

Dynamics and power of collective action in gender equity of livestock technology

Introduction

Smallholder indigenous chicken farmers suffer the disadvantages of low economies of scale in production, and weak bargaining power as individual actors in the marketing of their produce. These risks compromise their livelihood sources but also the dietary diversity and nutrition security for their households. Unequal gender relations at micro and meso levels may exacerbate the challenges that smallholder farmers face. In Makueni County, livestock keeping have a high potential to economically empower women smallholder farmers yet diseases like Newcastle Disease (ND), Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia (CCPP) and unequal gender relations undermine this potential. In response to these, the GIVE research project seeks to enhance the access and distribution of livestock vaccines through collective action especially co-operatives and groups. Collective action through co-operatives and groups enable smallholder farmers to purchase production inputs in bulk, aggregate their produce for collective marketing and access affordable credit within and without the collectives. In doing so, smallholder farmers can benefit from economies of scale due to greater cost savings and improved income. The objective is to encourage smallholder farmers to purchase farm inputs including NCD vaccines, access extension services including training and market their commodities through co-operatives and groups. The utilization of vaccines is expected to increase production and productivity, income from farm produce and eventually lead to the improvement of household livelihoods and nutrition.

The collective action intervention

To contribute towards ensuring that smallholder farmers work through co-operatives and groups in sharing information on poultry, vaccinating their poultry and accessing markets, the project sought to;

- Establish new co-operatives and groups or strengthen existing ones in collaboration with other actors and smallholder farmers.
- Enhance the smallholder farmers' knowledge about animal husbandry (poultry and small ruminants), symptoms of ND and CCPP and skills for the management and control of these diseases and vaccines especially the ND and CCPP vaccines.
- Build the capacity of the co-operative and groups leaders on internal aspects of organisational management and strengthen leadership skills.
- Link co-operatives and groups with key actors in the livestock value chain such as input providers, government co-operative and group officers, and poultry markets.

Outputs

- The project baseline survey found that the proportion of farmers who were members in co-operatives was low (9.9%; $n=1,270$). During the survey, when respondents who were not members of any co-operative were asked the reasons for this, over half (53.4%; $n=1,143$) stated

that the concept of a farmer co-operative was new to them. Therefore, one of the initial project activities was to therefore encourage smallholder farmers to join co-operatives and establish new ones in areas where there was none. In collaboration with key stakeholders, the project has facilitated the registration of three new co-operatives, established a poultry value chain in an existing co-operative and the registration of another co-operative is in the final stages. In addition, over 119 groups were involved in project activities. Table 1 shows the number of smallholder farmers who have registered with the new co-operatives and those who have been reached through groups in each of the intervention Wards.

Table 1. Co-operatives and groups membership and characteristics

		Mtito Andei	Masongaleni	Kikumbulyu	Makindu	Kitise	Kathonzweni
Smallholder farmers' membership in co-operatives							
1	Newly registered	NA	NA	175	324	NA	354
2	Ongoing registration	NA	89	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	Poultry value chain established	NA	NA	NA	NA	To be determined	NA
Number of groups represented capacity building training and their profile							
1	Total groups reached	23	22	28	21	15	10
2	Registered	21	18	25	21	12	8
3	Ongoing registration	0	0	2	0	0	1
4	Not registered	2	4	1	0	3	2
Groups main activity							
1	Poultry keeping	9	9	19	13	14	6
2	Goat keeping	1	0	0	2	1	1
3	Table banking	12	5	2	2	2	0
4	Merry go round	1	0	2	1	0	0
5	Farming	0	0	2	1	0	3
6	Village Savings and Loan Association	0	6	3	0	0	0
7	Welfare	0	0	0	0	0	1
8	Dairy	0	0	0	0	1	0
9	Children support	0	0	0	1	0	0
10	Tree planting	0	1	0	0	0	0
11	Undisclosed	0	0	0	1	0	0

- Knowledge and awareness of the power of collection action has been enhanced through training on internal organisational capacity building and strengthening. This involved training co-operative and group leaders on co-operative values, strategic planning, governance, financial management, communication, record keeping and conflict resolution. A total of 221 leaders participated in the training, of which 81% were women. Table 2 below shows some demographic characteristics of the trainees.

Table 2. Training participants' profile

		Mtito Andei	Masongaleni	Kikumbulyu	Makindu	Kitise	Kathonzweni
Number of attendees							
1	Men	6 (13.6%)	5 (13.9%)	12 (28.6%)	11(22.4%)	6(18.2%)	2(13.3%)
2	Women	38 (86.4%)	31 (86.1%)	30 (71.4%)	38(77.6%)	27(81.%)	15(86.7%)
3	Total	44 (100%)	36 (100%)	42 (100%)	49(100%)	33(100)	17(100%)
Education level							
1	No education	2	0	1	2	2	0
2	Primary	26	30	14	24	14	5
3	Secondary	13	5	22	20	14	8
4	Tertiary	3	1	4	3	3	4
Average age of trainees (years)							
1	Men	56.4	63.0	47.7	59.6	50.2	45.0
2	Women	43.7	45.1	43.7	46.8	48.2	49.1
3	Overall	45.2	47.6	44.9	49.5	50.1	49.5
Occupation							
1	Farmer	32	34	33	42	23	15
2	Housewife	5	0	1	0	2	0
3	Business	3	2	6	6	6	2
4	Community Health Volunteers	1	0	0	0	1	0
5	Employed	1	0	0	1	0	0
6	Pastor	2	0	2	0	0	0
Roles in their respective groups							
1	Chairperson	8	5	12	7	9	5
2	Vice-chairperson	1	0	2	1	3	0
3	Secretary	12	11	8	12	8	4
4	Vice-secretary	2	2	2	2	2	0
5	Treasurer	6	4	3	8	4	5
6	Trustee, adviser	1	0	1	1	0	0
7	Members	14	12	7	17	3	3

- The power of collective action and the requisite organisational development skills for the co-operatives and group leaders have been enhanced. This was achieved by training the leaders on entrepreneurship, collective marketing of produce, collective acquisition of farm inputs including vaccines, and linking them to service providers. The training involved total of 187 leaders across the six intervention sites (Table 3).

Table 3. Training participants' profile

	Mtito Andei	Masongaleni	Kikumbulyu	Makindu	Kitise	Kathonzweni
Number of attendees						
1 Men	7(18%)	7(18.9%)	7(23.3%)	4(9.5%)	5(21.7%)	3(18.8%)
2 Women	32(82%)	30(81.1%)	23(76.7%)	38(90.5%)	18(78.3%)	13(81.2%)
3 Total	39(100%)	37(100%)	30(100%)	42(100%)	23(100)	16(100%)
Education level						
1 No education	2	0	0	1	2	0
2 Primary	23	28	11	15	9	5
3 Secondary	11	5	17	17	8	7
4 Tertiary	2	1	2	2	4	4
Average age of trainees (years)						
1 Men	56.4	63	45.4	58.0	62.3	37.0
2 Women	43.7	45.4	40.75	46.7	49.2	53.1
3 Overall	45.4	48	42.0	48.4	53.0	50.8
Occupation						
1 Farmer	29	32	22	30	14	13
2 Housewife	5	0	1	0	2	0
3 Business	3	2	5	4	6	2
4 Community Health Volunteer	0	0	0	0	1	0
5 Employed	0	0	0	1	0	1
6 Pastor	2	0	2	0	0	0
Roles in their respective groups						
1 Chairperson	8	5	9	3	6	2
2 Vice-chairperson	3	0	1	1	2	0
3 Secretary	10	10	7	9	7	2
4 Vice-secretary	0	3	3	2	1	0
5 Treasurer	6	4	5	4	3	3
6 Trustee, adviser	1	0		3	0	2
7 Members	11	13	5	12	4	5

Outcomes

- Co-operative and group members are exchanging information about their organisations and discussing how they can generate more income from poultry production through collective activities.
- Two of the groups involved in the trainings and some members of a newly registered co-operative have collectively sold their chicken. Initial evidence shows that after the training on marketing and linkage with services providers, leaders of the two groups and co-operative discussed and agreed to sell their chicken in bulk. In doing so, they negotiated for fairer prices, they did not incur additional marketing expenses because the buyer collected chicken from a central location in their villages and they were paid on delivery. This was achieved through the links established earlier between a private trader and the group leaders by the GIVE project team. It is likely that availability of ready market for chicken and expectation of fairer prices would lead to increased chicken production and productivity through improved husbandry practices including adoption of technologies such as uptake and use of vaccines.

Lessons learned

- Heterogeneity of the smallholder farmers is evident in the various stages of co-operative and group development. From the baseline survey results, smallholder farmers' membership in co-operatives varied by the age, whether farming was the main income source, presence of chicken house, education (years of schooling), and the extent to which they received information or attended a training. Furthermore, from the discussions with farmers during mobilisation and group/cooperative meetings, past experiences with groups or co-operatives were likely to influence the extent of collective action. For example, in intervention sites where leaders had built trust among members, collective action was likely to be achieved faster.
This means that their context affects the extent to which they can use collective action to enhance economic and social benefits from poultry production. Therefore, leveraging on different strategies relevant for the context of smallholder farmers in different locations is key in successful collective action.
- Organisational building and strengthening takes time for the new leadership and/or collective activities. This is due to the varying levels of knowledge and awareness of collective activities through co-operatives and groups which requires trust and consensus building. This implies that some of the expected project outcomes such as collective purchase of inputs may take time to realise, and it is unlikely to be implemented uniformly by different groups and co-operatives.
- Linking smallholder farmer groups and co-operatives to markets and other actors of the poultry value chain is not a once off event. More technical support is required over time to achieve this.