

# CAN SMALL-SCALE IRRIGATION EMPOWER WOMEN?

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TRANSCRIPT

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## PRESENTERS

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## MODERATOR

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Julie MacCartee:

Great. Thank you so much to all our presenters for your excellent and thorough presentations. I really like these top takeaways. I think they're very useful, so I hope that all of you joining on the webinar will also let us know if these top takeaways resonate with you, if you think that they will be useful for your work.

All right. Well, we have some time now for questions and answers. We've been collecting the questions that have come in along the way. And so we'll run through them. And we encourage you to continue the discussion on Agrilinks [some interference with the mic on and off for few minutes or so] in this chat box at any time. And we'll get through as many as we can over the next 30 minutes or so.

All right. So, first up, we'll kinda go back towards the beginning, and ask a question to Claudia that came in from Indra. "While training can be designed and provided to women, how is the regional industry, namely men, being educated to be more accepting of women?"

Claudia Ringler:

Yeah. Very quickly, taken together with the that talks about awareness. So this is really good together. If you go back to the very original slide that I showed, we talk about reach, benefit, and empower. We do – as shown here, we do need to start with reaching women by informing them about the technology, then on how to get credit for the technology. But as soon as we move towards benefit and empowering, we actually have to make sure we talk to women and men. In fact, you always want to talk to both women and men. And if you actually want to move toward empowering small holders, we have to be sure that we don't just talk with men in the households, but that we also talk to communities and women.

'Cause the long-term goal is to change gender norms that family members over irrigation improves outcomes for everyone, not just for the women, but for the family, for family health, nutrition, and that's something that all men want. Each man in the family want strong, healthy children that thrive, that have better opportunities for future income earning. And that's the same with the women.

I think the goal is that we don't stop at reaching women with some training activities, but that we move beyond, reach out community and reach out men. And that's really a main factor makes a very large different.

Julie MacCartee: And Indra also asked a follow-up question, which was: "Additionally, what steps are being taken to raise awareness with larger that may rely on small stakeholders serving in the or small holders serving?"

Claudia Ringler: Okay. Maybe just to follow on. In fact, something we didn't talk about here in the PowerPoint is we implemented three large irrigation gender trainings that were focused at government agencies and implementers of irrigation project in the three countries: Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. We had a very strong turnout and strong positive feedback. And there's a lot of materials that can be used that were developed for those trainings, that can be used to reach out to additional agencies and implementers, and even funders. So those materials are available for everyone. And we believe that we do need to have this training, provide this training. Because a lot of the terminology sounds challenging to the traditional irrigation engineer who's implementing these projects. And I think that's what we need: we just need to increase capacity on the topic.

Sophie Theis: I think the focus of this research and this presentation is so much on the role of agribusiness, but it sounds like your question is curious about that. There does seem to be, based on this research, a business case to be made for better and more inclusively disseminating irrigation technologies to both men and women. So we've seen cases of agribusiness companies working in Africa that are actively disseminating irrigation technology and make their contract farmers more productive.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Thank you. I think we will skip down to a question that came in during Elizabeth's presentation from Emily Miller, which was about the WEAI scores. "Are the WEAI scores significantly different between those who use irrigation and those who don't? Was that something that you were able to observe?"

Elizabeth Bryan: So, the WEAI scores that I presented are the population-based measures. And my understanding is that can't look at statistical significance – the difference between those two measures. But I think there are other indicators that you can do that with. Like the 5DE would be one. So that is something that we're planning to do, but the table that I showed – we did not calculate the statistical significance of the difference between those scores. But I have talked to the people that created the WEAI and create the index. So we will look for ways to look at the difference between the individual WEAI scores.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Thank you. And, Nicole, a few questions came in for you from Indra Klein. And I think we'll go to the second one that's here on our list first: "Has maintenance of management of equipment been a deterrent for women? If not, are there any data on whether there is different pricing for repair and maintenance where women owners are concerned?" So, a little bit of a spotlight on equipment maintenance and how that could affect women.

Nicole Lefore: Okay. I hope you can hear me because I am having some issues with connectivity.

Julie MacCartee: We can hear you well, Nicole.

Nicole Lefore: Okay. Good. So in the various interviewed we did – and we would always ask about constraints. There was never any mention by women about access to maintenance. And also there wasn't any mention of differential payments or prices for women and men. In the cost-benefit analysis, we know that men and women both pay the same for other inputs and for all of the services and for daily labor. So, on the one hand, there isn't any reason to believe that it would be more expensive for women than men to – that they would be charged more for that repair and maintenance. However, I think it's an interesting point. Because women often have less mobility. So they won't necessarily have a bicycle, or there may be some social norms around traveling alone. And in most cases also, they would be taking equipment for maintenance in – it could be even as far as the district capital. So we could see there some issues arise about women accessing repair and maintenance.

Now, one of the potential solutions to that is a service provider model where you would actually have people who repair pumps but actually go to the field to repair them at the household or within the field itself. And we're seeing this pop up in places where they're providing service provision around – the pumps themselves, for one, but also providing fuel or providing some other kinds of support, not necessarily repair and maintenance yet. But we could see the potential for a service provider model here that could be a really good opportunity, and would help to address those issues around mobility. But I do take it as an important point, and I appreciate that you've raised that.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Thank you, Nicole. And we'll go to another question for you, which was: given challenges regarding financing for women, do you have any thoughts on how local ISE and female-focused microfinance offices have been included in bringing about change?

Nicole Lefore: Yeah. I think that there's an important thing to state here, which is that microfinance actually has very limited reach in rural areas. And one of the indicators that we looked at or one of the variables we looked at was proximity to any source of microfinance. And it's low in all countries that we are working in. The other thing is that the women-focused microfinance institutions and the financial service providers often don't reach rural areas at all, and they cite the high transaction costs of operating in the rural areas, and also high risks, and they prefer to lend to women for trading. So there is a lack of incentive there for some of the lending agencies to be involved in targeting women for irrigation technologies.

Also it's important the range of interest rates and the terms and conditions provided by different microfinance institutions. Oftentimes the microfinance institutions that're women-focused charge higher interest rates than cooperatives or informal sources. So, for example, in Ghana, the interest rate through a formal microfinance institution can be more than 50 percent a year. That's extremely high. And that's one of the reason why the farmer prefer to go to a local cooperative or an informal source. So I think one of the key issues here is: how do you create an incentive for a microfinance institution, though they're targeting women, to take on a higher risk and a high transaction cost to try to reach women in rural areas? And we just don't really see much of a priority put on that by the microfinance institutions, even if they are women-focused?

Julie MacCartee: Very interesting. Thank you. Certainly if anyone on the webinar has experience with microfinance institutions and wants to chime in on what you've seen, that would be fantastic. And actually it looks like Ruth has put in a comment in that regard. Very interesting. Thank you, Ruth, for sharing that perspective.

All right. So, now we'll jump down to a question that came in from Sudiere Yadaf, which actually also came in during your presentation, Nicole: "Is there any behavior study to understand why men give priority to labor-saving technologies while women look for multiple-use technologies? If women are seen as labor in the society, they might give priority to technologies to reduce

their drudgery." So do you see any behavioral reason for those differences in priorities?

Nicole Lefore:

Well, there's a way in which you can look at this and understand it as the same priority. Because women are giving priority to multiple-use technologies because it saves them labor. Men are doing it because it saves labor for irrigation, but multiple-use options because it saves them labor not just for irrigation, but also for collecting domestic water, feeding livestock, household, water need, basically. So there's a way in which it's both about reducing labor. It's just that women approach that reduction in a different way than men do.

And there is a clear indication from the qualitative research that there is an interest in reducing drudgery. There was a very interesting case in Ghana where one community had a high level of out-migration of women, actually, to provide labor along the border with Burkina Faso in agriculture. And the men in that particular community really focused on ways that they could get technologies to reduce drudgery for both domestic and agricultural purposes, specifically for women. Because they felt that it was important that women weren't really pushed to or forced to migrate to help the household income. So I think there is some similarities there between both men and women about prioritizing labor saving. They just have a different entry point to do that. And I think that where the incentives are right, men do also prioritize reducing drudgery for women. It just depends on the local incentives in that particular case.

Julie MacCartee:

Excellent. Thank you. And, as all of you can see, we've just put up a slide on our screen with just some coming attractions in November. So we just wanted to make you aware of these. We'll keep going with questions. But, for one point, we will be holding a continued discussion on Agrilinks stemming from this webinar. So if you have further questions or just want to engage a little bit further, share some resources. We'll make sure you have that link to click over to our discussion.

And we also have a few webinars coming up. A webinar next week on strengthening civil society's role in development, focusing on the Feed the Future civil society handbook. And also we have a gender focus on Agrilinks in November, so we're putting out a call for lots of resources, stories, blog posts, etcetera. If you have anything to share related to agricultural development and food security, you can post it directly on Agrilinks, or get in touch with us through e-mail.

And also just to flag next week – oh, no, that is actually later this week – a special LandLinks webinar on the business case for land rights. We'll make sure you have that link in the chat box as well.

Okay. So onto a few more questions. Let's see. We had one come in during Sophie's presentation, also from Indra Klein, who wanted to ask about movements among women to come together and begin change to renegotiate contracts that provide more benefit of technology, especially with the use of mobile tech and social media as a galvanizer. That's quite a question.

Sophie Theis: Wow. I think you should lead the way.

[Laughter]

So, I don't know about the use of mobile technology and social media for this purpose. We do see though, and often organically, women on their own initiative forming groups to either purchase or rent land along an irrigation canal in order to irrigate. Or come together – some examples Nicole mentioned – and collectively purchase irrigation pumps. I think the point is that irrigation is quite transformative. It allows you to often produce a whole other harvest and assure your production despite increasingly variable rainfall. And often shift to higher-value crop. So it's quite valuable to people. And women value this as well.

So, example that I saw was in Ethiopia recently a group of women had taken credit from the local women's credit league to rent land along an irrigation canal. Was just women, women-run. They did this because this was a way for them – a strategy for them to retain control over all of their earnings and production despite the extra labor. So it would be great if – there may be movements going on that I'm not aware of, and it'd be great if organizations could be supportive of women's groups that are taking the initiative on this going forward.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Thank you, Sophie. Let's see. I think we'll jump to a question from Emily Miller that I thought looked interesting. "Are efforts to get women's input on priorities and design being sustained? I've only seen one project to date in this

regard." So I'm assuming that she means getting input from the beneficiaries of a project about what that project is going to cover or what the priorities are. Have you seen that in this particular realm?

Claudia Ringler:

I mean, maybe too add there – I mean, to make sure that these efforts are sustained, you need a whole bunch of impact pathways. And one impact pathway that we have used in Ethiopia is to directly work with the Agricultural Transformation Agency, their gender expert, who is actually feeding in our result into policy documents, to ensure that all effort in Ethiopia on household irrigation are beneficial to women, and not just – again, from reach to benefit to empower. That's one impact pathway that you actually tried to go up to the policy level with the national government and make sure that this is enshrined. But of course, as we know, in our even enshrining such – enshrining gender in policy documents doesn't necessarily mean that we're gonna actually reach women, empower them. So we have to work at various levels.

And, again, as we mentioned before, we have been doing these gender irrigation trainings with agencies and actually technical people who directly implement projects. Then we have to work again at the community level talking with community leaders. But I think an issue that you also raised by posing that question is: to what extent are we able to go back five years after one of these Feed the Future Innovation Lab projects has ended – can we go back after five years and see what has been sustained? How have women been empowered? And that is I guess a challenge that all of us – both from the research side and from the implementation side – have. Because we usually then have to move on to another project. So we have definitely seen on gender a lack of learning in terms of coming back few years after an intervention has taken place. So that's something where more effort certainly is needed.

Julie MacCartee:

Thank you. And a question came in from Nama Ras Yasif, who was hoping that the team here could elaborate on women's preferences for types of technology, manual versus solar, etcetera. And also to please talk a little bit about scaling up of these technologies. And it sounds like Nicole is probably the best person to tackle that one. Nicole?

Nicole Lefore:

Yeah. The technology that was prioritized by women, but also by men, was solar. Perhaps for different reasons. But that was the technology that they preferred. The women like it because it doesn't require the physical labor that, for example, manual pumps require. Like pulley and rope and washer can be difficult to

manage, particular for kids who have to help with household and domestic water collection. But women also preferred the solar because of the fact that it was installed near the household. So women – for example, rope and washer was also installed near the household, and women liked the fact that the clean groundwater with rope and washer. But then if you figure in the labor aspects, they preferred solar over it.

In terms of scaling, what we're doing in this project is looking at how the different approaches to irrigation and sort of different technologies and crop combinations can be scaled in different locations. So, mapping it based on the suitability of a technology and a crop. And we're also looking at the institutions and regulatory environment that either enhance or constrain scaling in the different countries where we're working. And one of the things that we're trying to focus on more in these last few months of the project is looking at the private sector role in scaling. Because, in most cases, the supply chain for the technologies themselves are underdeveloped in these countries. And developing those supply chains – it is quite a complex process. So we're trying to engage more with the private sector and look at opportunities for service provision as well as supply chain development.

So that is some of the ways that we are looking at the potential for scaling. But in order to look at the potential for scaling, we first had to do this research to understand what fit in what different context.

Elizabeth Bryan:

Yeah. I just wanna emphasize again that the context is really important. Although we wanna have these silver bullets to figure out "How can we reach women and benefit women and empower women, and what are women's preferences?" again, I think we have to be careful because, in every context the constraints are gonna be different; women's roles in agriculture are gonna be different; their preferences are gonna be different. So I think it's important to remember that we need to not only – in our work, in the context that we're working, I think we're getting a better idea. But as these interventions are scaled, and as other interventions are developed in other places – I think somebody was asking about Latin America – it's important to think about: "What are the specific preferences women have? What are the specific constraints they have? How are gender roles in agriculture?"

And so I just want people not to leave the webinar thinking that we have all the answer and we can solve it today, but that this is a continual learning process as we improve people's access to water.

Sophie Theis:

And I think as we – one output that we're developing now are a series of questions that practitioners can use to ask the people they're trying to serve what it is that they want, what their household relationships and community relationships are like, in order to design projects that really meet their needs. I think we've learned a lot through this research about ways to ask this question, and domains of sharing costs and benefits. And it will be good for us. Stay tuned for that basically.

Julie MacCartee:

Excellent. Well, I think that's a really strong note to wrap our webinar. We've gotten through a lot of our questions, and we are actually going to be continuing the questions over on Agrilinks, through an Agrilinks discussion. We'll be sure to post that link in the chat box. It's also up there on the left of your screen.

Thank you all for filling out our polls today. They're very helpful to help us look forward to future webinars and figure out what we can do to make the webinar experience better for all of you. And if you are interested in joining the Agrilinks mailing list, please do put your e-mail in the box there on the center of your screen. The responses are hidden for that question, so it won't be broadcast to everyone, but we collect your e-mail and make sure that you are aware of any future Agrilinks events, and get on our mailing list.

All right. I think we were able to tackle pretty much all of the questions. But, again, click over to Agrilinks if you have more. And I would like to extend a sincere thank-you to all of our presenters for joining us today. It was really a great presentation. And, more importantly, I'd like to extend a thank-you to all of you, our participants. Thank you for the great questions, for the engagement, and for continuing to attend Agrilinks webinars, and making them worth it for us to help you as much as possible in your work.

So we're gonna go ahead and sign off. But be on the lookout for the recording in case you'd like to share this with your colleagues. And we will be happy to engage with you further through Agrilinks. All right. Thank you all.

Adam S.:

Thanks, all.

[End of Audio]