

Gender Issues in the Traditional Irrigation Improvement Programme (TIP), Tanzania

Even though a number of studies analyzing gender issues of importance to the Traditional Irrigation Improvement Programme (TIP) in Tanzania have been carried out in the recent past, so far very few explicit attempts have been made to implement their recommendations.

As a first step in facilitating the implementation of suggestions made in these reports, a two-day

training workshop was organized in January, 1992. The training was meant for technicians and female field staff working in TIP and was aimed at increasing the awareness of the importance of gender issues in irrigated agriculture and at providing the participants with some tools, methodologies and techniques which would enable them to better recognize and address women's needs. The philosophy underlying the workshop was to make the maximum use of the experiences and knowledge of the participants.

Participants of the workshop analyzed the roles of women. Women participate in construction activities; in operation and maintenance; in afforestation; in terracing and in road construction. Women's participation in meetings and water users' groups is negligible. The participants concluded that there was a discrepancy between the amount of labor women contribute to TIP activities and the degree to which they benefit from it. Only those women who actually own land in the TIP area are certain to benefit directly from their efforts in construction and maintenance activities. However, women do benefit from the afforestation activities; the newly planted trees provide them with fruits, timber, firewood, shade and fodder.

The major constraint for women is their lack of access to land, especially irrigated land. Suggestions to improve women's position, therefore, stressed the need for providing women with land, or of providing irrigation facilities to land controlled and cultivated by women. Other suggestions related to the possible increase of the afforestation activities and to ways of increasing women's participation in water users' groups.

The participants of the workshop realized that better recognizing and addressing women in planning and implementing activities require a different approach. It is necessary to know who the target group is and what its needs are. Discussions, formal and informal meetings with both male and female farmers, individually and in groups are good ways of achieving an adequate understanding of the real problems in the different districts. The participants of the workshop emphasized that activities should not be implemented too rapidly and that the focus of the activities should not be only on construction.