

**Strategies for addressing gender  
in agricultural development:  
Some reflections on Oxfam's experience**

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## **Barriers facing rural women**

**Women's lack of, or insecure rights, translate into ineffective developmental outcomes perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.**

- **Weak land rights**
- **Limited access to finance/ inputs/ equipment/ labour**
- **Incentives to invest are low**
- **Productive capacity constrained**
- **Status and autonomy reduced within household and community**
- **Increased vulnerability**

## Rural women - organising for change



- **Organic cotton farming: Mali**
- **40 % women**
- **Increasing leadership**
- **Improved incomes and health**
  - **Literacy, training...**
  - **Access to equipment**
  - **Promoting land tenure security**

# Rethinking our priorities in agricultural development



- **Choice of sectors, markets, technologies**
- **Low input systems**
- **Local food markets**
- **Moving women ‘up the value chain’: quality, storage, processing, trading...**

# Widening our lens on agricultural development



- **Rural water and energy**
- **Reproductive health and health care**
- **Literacy, rural education**
- **Violence against women**



# Changing institutions: producer organisations



- **Women only producer groups and organisations (*India, Honduras, Malawi...*)**
- **Literacy**
- **Building leadership and business skills**
- **Increasing incomes and confidence**
- **Flexible organisational forms**

# Changing institutions: producer organisations

- **Women's leadership in mixed organisations:**
  - **Legal frameworks that promote women's membership e.g. In cooperatives**
  - **Changing membership rules (*individuals, family members, women's groups..*) increases women's representation**
  - **Investing in women's capacity to promote their effective involvement and leadership**



## Changing institutions

- **Government extension services**

**Vietnam – proximity to women farmers, targeting technology transfer, widening network of women agents...**

- **Private sector companies**

- **Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar, India**
- **ETI**



## Policy trends – advocating for change



- **Land and water rights – undermined by biofuels?**
- **Land reform and registration: Opportunities to secure women's rights – e.g. joint titling**
- **Importance of broad based civil society support**

## **Wider trends – changing practices**

- **HIV/AIDS impact on care burden on women and capacity for farming**
- **Assuring food supply for women affected by – or caring for family members affected by - HIV/ AIDS**
- **Malawi – labour saving techniques – zero tillage, herbicide provision**



## Addressing power relations

- **Power relations can change!**
- **Changing beliefs and attitudes takes time**  
– **working with men and women**
- **Rural women as change agents – need support and allies**
- **Ways of assessing qualitative changes**

# Food crisis: opportunity to strengthen rural women's livelihoods and rights?



- **Transfers targeting vulnerable women**
- **Employment schemes (India NREGA)**
- **Promoting access to inputs for rural women**

# **Food crisis: opportunity to strengthen rural women's livelihoods and rights?**

- **Institutional changes in agricultural research and rural extension systems**
- **Investment in rural infrastructure and basic services**
- **Leveraging finance**
- **Strengthening women's asset security**
- **Women farmers' visibility and influence on policy**

**Thank You**

