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Inclusive Growth:
Empowering Women and Youth in
Rice Farming in Africa.



INCLUSIVE GROWTH: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN RICE FARMING IN AFRICA

PREPARED FOR THE COALITION FOR AFRICAN RICE DEVELOPMENT (CARD)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Achieving sustainable and inclusive rice sector transformation in Africa requires intentional efforts to empower women and youth, key actors whose contributions remain under-recognized and under-supported. Despite their significant involvement in rice production, processing, and marketing, women and youth face systemic barriers, including limited access to land, finance, technology, extension services, and decision-making platforms. These constraints not only undermine their livelihoods but also limit national productivity, food security, and economic growth.

This policy brief, developed through a collaborative effort by AfricaRice, IRRI, AGRA, and JICA in support of CARD, presents evidence-based recommendations to mainstream gender and youth inclusion into National Rice Development Strategies (NRDS). The proposed actions aim to close critical gaps in equity, build resilience to climate change, and unlock the transformative potential of inclusive agricultural development. Eight strategic recommendations are put forward, from institutionalizing gender-disaggregated data systems to promoting gender-responsive innovation bundles and addressing gender-based violence (GBV), to ensure that the benefits of increased rice production are equitably shared. By integrating these recommendations into the renewal of NRDS frameworks across CARD member countries, policymakers can catalyze inclusive growth, enhance productivity, and contribute to achieving the CARD target of doubling rice production to 56 million tons by 2030.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the cornerstone of Sub-Saharan Africa's economy, contributing significantly to food and nutrition security and economic development; in 2022, it accounted for approximately 17% of the continent's economic output, generating livelihoods for around 70% of households¹. Rice provides an estimated 9% of the continent's caloric intake². However, domestic rice production in Africa currently meets only 50-60% of demand, necessitating costly imports and threatening food security. Several factors contribute to this shortfall, including inadequate irrigation, the use of outdated farming techniques, inadequate access to essential productive resources and extension services, and the increasing impacts of climate change. The Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), in partnership with 32 Sub-Saharan African rice-producing countries, 14 Development Partners, 5 Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and South-South cooperation partners aims to promote equitable and sustainable farming practices that increase rice productivity from 28 million tons to 56 million tons by 2030. While progress has been made, sustainability and inclusiveness remain major challenges. Women and youth who constitute a large share of the agricultural labor force are often excluded from decision-making, ownership of assets, and access to modern technologies and markets. Although some National Rice Development Strategies (NRDS) acknowledge gender and youth issues, they lack binding targets, monitoring mechanisms, and actionable plans. Without deliberate inclusion, the goal of equitable and resilient rice sector growth will remain unattainable. Recognizing the critical importance of inclusivity, CARD Phase 2 intends to prioritize the integration of women and youth in the rice sector, acknowledging their contributions and capabilities while addressing the specific challenges they face.

Restrictive social norms and practices disproportionately affect women and youth, hindering their full and effective participation and leadership in rice farming. While both men and women contribute significantly to rice farming, women often have less ownership and control over assets and decision-making power compared to men. Similarly, young people, despite their potential to drive innovation and modernise farming practices and outputs, frequently encounter significant barriers in accessing resources and opportunities. These constraints limit their engagement and investment in rice-based agrifood systems, ultimately impacting productivity and economic gains.

This policy brief examines the role and challenges faced by women and youth in rice farming, intending to foster more equitable participation, enhance profitability and sustainability, and improve household food security and overall livelihoods. It provides recommendations for implementing gender-transformative approaches within CARD member countries, ensuring that the benefits of increased rice production are shared by all.

¹ https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/news_documents/ader_2024_-_chapter_2_en.pdf

² Rice production in Africa: Challenges and opportunities



WOMEN AND YOUTH CONTRIBUTIONS TO RICE FARMING IN AFRICA

In African rice-farming communities, women and youth play a crucial role³ in every node of the rice value chain, from the production of seeds and paddy to processing, marketing, and consumption. Studies have evidenced women's labor contribution to rice cultivation and processing from three percent of total labor input to over 80 percent, depending on the rice agroecosystem at the production level, whereas their participation in post-production activities such as rice aggregation, wholesale, and retailing is only as low as less than 5% to 35%⁴.

In production, the gender division of rice farming activities shows a complex and unbalanced system, at the ex-

pense of women and youth who are the main labour suppliers. Women and youth are often responsible for labor-intensive tasks such as transplanting, weeding, paddy-drying, and harvesting. These tasks require significant time and effort. They also carry out post-harvest activities, including threshing, milling. Women and youth are also actively engaged in value-added processing, such as parboiling, producing rice-based products, and marketing in the local markets. Although the specific activities and level of involvement vary depending upon factors like region, access to resources, and cultural norms, some common activities of women and youth include:



Womens' involvement in manual labor-intensive activities is primarily shaped by the socio-cultural factors and traditional gender roles that place them in agricultural production as mere wives of farmers, but not farmers and agripreneurs in their own right. This invisibility limits

their access to training, credit, inputs, and policy benefits¹². In addition, women's tasks are characterized by low mechanization.

3 <https://epar.evans.uw.edu/gender-cropping-in-sub-saharan-africa-rice/>

4 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2025.2466636>

5 Women's access to agricultural technologies in rice production and processing hubs: A comparative analysis of Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tanzania - ScienceDirect

6 C:\Users\keisu\Desktop\JICA\1. NRRDSE\20191213 Stakeholders meeting\20200305 To Molla\20200305 NRDS-2 Final.docx

7 Women's access to agricultural technologies in rice production and processing hubs: A comparative analysis of Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tanzania - ScienceDirect

8 C:\Users\keisu\Desktop\JICA\1. NRRDSE\20191213 Stakeholders meeting\20200305 To Molla\20200305 NRDS-2 Final.docx

9 madagascar_nrd3.pdf

10 senegal_nrd2.pdf

11 Kinkingninhoun Medagbe FM, Komatsu S, Mujawamariya G and Saito K (2020) Men and Women in Rice Farming in Africa: A Cross-Country Investigation of Labor and Its Determinants. Front. Sustain. Food Syst. 4:117. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2020.00117

12 Gender & Cropping in Sub-Saharan Africa: Rice - EPAR

The youth actively participate, alongside their household members, in key activities along the rice value chain, as self-employed, employers, or laborers. The youth's access to capital, credit, land, and adequate infrastructure are the key drivers of participation.

Empowering women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in the rice value chain drives inclusive economic growth and expands employment opportunities. Evidence suggests that increasing youth participation in agriculture helps address the challenges of an aging farm population while enhancing agricultural productivity. In Nigeria,

the intensive engagement of youth in agriculture resulted in a 3.9% increase in productivity and a 12.2% rise in revenue within the rice sector. This growth is largely attributed to the utilization of youth-driven skills, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, market access, and improved efficiency. Furthermore, studies indicate that youth engagement in agricultural value chains generates higher ripple effects, with off-farm activities, such as processing, packaging, and marketing, creating 11% to 40% more jobs compared to on-farm production segments.

CHALLENGES WOMEN AND YOUTH FACE IN RICE FARMING

While women and youth are central to rice farming, they face disproportionate structural and social barriers that constrain their productivity and economic empowerment due to the following factors:

Limited access to productive resources: In many African countries, women and youth often do not have access to and control over productive resources such as land, finance, inputs, and technology, hence limiting productivity, as evidenced by the lower yields realized by women. Land ownership is predominantly male-owned and controlled, and as such, this restricts women's ability to optimize their production capacity. Evidence in Ghana showed that limited access to credit and financial resources restricts women's ability to obtain improved rice varieties, fertilizers, and more efficient farming tools, including on-farm mechanization, digital tools and other related technologies^{13,14,15}. When some operations are mechanized (to save time, reduce the energy burdens, or improve the farming process, they tend to be taken over by males¹⁶.

Gender bias in agricultural extension services: The extension and advisory services are often inequitable due to the low ratio of extension officers to farmers, for instance, in Tanzania, coupled with the shortage of female extension workers, which prohibits female farmers from interacting with male extension workers, illustrated in Ethiopia. The design and delivery of agriculture extension services and approaches also tend to favor the participation of male farmers, further leaving women and female youth with less access to knowledge, skills, and information on improved and sustainable rice farming practices and technologies.

Disproportionate Burden of Care Work: Women and female youth often bear a double burden, handling both agricultural work and household duties such as cooking, fetching water, and caring for children and the elderly. This limits the time they can dedicate to rice farming, reducing their productivity and benefits, whereas male farmers can gain more income, which, for instance, in Burkina Faso, is more than double the female farmers' income from rice farming. The women's limited access to financial resources further limits their ability to hire labor both on-farm and in the household.

The norms and culture associated with the gender roles, in turn, determine the capacity of men and women to allocate labor time across reproductive (household) and productive (economic) activities. However, women's time constraints also reduce the effectiveness of hired labor hours because of insufficient supervision, as observed in Nigeria.

Exclusion from decision-making: In many communities, men make the key decisions about rice farming. They choose which rice varieties to grow, decide how to use the land, and determine how to allocate the harvest to different uses (consumption, seeds, sell); men regulate sales and control of incomes from the sale. Women and youth have little influence over these decisions, even when they are more involved and knowledgeable about rice farming. Due to their low levels of empowerment and limited access to leadership and decision-making spaces, the voice and decision-making power of women and youth remain low.

13 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02255189.2023.2166025>

14 Gender, selected agricultural innovations and intra-household income in Ghana

15 Gender differences in rice production participation among smallholder farmers in small-scale irrigation schemes in mbarali district, Tanzania - ScienceDirect

16 https://www.africarice.org/_files/ugd/0839e4_b722c082dca24056a36e06b5251e3747.pdf

17 Women's access to agricultural technologies in rice production and processing hubs: A comparative analysis of Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tanzania - ScienceDirect

18 C:\Users\keisu\Desktop\JICA\1. NRRDSE\20191213 Stakeholders meeting\20200305 To Molla\20200305 NRDS-2 Final.docx

19 GENDER-POLICY-BRIEF_BamanyakiP_November-2022.pdf

20 Frontiers | Men and Women in Rice Farming in Africa: A Cross-Country Investigation of Labor and Its Determinants

21 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X21004150>

22 C:\Users\keisu\Desktop\JICA\1. NRRDSE\20191213 Stakeholders meeting\20200305 To Molla\20200305 NRDS-2 Final.docx

Gender-based violence in agricultural settings: Studies show that up to 44% of women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa experience some form of gender-based violence (GBV), including workplace harassment and domestic violence. GBV is due to prevalent low socioeconomic status, limited access to education, patriarchy, and unequal power balances^{23,24}. Rural women are at a higher risk due to traditional attitudes regarding the subordinate role of women that persist in many rural communities²⁵. GBV practices limit women's mobility, undermining their mental and physical health, and restricting their economic independence. The study on women's engagement in downstream nodes of the rice value chain in Uganda, noted that domestic violence still existed, especially when men forcefully demand income and rice stocks for sale for their personal gains²⁶. These factors not only hinder the economic potential of women and female youth but also impact agricultural productivity, making it harder to meet the rising demand for rice and ensuring food security for Africa's growing population.

Climate change impacts on agriculture and rice farming: Droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall significantly affect rice yields. Studies showed that without climate change adaptation, shortening of the growing period due to higher temperatures had a negative impact on yields of -24%, that can go to -45% in irrigated rice yields in West Africa in the dry season²⁷. While the entire population faces climate-related risks, women are disproportionately affected due to their increased vulnerability. Women in Africa often lack access to climate-smart technologies, and often struggle to access agricultural training to adopt drought-resistant seeds, irrigation systems, and climate-resilient farming techniques or alternative livelihoods for climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Consequently, empowering women, youth and other vulnerable groups in African rice farming is a strategic investment, crucial for both agricultural development. It strengthens food security, drives economic growth, and enhances climate resilience. Moreover, this empowerment is not only an economic necessity but also a matter of fundamental human rights and social justice, ensuring that resources and benefits are distributed fairly. Eliminating gender disparities and expanding opportunities for women and young farmers and other vulnerable groups fosters a more inclusive and equitable agricultural sector, ultimately building a more resilient and prosperous society for all.

Despite these opportunities, very few national policies for rice development recognize the roles of women and youth. They highlight the necessity of integrating gender sensitive interventions in the sector's development, ranging from enhancing women's and youth's participation and roles in decision-making, to supporting action in the value chain and to aligning with the national policies on gender. However, the discrepancies in the description of the needed interventions and the quasi absence of gender considerations in several policies are indication that the gender and youth perspective is not always leveled up due to the absence of adequate data, evidence, competencies and appreciation of opportunities that would be brought about by their empowerment.

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE RICE FARMING

To foster inclusive engagement of women and youth in rice farming, the following policy recommendations and programmatic actions are proposed, to be tailored to the specific needs of women and youth and the challenges they faced. Associated with the recommendations are

illustrative evidences of best practices to enhance inclusive rice farming, increase productivity and effective engagement of women and youth in rice farming.



Recommendations to the CARD Secretariat to enhance capacity of NRDS Task force on gender and youth inclusion.

Recommendation 1: Building capacity of NRDS task force teams on integrating gender in program design and implementations, resource mobilization and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL).

Recommendation 2: Institutionalizing a system of collecting, analyzing and reporting gender and age disaggregated data to inform policy decisions and support the design of programs that are inclusive.

These recommendations will capacitate the task force to steer the policies and implementation into realistic actions with a goal to achieve inclusion and its benefits.

23 Gender Based Violence against Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cross-Sectional Studies - PMC

24 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11861195/>

25 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Statements/StatementRuralWomen.pdf>

26 Full article: Participation in Downstream Nodes of the Rice Value Chain in Uganda: Where Are the Women?

27 Impacts of climate change on rice production in Africa and causes of simulated yield changes - PMC



Recommendations to practically integrate gender in country policies and actions.

Recommendation 3: Enacting policies that guarantee equity and women equal right to land ownership, these include strengthening legal frameworks and addressing customary practices that often disadvantage women and youth.

Secure land rights are essential, providing women with control over productive assets, enhancing their economic independence, and increasing their decision-making power. This can be achieved for instance through joint titling and land certification programs targeting women. When women and youth gain full access to and control over land, and additionally on credit, essential inputs like quality seeds, fertilizers, mechanisation, and training, women are empowered to adopt improved farming techniques, boost yields and achieve the same productivity levels as male farmers. For example, in Uganda, women achieved the same yield levels as men when they obtained seeds of NERICA rice varieties, despite challenges such as smaller plot sizes and lower market prices compared to those of men.

Evidence 1. The land certification program in Ethiopia

The land certification program in Ethiopia illustrates positive impacts on agricultural productivity in the country: with the establishment of legal land rights, women were encouraged to integrate more sustainable practices on their land, including planting trees and implementing practices to prevent soil erosion such as terracing^{28, 29, 30, 31}.

On a macroeconomic level, the impact of reducing disparities in access to productive resources is profound, as it contributes to lifting population out of poverty. Closing the gender gap can increase annual crop output between 2 and 10 %, leading to a GDP growth of 0.5 to 1.8 % and a reduction in poverty by 0.9 to 2.2% in different countries.

Evidence 2. Closing the gender gap in Ethiopia

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, UN Women, UNDP and UN Environment in Ethiopia determined that by addressing the gender gap effectively, the country's annual crop output could increase by 1.1 percent, create potential gross gains to GDP of \$203.5 million and lift more than 1,050,000 persons out of poverty.

Recommendation 4: Designing and delivering gender-responsive, climate-smart innovation bundles (agricultural labor-saving technologies, fertilizer, improved varieties, finance, information, etc.) tailored to specific needs and preferences of women and youth, ensuring that technologies and programs are accessible, beneficial and transformative.

Gender-responsive, climate-smart, socio-technical innovation bundles (STIBs) combine technological advancements with social and institutional changes to create a more holistic and effective approach to agricultural development in a supportive and inclusive environment for women and youth in rice farming.

Examples of STIBs strategies include:

- Targeted Technological Solutions such as labor-saving technologies to alleviate physically demanding tasks, associated with improved information and communication and increased access to market and training resources.

28 Owing Your Own Land Makes a Difference: The Role of Female Land Rights in Increasing Agricultural Production – SDG Knowledge Hub

29 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00220381003706460> – Tenure Insecurity, Gender, Low-cost Land Certification and Land Rental Market Participation in Ethiopia: The Journal of Development Studies: Vol 47, No 1 – Get Access

30 <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=1edd9f5cbbf6d73e693d8c8d4c78232fd06b8861#page=124>

31 https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/64515/1/Bezabih_The_Role_of_Land_Certification.pdf

Evidence 3 : Rice–rice and rice–shrimp production in Vietnam³²

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Vietnam introduced several technologies and farming practices such as short-duration rice varieties, improved management practices to reduce inputs for rice production, shrimp technologies, agricultural machines and light tools to overcome farmers' labour constraints such as the rice seedling gap-filling tool, the lightweight pesticide sprayer, the combine harvester-thresher, the portable rice thresher, etc. Some of the simple tools were invented by farmers themselves.

The combine harvester reduced labour requirements and post-harvest losses by 10 percent, and increased income due to savings in hiring manual labour for harvesting. The introduction of the technology has reduced, in the dry season, the amount of hand cutting and grain gathering after threshing carried out by women, as well as the amount of hauling and rice gathering for men. However, during the wet season, rice stalks lodge and cannot be harvested with the combine. As a result, they must be harvested manually and this tedious task is relegated to women.

Evidence 4: Improved rice parboiling technology targets to improve rice processing in Africa

AfricaRice and its partners have developed an improved rice parboiling technology called GEM – in short for 'Grain quality enhancer, Energy-efficient and durable Material,' – which produces rice of high physical and eating quality compared with the traditional technology.

The traditional parboiling process is laborious, time-consuming and unsafe, producing rice with impurities, broken and burnt grains and undesirable smell. It also requires lots of firewood and water. Over 3,500 women rice processors in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria and Togo trained in the use of the GEM rice-parboiling system can get a profit of US\$ 392 for every ton of rice parboiled compared to parboilers using the traditional system³³.

- Capacity Building and Skill Development programs to ensure that women and youth can effectively utilize new technologies and participate in value chains. Strategies prioritize equipping young people with modern agricultural techniques, including sustainable practices, agribusiness management, and digital literacy.

Evidence 5: Enhancing capacities for seed production in Odisha, India³⁴

The Farmer Producer Companies (FPC) established through the collaboration between IRRI and the Access Livelihood Foundation (ALF) enabled women farmers to learn new farming techniques and gained valuable skills in seed production, enabling them to improve crop yield and quality. Seed production became a source of income to several women farmers. They indicate that they are able to support their family and invest in their children's education.

Evidence 6: Case study of training youth in Vietnam and Uganda

In Vietnam, youth using AWD techniques reduced water consumption by 35% while maintaining high productivity. In Uganda, the youth Climate-Smart Farming Initiative trained young rice farmers on soil conservation, leading to higher crop resilience and sustainability.

- Access to Resources and Services such as credit, insurance, financial services and market linkages have been proven to empower youth and women, by helping them to overcome financial barriers and participate more fully in the agricultural economy. Financial inclusion, coupled with access to essential inputs like quality seeds, fertilizers, this empowers women to adopt improved farming techniques, boost yields, and generate higher incomes

Evidence 7: Rice farmer credit programs in Vietnam

A microfinance initiative targeting women rice farmers in Vietnam increased rice yields by 25%, as they could afford improved seeds and fertilizers. Households also reported a 30% rise in incomes (ADB, 2020).

³² Rice–rice and rice–shrimp production

³³ AfricaRice | GEM rice parboiler

³⁴ Beyond incomes: What is the true impact of engaging in seed production on women's lives? | International Rice Research Institute

- Gender-Responsive Design: Innovation bundles are designed with gender considerations in mind including the specific needs and preferences of women and youth. Such design ensures that technologies and programs are accessible, beneficial and transformative.

Evidence 8: AfricaRice has promoted several innovations that have impacted the livelihoods of women³⁵

For instance, (1) the adoption of improved varieties in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has shown that 8 million persons have been lifted out of poverty as a result of the adoption of these varieties. In Ghana, women's adoption of improved rice varieties significantly increased net revenue per acre by 61.3% , while their use of fertilizer raises it by 86.2%. When women farmers combine improved rice varieties with fertilizer, net revenues increases by 153.5%³⁶; (2) the Smart-valleys technology introduced in Togo and Benin was found to increase yields at an average of 0.92 to 1.32 tons per hectare, income by US\$267 to US\$440 per hectare, and food security by more than 4 to 10 points on the Food Consumption Score.

- A focus on youth has additional multiplier effects; they bring energy, innovation, and digital skills, which can enhance productivity through modern farming techniques and mechanization.

Evidence 9: In Ghana, a youth-focused rice farming project increased participants' income by 40%, reducing rural unemployment (World Bank, 2022).

- Integrating sustainable practices and adaptive strategies for building climate change resilience considering the engagement of women, as the custodians of traditional knowledge, and hence their pivotal role in promoting eco-friendly, sustainable farming practices and ensuring long-term food security and environmental sustainability³⁷ while, youth bring technological innovation to agriculture to optimize productivity and mitigate climate risks.

Evidence 10: The Groundswell West Africa network's Agroecology Plus Six (AE+6) program in the Sahel³⁸.

Operating in Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal, the program aimed to strengthen the resilience of dry land farming systems, primarily by enabling farm families to counter land degradation and the effects of climate change. Large-scale promotion of agroecological practices significantly augmented when it systematically integrates strategies for the empowerment of women in agriculture, and complementary activities to strengthen their livelihoods such as promotion of credit and savings groups, nutrition education, and promotion of dietary diversity. Women's empowerment increased because of a variety of climate mitigation efforts, it improved intrahousehold decision-making and equality, and increased women's leadership at the community level.

Evidence 11: The AICCRA program in Mali supports women's access to solar-powered irrigation technologies

While an initial investment to install solar-powered irrigation system is not afforded to smallholder farmers, the 'pay-as-you-go' business models enable access by giving farmers, especially the financially constrained women and youth, the ability to pay for what they can affordably use as they need. The use of solar-powered irrigation technologies allows crop diversification and horticulture in fields previously abandoned due to water scarcity, and consequently to increase in incomes, investment in quality seeds and fertilizers, hence higher resilience.

These combined strategies enhance women's control over their livelihoods, strengthen their voice in decision-making, and contribute significantly to increased agricultural productivity and food security, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable rice farming sector.

Recommendation 5: Investing in strengthening rural infrastructure (irrigation systems, storage and market facilities, electricity, transportation and communication services, machineries and equipment) to ensure access to co-sharing and benefit arrangements that are inclusive, equitable and promote youth and women entrepreneurship in the rice system.

Access to information and communication technologies connects these farmers to vital market information, weather forecasts, and other valuable resources.

Evidence 12: Nigeria's Rice Processing Program:

A government initiative training women and youth in rice milling and packaging led to a 30% rise in employment in rural areas (World Bank, 2021).

³⁵ AfricaRice innovations that have impacted the livelihoods of women in Africa

³⁶ The impact of uptake of selected agricultural technologies on rice farmers' income distribution in Ghana | Agriculture & Food Security | Full Text

³⁷ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecoser.2018.03.004>

³⁸ <https://www.groundswellinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/case-study-women-4-web.pdf>

³⁹ Pay-as-you-go model makes solar-powered irrigation affordable for farmers in Mali | AICCRA

Evidence 13: The PEJERIZ project

The CTA's PEJERIZ project encouraged job creation jobs in the rice value chain in Mali and Senegal: 194 new jobs were created in mechanization and 453 jobs were created through coaching young entrepreneurs. As a results, the revenues were created as 98,569 € and 45,791€ through provision of mechanization service to 3,562 farmers in Senegal and 716 farmers respectively, of 95€/ha/season on average for each 1,176 agro-entrepreneurs. The young entrepreneurs have access to finance.

Recommendation 6: Establishing and strengthening extension and rural advisory service systems, increase the number of female extension workers to cater for women's specific extension needs as well as enhancing the capacity of male extension workers to effectively reach and benefit women and youth such as to counter cultural barriers during women and men interactions.

To increase recruitment of female extension agents, Governments and development partners should actively recruit, train, and deploy more women extension workers, especially in areas with strong gender segregation norms. Other opportunities could be enhanced through the use ICT tools by leveraging radio, SMS, videos, and mobile apps in local languages to reach female and youth farmers who may not attend in-person meetings.

Evidence 14: Farmer service centers offer a model about last-mile delivery of extension services to the farmers.

They entail empowering trainers of the trainee within the community to bridge the gap of poor extension services. The model also serves as a community-led one-stop-shop in the surrounding farming community, providing agricultural extension support, inputs, and other services to the community. Similar initiatives such as the Youth and Women Quality Centers have strengthened the technical and business capacities of seed producers and catalyzed broader shifts in social norms and attitudes around women's and youth's role in seed production.

Recommendation 7: Equipping agricultural programs and extension services with GBV awareness training and linking them to support networks to foster safer, more inclusive farming communities, especially in high risk and vulnerable zones .

CARD member countries should enhance actions to strengthen the capacity of agricultural extension officers to recognize signs of GBV, provide basic support, and refer cases to appropriate services. This is important as many GBV crimes go unreported, hence there is a need to create safe reporting mechanisms. It is also necessary to take action to establish linkages between extension officers and local support networks, including women's organizations, legal aid services, and health providers, to ensure a coordinated and effective response to GBV.

Recommendation 8: Facilitating and supporting women and youth effective participation in farmer organizations, cooperatives, governance and other institutional structures to promote inclusive leadership, increase women's voice and recognize their contribution in the rice sector.

Integrating women and youth into rice value chains is crucial for inclusive and equitable agricultural development in Africa. Targeted policies should facilitate their access to markets and value-addition activities like processing and packaging. This can be achieved by promoting cooperative and group marketing schemes, which improve information dissemination and strengthen bargaining power and market access, while also providing crucial training in business management.

Evidence 15: Women farmer cooperatives in Vietnam

Women-led rice cooperatives have improved bargaining power and market access, increasing incomes by 40%.

Empowerment and social inclusion can be enhanced by lead to greater participation of women and youth in decision-making processes and a stronger voice in their communities.

40 New technology and business skills create rural jobs | Color My Life 369

41 <https://ricetoday.irri.org/seeding-a-sustainable-future-how-youth-and-women-quality-centers-are-transforming-ugandas-seed-landscape/>

42 CARD member countries should enhance actions to strengthen the capacity of agricultural extension officers to recognize signs of GBV, provide basic support, and refer cases to appropriate services. It is also necessary to take actions to establish linkages between extension officers and local support networks, including women's organizations, legal aid services, and health providers, to ensure a coordinated and effective response to GBV.

Recommendations to the CARD Secretariat to enhance capacity of NRDS Task force on gender and youth inclusion.

Empowering women and youth in Africa's rice sector is not only a matter of equity; it is a strategic imperative for achieving food security, economic growth, and climate resilience. The eight recommendations presented in this brief provide a clear roadmap for transforming the rice value chain into an inclusive, productive, and sustainable system. The highlighted recommendations are:

1. Building capacity of NRDS task force teams on integrating gender in program design and implementations, resource mobilization and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL).
2. Institutionalizing a system of collecting, analyzing and reporting gender and age disaggregated data to inform policy decisions and support the design of programs that are inclusive.
3. Enacting policies that guarantee equity and women equal right to land ownership, these include strengthening legal frameworks and addressing customary practices that often disadvantage women and youth.
4. Designing and delivering gender-responsive, climate-smart innovation bundles (agricultural labor-saving technologies, fertilizer, improved varieties, finance, information, etc.) tailored to specific needs and preferences of women and youth, ensuring that technologies and programs are accessible, beneficial and transformative.
5. Investing in strengthening rural infrastructure (irrigation systems, storage and market facilities, electricity, transportation and communication services, machineries and equipment) to ensure access to co-sharing and benefit arrangements that are inclusive, equitable and promote youth and women entrepreneurship in the rice system.
6. Establishing and strengthening extension and rural advisory service systems, increasing the number of female extension workers to cater for women's specific extension needs as well as enhancing the capacity of male extension workers to effectively reach and benefit women and youth such as to counter cultural barriers during women and men interactions.
7. Equipping agricultural programs and extension services with GBV awareness training and linking them to support networks to foster safer, more inclusive farming communities, especially in high risk and vulnerable zones.
8. Facilitating and supporting women and youth effective participation in farmer organizations, cooperatives, governance and other institutional structures to promote inclusive leadership, increase women's voice and recognize their contribution in the rice sector.

The above recommendations will be integrated into the process of renewing National Rice Development Strategies (NRDS) and Regional Rice Development Strategies (RRDS).

Next Steps:

- Integrating these recommendations into the renewal of NRDS and RRDS.
- Mobilizing domestic and international resources for gender-responsive programming.
- Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration among governments, research institutions, development partners, and civil society.



Authors

This policy brief is the result of intensive discussions led by distinguished experts in the field in collaboration with the CARD Secretariat, namely:

Gaudiose Mujawamariya has a PhD in Development Economics from Wageningen University in the Netherlands. She is the Gender Focal Point at the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), a CGIAR center and a pan-African Center of Excellence for rice research and development. Gaudiose is based in Madagascar where she also acts as the Country Representative of AfricaRice and the Country Convener for One CGIAR. With respect to her gender research, Gaudiose applies quantitative and qualitative research tools for strategic and integrative gender investigations. Her work spans from informing the design, pilot and dissemination of gender-responsive agricultural technologies and innovations to marketing studies in the broader value chain and socio-economic research. She also coordinates the Africa-wide Task Force on Gender in Rice Research and Technology Development that functions through gender focal points in national agricultural research and extension systems of AfricaRice member countries, to ensure an effective gender mainstreaming in rice R4D programs.

Jummai Yila is an experienced gender and development professional with an interdisciplinary skillset and a global reach. Jummai is a Senior Scientist – Gender and Social Research and Country Representative for Uganda with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) based in Kampala, Uganda. Jummai also doubles as the Research Lead of the Gender, Livelihoods Unit under the Sustainable Impact through Rice-based Systems Research Platform, which focuses on exploring approaches to improve the lives of rice stakeholders. For over 18 years, she has contributed to and led initiatives that mainstream gender outcomes in different crops and forest value chains, impacting the economic empowerment of women and the socioecological resilience of smallholder farmers and farming communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Makiko Kubota is a senior gender advisor for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). She provides advisory and technical support to JICA operations in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, with experience across Asia and Africa. Her work spans sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response, social protection, women's economic empowerment, political participation and leadership, and gender-responsive security sector reform. She has also been actively engaged in mainstreaming gender into agriculture, rural and community development initiatives of JICA, providing technical support to enhance women's network, improve their access to productive resources, and sustainable livelihoods.

Winnie Osulah is an International Development practitioner and an experienced Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion programming specialist with strong expertise in leading the development of evidence-based gender, youth, and social inclusion strategies with over 20 years of experience in both multi-sectoral development and humanitarian sectors across Africa. She specializes in gender mainstreaming, integration and strategic learning, with a strong focus on policy advocacy and engagement, organizational development and inclusive results-based management. She is currently the Lead – Gender Integration at AGRA, providing technical advisory support and leadership in the strategic analysis, conceptualization, planning, coordination and delivery of AGRA's gender responsive food systems program initiatives across Africa.

By synthesizing expert perspectives and policy considerations, this document serves as a foundational resource to inform and guide policy decisions for a more inclusive and productive rice sector in Africa.



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