical package” to improve yield, improvement of the seed propagation and seed distribution system, and creation of a coaching system for rice production techniques.

2. Situation of Rural Areas in Madagascar from the Gender Perspective

According to a survey in 2001, 78% of women work in the agriculture sector and produce more than half of the subsistence agriculture products. In addition to agricultural activities, women deal with water, wood energy collection, food cooking, and child care. They work up to 16-18 hours per day if all their activities are counted. Yet rural women have low influence and power on the decision-making process inside their families. The lower the family income, the more exclusive control men have over income management.

3. Gender-responsive Activities

(1) Ensuring “equal opportunity”

The project aims to ensure “equal opportunity” between men and women in their daily activities, e.g. equal participation of a husband and a wife in trainings and other activities. The reason is that agriculture requires collaboration between men and women, so that dissemination of techniques and educational tools become effective when they are accepted by both men and women. The following are the specific gender-responsive activities.

a. Sharing of experiences between men and women: Experiences are shared by participating in

the training together, men doing “women’s” work even though it is usually done by women, and vice versa.

b. Creating an environment for both men and women to express their opinions easily: Though it is not difficult for women to express their opinions in front of men during trainings and other opportunities in Madagascar, both male and female trainers/ facilitators are arranged to listen to everyone’s opinions equally.

c. Making a decision jointly by men and women: The project promotes joint decision-making, for example, on comments on revision of the “integrated technical package” developed by the project, and on a method for family budget management.



(2) Development of techniques and educational tools acceptable for both men and women

a. Improvement of techniques based on the opinions of men and women: There is a clear division of labor by gender in rice cultivation in Madagascar. Thus, men and women might have different opinions on the same new techniques introduced by the project. Therefore, further technical improvement was done based on the opinions of both men and women to reduce the labor of the male or female farmers who are actually engaged in the work. While weeding by a weeder is “male” work, the project developed a barrow-type weeder so that female heads of households could easily utilize it on their own without men.

b. Appearance of women in educational tools: While activities of rice cultivation are done equally by men and women, illustrations and photographs in educational tools of various agricultural projects in Madagascar depict mostly men. The project uses women’s images proactively in educational tools to emphasize that “agriculture is not only for men.”

Women play an important part in farming. Increasing women’s productivity through new techniques leads directly to improvement in the livelihood of the household. It is expected that the gender-responsive activities in the project will be applied to other agriculture projects in Madagascar.