

RECOMMENDATIONS

LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION IS OFTEN PROMOTED AS AN ADAPTATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, YET WHAT PEOPLE DIVERSIFY INTO IS CRITICAL.

ALSO, THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERSIFICATION ARE RARELY CONSIDERED. WHILE IT MAY INCREASE INCOMES, IT DOES NOT ALWAYS IMPROVE RESILIENCE OR ENHANCE WELLBEING.

TO COUNTER ANY NEGATIVE OUTCOMES, REGULATED LABOUR LAWS, IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE, IMPROVED SOCIAL PROTECTION, AND THE PROVISION OF SAFETY NETS SHOULD ACCOMPANY LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION EFFORTS.



WHEN PLANNING RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES:

01

DON'T ASSUME ALL WOMEN ARE VICTIMS.

We see that, at times, women are increasing their sense of agency, which makes them critical agents for adaptation.

02

CONSIDER POWER RELATIONS EXPLICITLY.

Women's increasing agency can lead to the renegotiation of power relationships which are essential for managing risk and improving wellbeing in a more equitable and inclusive manner.

03

SUPPORT PROCESSES THAT INCREASE AGENCY, CAPACITIES AND LONG-TERM WELLBEING BY:

- Improving access to jobs and resources, concurrently with other forms of support for domestic tasks (e.g. childcare, improved access to water).
- Supporting productive assets (e.g. land, equipment).
- Offering support services and mechanisms that incentivise cooperation.
- Providing direct access to information.
- Working with men and governments to challenge social norms.

04

HELP PEOPLE TO AVOID RISKY OR ILLEGAL LIVELIHOODS BY:

Providing better access to social support, education and technical skills, along with alternative sustainable livelihood opportunities.

IN SEMI-ARID REGIONS, WOMEN ARE NOT NECESSARILY VICTIMS OR POWERLESS: THEY ARE OFTEN DIVERSIFYING THEIR LIVELIHOODS AND INCREASING THEIR AGENCY



The five-year ASSAR project (Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions, 2014-2018) uses insights from multi-scale, interdisciplinary work to inform and transform climate adaptation policy and practice in ways that promote the long-term wellbeing of the most vulnerable and those with the least agency.

IN SEMI-ARID REGIONS, WOMEN ARE NOT NECESSARILY VICTIMS OR POWERLESS:

THEY ARE OFTEN DIVERSIFYING THEIR LIVELIHOODS AND INCREASING THEIR AGENCY

HOME TO HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, THE SEMI-ARID REGIONS OF AFRICA AND INDIA ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO CLIMATIC AND NON-CLIMATIC IMPACTS AND RISKS. TO ADAPT TO SUCH DYNAMIC AND CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTS, PEOPLE MAY SHIFT OR DIVERSIFY THEIR LIVELIHOODS. DOING SO CAN AFFECT PEOPLE'S AGENCY, STATUS AND RESILIENCE IN BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE WAYS.



OUR FINDINGS

WOMEN ARE ENHANCING THEIR POSITION IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND SOCIAL STATUS.

Women's increased exposure to information and new networks as a result of working outside their homes, in addition to their new sources of income, is at times increasing their agency and voice.



"I survive from selling local produce from my land and vegetables from the Etunda Irrigation Scheme. I am an entrepreneur. I sell marula juice, marula nuts, ground nuts, beans, thatching grass and livestock fodder that I gather from my land and wild fruits. I do all this by myself."
(Ndeuhala, Ndongona widow, Omusati Region, Namibia)

"In the past, I used to farm, but I stopped when I joined a singing group 10 years ago. We are a successful group of 32 members and perform at many weddings and events – sometimes up to 10 events a month. This brings in enough money for me to support myself and help my daughter care for her three children."
(Ayah, older separated woman, Isiolo County, Kenya)

"When my wives get their income, they usually bring it to me and I help them make a decision on how to spend the money. Though, I show my wives my income, I always take the final decision on how the money is spent. In my absence, my younger brother becomes the head of my household."
(Saanuo, married man, Lawra District, Ghana)

"Since our farmlands have shifted from subsistence to cash crops, our responsibilities have increased. But our husbands take all the decisions about crop selection, market transactions or land use, and we have gone from being farmers to being labourers on our own land."
(Women from Maharashtra, India)

BUT IN MANY CASES, MEN REMAIN IN CHARGE OF DECISION-MAKING.

Men are often still in charge of the family's income and how it should be used. And, where there has been a shift to cash crop farming, women are not consulted anymore, as it is now seen as an aspect of financial planning.



LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION SOMETIMES LEADS TO FEELING OVERWHELMED AND STRETCHED FOR TIME.

Workloads have increased for both men and women, and everyone has less leisure time. However, when domestic chores and parenting roles remain unchanged, women become disproportionately burdened by the extra workload.



"Because of the shift to growing pomegranate, our work day has extended...we do not have time to celebrate festivals or even to meet each other."
(Social extension worker on behalf of a group of women, Borban, Maharashtra, India)

"I have to work on my husband's farm before I can work on my own groundnut farm. In the dry season I am also involved in petty trading to support household food security and have limited time to rest."
(Grace, married woman, Upper West Region, Ghana)

"Since my borewells kept failing and the income from my farm decreased, I now commute for eight hours every day, six days a week to work as a gardener in Bangalore. On weekends, I work on my farm."
(Mohan, male smallholder farmer, Kolar, Karnataka, India)

"I knew I was HIV positive when I got pregnant with my first-born child. When business was not good, I decided to have sex for money. Once in a while I do casual work like weeding on farms but because I am sick and weak, I can't work everyday."
(Abida, woman with two children, Isiolo, Kenya)

"I moved to work in this brick kiln with my entire family. My two children and my husband work with me, but the conditions are difficult and my health is suffering. The rest of our family is far, so no one can help me with minding the children or lending me money to go to the doctor. Although we earn a bit more than at home, our poor health and the children's compromised education does not make up for it."
(Shubha, married woman, Gulbarga, India)

LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION DOES NOT ALWAYS LEAD TO ENHANCED RESILIENCE OR WELLBEING.

Women and men sometimes choose risky livelihoods out of desperation, which impacts negatively on their long-term health and safety.

