

# Gender field schools

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Since it began in 1989, the majority of participants and facilitators in the successful Indonesian IPM FFS programme have been men. Some efforts have been made from the beginning of the programme to include women, but with limited success. While there are now more women trainers and women participants involved in IPM FFS than in the beginning, evaluations of the IPM Network still indicate that the experiences of women in IPM FFS are different of those of men. Many of the women engaged in IPM felt “there is something missing”, something that has not been understood or addressed. They wanted to see a move from “women’s involvement” to gender equality.

## Going one step further

As a result of the ongoing perception that FFSs in Indonesia are still not gender equal, a special programme is now being introduced into IPM activities. This programme is firmly rooted in the participatory approach and aims to make all those involved in IPM FFS aware of what gender discrimination is, and why and how it occurs.

This requires a supportive policy framework, as well as a commitment from the programme staff to integrate gender issues. The National IPM Farmers Association stated its support and established a policy framework for the programme in 2001, providing the necessary framework for the first National Gender Workshop.

The first National Gender Workshop, organised by farmers, concentrated on developing a strategy, a plan of activities and a curriculum that would support a wholly participatory approach to mainstreaming gender into IPM FFS activities. At the same time, farm-level discussions were initiated. Farmers involved in IPM FFS agreed to take part in gender training and curriculum-building activities, as well as to collect information on gender issues that could later be discussed and analysed.

A core team was recruited from amongst women facilitators who were experienced in FFS and interested in gender issues. A gender-training curriculum was set up, using the FFS approach, to introduce and explore the concept of gender inequality in rural communities. The curriculum focused on the actual incidences of gender injustice and sought to inventurise the social and political factors underlying gender inequality. Strategies for effectively collecting information on gender issues and clarifying what gender inequality means at farm level were discussed extensively, and farmers were given a key role in collecting data and in developing family case studies. Farmers enthusiasm for the initiative resulted in a strong process of farmer-initiated knowledge development and gender analysis.

## Key questions

Farmers and the core team of facilitators met in field-based provincial and district workshops, where they developed tools that could be included in the first curriculum. During these workshops, insights were gained into how to raise gender consciousness in rural areas and within the IPM network.

Two key questions raised during these workshops were: “Why do we want to introduce gender into IPM?” and “What is in it for

## Towards a gender sensitive approach

In 1990-91, during the first cycle of the National IPM programme, it became clear that women had more limited access to and opportunity to benefit from IPM training than men. In addition, Indonesian women often feel less competent than and inferior to men, which can hamper their active involvement in training.

This had serious implications for the IPM programme. Women make up 50% of the farm labour force in Indonesia, and in rice growing areas such as Central Java, agricultural tasks are shared equally between men and women. Not only are women involved in transplanting, weeding, routine observation of the crop, supplying food to hired labourers, harvesting, threshing and selling the harvest, they also have the important task of managing the household money.

In addition, a significant number of women head farm households in Central Java, either because their husbands are migrant labourers or because they are alone. Women with a lower socio-economic status are heavily represented in the female-headed household group. In general, they have low levels of education and tend to be overlooked in development programmes.

The fact that women farmers in Indonesia are often “screened out” of FFSs is a direct result of the inclination of local officials to automatically select male heads of households for IPM training. They also tend to select men from high and middle - income groups. This not only prevents women from participating in IPM FFSs, it also means there is little “trickle over” of knowledge because men in these socio-economic groups often do not farm themselves – they usually hire labour – and they have very little contact with women of lower socio-economic status.

Domestic and educational factors also play a role. Women have household tasks that make it difficult for them to consistently follow weekly FFSs for an entire session. In some sections of Indonesian society, women feel less competent than men and this can inhibit them in group learning situations. For example, in Central Java, it was found that when women were selected for FFSs they participated actively in all activities except those involving group presentations.

Women are not deliberately excluded from IPM training. As one official put it “I just never thought about the issue”. No specific attention had been given to identifying the social conventions and cultural practices that limited women access to agricultural development programmes until, in 1989, the National IPM programme and the local NEO IPM programme, coordinated by World Education, developed a training preparation process that specifically addressed the issue. Gender analysis and needs identification were carried out with farm communities and village officials and by 1995, results showed that in all parts of Indonesia women’s participation in IPM FFS had increased by an average of 15%.

The National IPM programme concluded that women’s involvement in IPM FFS could be enhanced by a training preparation process prior to the FFS, strengthening the role of farmer trainers and extension officers, and emphasising women’s leadership development. After 2001 and on the bases of these experiences, policy was initiated that lead to the development of Gender Field Schools.

Source: Fliert, E, van de and Proost, J. (eds.), 1999. Women and IPM: crop protection practices and strategies, KIT, Amsterdam, 1999. Email [elske.vandefliert@fao.org.vn](mailto:elske.vandefliert@fao.org.vn)

men?" The answer to the first question revealed the depth and complexity of the gender inequality. Women responded in direct and emotional terms. "We are second-class in our own culture" and "We are just followers". They showed they were well aware of the fact that discrimination was accepted as normal *because* women were regarded as second-class people. The question "What is in it for men" was answered during the course of the workshop. Participants concluded that tackling gender issues did not imply an attack on men's status, but could have a direct benefit for the family and community by strengthened women's confidence, self-esteem and status. Exploring problems in the context of gender inequality also opened the way for effective solutions.

In discussing gender inequality, workshop participants made a clear distinction between the biological definition of sexual difference and the socio-cultural concept of gender that included culture-specific roles such as the male breadwinner and the female homemaker.

### FFS for gender - Gender Field Schools

The participatory approach chosen for integrating gender in the IPM movement places farmers, both men and women, at the centre. It is a long-term, process-oriented activity. Farmers use their own experiences to identify what exactly gender inequality and discrimination meant to them and they use these insights to make adjustments to their own IPM programme. The members of the core gender team also become the facilitators working with the first farmers groups on gender.

Gender Field Schools have become the basis for efforts to "mainstream" gender in the IPM network in Indonesia.

Participants follow five basic steps towards a more in-depth understanding of gender issues in their community.

- The first step is gender training, to raise awareness of gender issues and enable farmers to conduct participatory gender research.
- The second step is data collection. The farmers use their training to identify gender issues in the farmers household and community and collect data on these issues. The data collected are grouped into five categories: access; participation; control; benefit; burden and level of violence.
- The third step is the Gender Analysis. The facilitator helps the farmers analyse the data collected. Farmers come to understand the way local perceptions of gender affect women's lives.
- The fourth step is to plan for action to reduce and eliminate the identified inequalities between women and men.
- The fifth step is monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation helps to identify the activities that will increase women's access to, control over, and benefits from the IPM programme, and expand women's participation in the IPM farmers organisations, programmes and processes.

The development of core groups to pioneer the process of gender mainstreaming in the IPM networks is considered crucial in the process. To start with, the farmer communities to be involved in Gender Field School experiments are carefully selected. For the time being, eight GFS groups have been started, all of them with farmers groups that have previously been involved with FFS for IPM. The GFS are farmer-run and farmer-financed.

After a GFS is conducted, a Farmers Family Crisis Centre (Tim Pembimbing Keluarga Petani-TPKP) is established. The Centre is located in the IPM farmers community. It is hoped that the Centres will help to lower divorce rates, and minimise domestic violence and other forms of discrimination against women. So far, eight such Centres have been established.



Group dynamics exercises in a gender field school in Ciamis District, West Java. Photo: FIELD

### Lessons learnt

From the experiences of the farmers IPM network in trying to integrate gender into their development programme, it is clear that if such initiatives are to be successful, farmers must be fully involved and the farming communities participating in the Gender Field Schools experiments must be carefully selected. It is also important that the farmers have prior experience with FFS. Other lessons learnt include:

- Integrating gender into development programme cannot be induced from outside. It requires a process led by farmers themselves, both men and women.
- Gender mainstreaming needs political will and the commitment of the leadership of the IPM programme. A strong effort and appropriate mechanisms are needed to integrate gender into the national IPM structure, and into the activities of the National IPM Farmers Association.
- Gender mainstreaming is a process of education, research and action. Capacity building is therefore essential. Capacity building support has been provided to the farmers to conduct gender data collection and for the creation of an information system, through a participatory approach. The capacity building process should include enabling farmers to establish their own vision, mission and strategies, as well as the organisational structure for mainstreaming gender.

### Conclusions

So far, the efforts to mainstream gender have increased the capacity of the IPM farmers networks to integrate gender into their policy, planning and monitoring. The IPM project staff have increased their awareness about their roles in the gender mainstreaming process. The experiences gained through this process of gender mainstreaming can contribute not only to the FAO-IPM project, but also to other groups who are pioneering the field of gender equality in rural areas.

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