

A TRADITIONAL MAITHILI SONG

This is a very popular folk song sang by farmers for generations while working on the fields in the Mithilanchal region in Nepal, mostly by the Tharu community. It is about a group of women who go to fetch water, but one daughter-in-law breaks her pot. She flees to hide in her parents' village as she is scared of the consequences. Her sister-in-law reports to her husband about her bad manners in breaking the pot and his mother also tells him that she has bad manners. However, he does not blame his wife and instead looks for her. He asks her to return home despite the mistreatment of the in-laws. He understands her and explains that this will be solved by time, as the joint family will dissolve and they can live and make their own decisions. The song addresses gender discrimination women have historically faced, especially when at their husband's home. Here, in this song, it shows how men can play an important role in fight gender discrimination for their wife after marriage and be supportive of them, while women sometimes reinforce such discrimination upon less powerful women to gain more power.

Maithili original	English translation
<p>Saat sakhiye mili, paniya ne gayelai, Wahi re Jamuna ladi dhaar ho Ek sakhiya kera gagari futal, sab sakhi rahalai lajai ho</p>	<p>Seven friends together, went to fetch water, from Jamuna river's flow One pal broke her water-pot, others remained shy</p>
<p>Sanga hi me chellai rama, chotaki nanadiya, daural gayal harath ho. Toharo ke tiriya he bhaiya birahu ke matal Gagari fori naihar jayi ho</p>	<p>Among the friends, there was younger sister-in-law, who ran to the plow-field, said: "Your wife, my brother, is totally bad- mannered; she broke her water pot and left for her mother's place"</p>
<p>Haraba jotaite ge bahini faraba harayegellai Tuti gellai harahu ke nas ho Pyar pichari gellai, gagari futal, tiriya ke kone aparadh ho</p>	<p>"During plowing, sister, it happens, I lost Faraba and broke another machine that is used for plowing. She had slipped out and broke the water pot, what is the crime of my wife here?"</p>
<p>Har joti ayela babu, kodar pari aayel, Dehari me bhaithal jhamai ho Sabhu ke tiriya ge ama ghara hi me chai ke, hamhuke tiriya khana jaye ho</p>	<p>"Oh! back from plowing, son, wasn't it a busy day with hoe?" - "You are relaxing here at the veranda, Mother! everyone's wife is at their home, why has my wife left?"</p>
<p>Toharo ke tiriya ho babu, biraha ke matal, gagari fori naihar jai ho Khaiyo liyau babu, dahi chura bhojan Pibi liyau, ganga jal pain ho</p>	<p>"Your wife, son, is much bad-mannered; She broke her water pot and left for her mother's place. Eat the food, son, the yogurt beaten rice meal, drink the Ganga- water, drink"</p>
<p>Nai hum kahyebo ge amma, dahi chura bhojan, naiye pibau ganga jal pani ho. Kasi lebau ahe re ama, raja hansa ghodiya, chali jebau tiriya o desh ho</p>	<p>"No, I wouldn't eat, mother, the yogurt beaten rice meal, won't drink Ganga-water. Rather would get my Raja Hansa horse ready and go to my wife's village"</p>
<p>Ek kosh gella rama, gela dui koshaba Bheti gellai gai ke gaaibar ho. Tora hum puchiyau ge bara bhaiya yehan sadhu batiya yahi pantha dekhne rusnair ho</p>	<p>One mile travelled, dear, travelled two miles, On the way a dairy farm was discovered, he made to the guard a generous request, if he had seen any anxious lady</p>
<p>Dekhno me dekhno bhaiya, bel re babur tar, Naina sa dharai chellau loor ho. Chaliyau me chaliyau dhani, ghoori ghar chaliyau, ghuri ghar chaliyau taken ge</p>	<p>"Yes, for sure! I had seen under the Bel Babur tree a lady pouring tears from her eyes." "Come back my lady! Let's return home, let's return home."</p>
<p>Budiya se maiya he dhani, mari hari jayetai, Bahini je jettai dur sasur ho, woho je bhai ke re bhina kari dayabai, dunu mili karabai biraj ho</p>	<p>My mother has become old, will die shortly, Sister will get married to her home, Remained will be my brother, I will separate him, We both will rule our regime."</p>

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WHAT IS GENDER?

Caroline Moser (1993) defines gender as:

“culturally based expectations of the roles and behaviors of men and women. The term distinguishes the socially constructed from the biologically determined aspects of being male and female. Sex identifies the biological difference between men and women, whereas gender identifies the social relations between men and women. It therefore refers not to men and women but to the relationship between them, and the way this is socially constructed. Gender relations are contextually specific and often change in response to altering circumstances.”

WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT?

Naila Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as:

“the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability.”

Those who are disempowered are either denied or have limited choices. Therefore, empowerment is a process that expands people’s ability to make choices that result in desired outcomes. The ability to make strategic choices depends on three interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements. Resources relate to physical, social and human resources and access to such resources reflects the rules and norms, which allows certain individuals authority over others. Agency relates to decision-making wherein an individual recognizes their ability to either make a decision, bargain, negotiate, reflect, manipulate, or resist to pursue their own goals and can be exercised individually or collectively. Achievements are the outcomes of making strategic choices that lead to well-being.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATORY MEAN?

Robert Chambers (1994) defines participatory as:

“an approach and methods to enable local people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.”

In a participatory approach, local people share and own their information and help shape outcomes. Everyone has the right to participate and outsiders must seek out marginalized voices and create a safe space to share information. Outsiders must also be self-critically aware of the different perspectives and realities within communities while respecting the local knowledge. This method involves ‘handing over the stick’ by allowing the unheard voices to share information while the ‘expert’ sits back and quietly allows others to participate in a safe space. Tools include mapping, diagramming, and ranking.



GENDER IN AGRICULTURE AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Women play different roles in society which is determined by legislation, religious and cultural norms, economic status, ethnicity, community and household and their contribution to productive activities. Women are usually responsible for domestic work and also participate in agricultural activities that help generate income. However, their high participation contrasts with their low political and social power since their household activities and care work is economically unrecognized. Therefore, both men and women's role in society needs to be recognized and addressed separately to understand their needs and involvement in terms of decision-making.

Gender interacts with socio-economic differences such as age, caste, and class in determining access to and control of resources. The transfer of water management responsibilities is given to local institutions such as water users groups, irrigation associations etc. The idea is that by decentralizing management of water resources, the community will benefit and lead to a sustainable use of the resource over time (Harris and Gantt, 2007). However, evidence suggests that the community-based approach applied in water management projects does not necessarily lead to greater participation and empowerment of all stakeholders involved (Meinzen-Dick and Zwarteveen, 1998). This is due to the fact that this approach views the community as one entity where the members share common interests and goals (Sultana, 2009) when, in reality, men and women have different needs and priorities in terms of resource use.

Moreover, women still face barriers in controlling resources and participating in formal local institutions that are responsible for managing water resources. Gender relations play a major role in influencing structures of property and endowments that govern domestic divisions of property and labor which shape people's relationships to communities (Meinzen-Dick and Zwarteveen, 1998). In South Asia, land is traditionally owned by the male member of the household who also serves as the head of the household. Participation in local organizations such as water user groups is extended either to the land owner or head of the household, which in most cases



tend to be male. At the same time non-participation may not always mean non-influence or non-involvement (Long, 1989). Evidence suggests that women influence decisions by relaying information to their husbands or the participating male members of the household. Their role as a backstage actor can be viewed as wielding some form of influence in formal institutions from the private domain. However, this influence occurs in the private domain and is dependent on their position within the household.

In the developmental field, it is important to understand the perceptions of community, household and individuals to break it down based on local understanding. It is important to listen and consult with women of different age, caste, class and other socio-cultural divisions to understand their roles within the household and community to better understand and address their needs (Williams et al., 1994 and Reeves and Baden, 2000).

Introduction

WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

Any community mobilizer, non-governmental organization (NGO) staff or researcher who wants to hold a discussion with farmers on gender norms, roles and relations in their communities can use this manual. It has been designed for communities with small-scale farming activities, but by changing the labor activities, it could also be used for more urban, non-agricultural settings.

WHAT IS IN THIS MANUAL?

A step-by-step description of a three-hour gender training workshop for approximately 5 to 12 participants. In three activities and three discussions, participants:

- 1) are encouraged to reflect on their own perceptions of sons and daughters
- 2) critically review agricultural and domestic tasks, and why men and women are expected to work in different jobs
- 3) develop argumentation skills to resolve conflicts and evoke empathy, by switching roles and showing men and women what life is like for the other gender

Guided discussions help connect the activities and provide participants space to ask questions and talk about new ideas. This manual also includes tips for facilitation and an appendix section with the paper props that you will need to run a successful and engaging workshop.

HOW WAS THIS MANUAL MADE?

This workshop is based on participatory research conducted by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE). The training was co-developed by researchers, field staff and farmers within the ACIAR-funded project “Improving Dry Season Irrigation for Marginal and Tenant Farmers (DSI4MTF)”. It borrowed activity one from a gender training by iDE, and builds on didactic teaching methods developed for a doctoral dissertation on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for India’s formal educational system by Stephanie Leder. The training activities were piloted and modified in six villages in the Eastern Terai, Nepal and Bihar and West Bengal, India. The trainings were conducted twice per village, twelve times in total. The villages are Koiladi and Khoksar Parbaha in Saptari district (Eastern Terai), Bagwatipur and Mauahi in Madhubani (Bihar), and Dholaguri and Uttar Chakowakheta close to Cooch Behar in West Bengal. During and after every training, modifications and variations were incorporated in the training structure, e.g. timings per activity were adjusted and instructions changed or specified.



WHY IS THIS MANUAL IMPORTANT?

Due to male labor migration from rural communities, women are increasingly managing the farming process. Female-headed households face new patterns of vulnerability, with an increase in labor burden accompanied by limited access to and control over water resources. Addressing this through open dialogue is essential for climate resilience. Socio-economic, structural and institutional constraints to sustainable water use in patriarchal and caste-based societies impacted by migration pose a challenge to the long-term up- and out-scaling of more productive opportunities. This training addresses gender inequality in small-scale agriculture, women's triple work burden (domestic, productive and community tasks), and institutions marked by caste, class and gender disparities that particularly affect female-headed households, as well as marginal and tenant farmers.

If women are also not allowed to contribute to particular forms of labor, use certain types of equipment or impact the decisions of farmer groups, agricultural productivity and farming livelihoods are challenged. This workshop helps communities realize the role that gender plays in their lives, and discuss how they can move toward a more equal society. This manual is not prescriptive or designed to infuse a particular "Western" view on gender relations. The activities and discussions provide valuable space for encouraging farmers to bring their own ideas and stimulate critical reflections and dialogue on gender perceptions and practices in their particular cultural setting.

WHEN CAN THIS MANUAL BE USED?

While this manual can be used at any time to generate discussion and reflection on the impact of gender in a community, there are four times in particular when this workshop may be particularly necessary:

- 1) When new projects are starting in villages and community groups are formed. In this case, the training can be used to sensitize field staff and farmers on gender relations in communities.
- 2) When there are gender-related tensions in a community. This may happen often in communities where men are out-migrating and women are routinely left behind.
- 3) When conducting participatory research to understand how gender effects community relations and practices in villages.
- 4) Lastly, with project staff who are working with communities. It can help to reveal one's own gender perceptions before addressing those directly or indirectly in villages.



After the implementation of the activities and discussions, facilitators and farmers can discuss opportunities to repeat these activities to observe whether their perceptions have changed. It is important to view this workshop as an initial tool within a greater development process which can be linked to other project interventions. For this purpose, this manual can identify community-specific challenges regarding to gender relations which shape and developmental interventions in unpredicted ways.

WHAT DOES THIS MANUAL ASSUME?

This manual assumes that facilitators understand that the concept of gender is socially constructed and changes over time and space (rather than being biologically fixed). Facilitators are expected to be able to lead critical discussions reflecting the origins of the cultural notions of “girls” and “boys”, “women” and “men”.

WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS GAIN FROM THIS WORKSHOP?

- A space to talk about gender perceptions and roles in their households and community
 - Myths on women’s and men’s roles in agriculture may be revealed, as well the imbalance in the division of labor
- A chance to reflect
 - While other training programs teach pre-determined technical skills, this workshop lets participants come to their own conclusions by guiding them through a reflection on gender and developing empathy through role play
- New insights and skills
 - What participants and facilitators learn may differ from workshop to workshop, but hopefully some participants leave with new ideas about how gender impacts their daily lives, and how they might change those impacts. Additionally, bargaining and problem solving skills will be learned from the role play activity.



Preface

Any intervention in a village requires strong community support. This cannot be trained or tick marked, as it is not easily measurable. Underlying every community and household is constant change. Male out-migration changes women's work load, their mobility and need to speak up for their family. However, their agency might be restricted by gendered norms. Social change, the change of norms, rules, and relations, is a long-term process. "Gender" cannot be trained as information or knowledge, as this would be prescriptive and counterproductive. Instead, this manual's intention is meant to guide staff working in communities on starting an open dialogue with participants on their gender perceptions through pictures and group discussions. How can farmers work effectively in groups, both men and women being sensitive towards gendered restrictions? This training manual sensitizes both farmers and field staff for gender roles and relations, and helps inform, monitor and modify project interventions. Furthermore, methods can be used by researchers for a gender analysis. Most of all, farmers and staff can reflect around their capabilities, value systems and existing practices to make suitable contributions and become effective partners in intervention processes.

Community engagement in the activities and discussions of this training are based on brain based principles (Spitzer, 2007). For this purpose, a participatory, visualizing, network thinking and communicative approach was chosen (Bunch, 1995). To interlink knowledge, participants are encouraged to describe, explain, discuss and arrange visual inputs in form of pictures (Vester, 2002). A role play challenges farmers to represent the other gender in a humoristic manner, and to act and speak like they perceive the other gender. Role-switching can promote a change of perspective and negotiation skills, without criticizing current gender roles and relations. This training provides a space for farmers and staff to share their perceptions, to learn from another, and to engage in a dialogue. This can lead to collective ideas evolving and a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), which contributes to social change.

While we conducted the trainings in six villages in India and Nepal, we were inspired by diverse farmers' great enthusiasm to talk about gender roles and beliefs in their community, as well as different critical views on gender relations. The workshops brought out how local gender norms (intersecting with age, caste and other social divides) strongly mitigate structural constraints such as limited access to or lack of irrigation, pesticides, crop choices, and bargaining market prices. The field staff and participants' enthusiasm while talking in depth about local gender beliefs triggered critical reflections and the realization that gender



norms are already changing, and will change more in the future under the community's active engagement. Farmers were laughing heartily when asked to create spontaneously a role play with switched gender roles. In one role play, a woman started to sing out a traditional Maithili song which addresses the fact that women also re-enforce gender roles. This song demonstrates our central learning that we want to share with this manual: That it is important to creatively initiate discussions to raise awareness, as opposed to lectures. Whether and how this leads to change in the community will be in the hands of the participants, not us.

-Stephanie Leder