

Is gender adequately mainstreamed in the Harmonised Seed Security project?

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A household vulnerability study conducted in Zimbabwe's Zaka district reveals that there is evidence of gender not being adequately mainstreamed in the FANRPAN Harmonised Seed Security project.

Tendai Kureya of Development Data says results indicate that the cultural and social setting is highly patriarchal in the district, resulting in women's participation in livelihood activities being subdued.

"As a result, the number of female headed households that are participating is significantly much lower. In all seed farmer households, ownership of physical and other assets is much lower compared to that of men.

"For better success with the project and the other seed interventions, gender needs to be considered. There is a need to deliberately increase the number of women farmers, and encourage fairer assets distribution among participating households."

The study was developed for FANRPAN by Development Data, following a survey on seed farmers in the district. Development Data partnered Agricultural Technical and Extension Service and GRM International to assess vulnerability levels of seed farmers in the district, using the Household Vulnerability Index assessment tool. The index is a product of FANRPAN, a statistical approach to vulnerability assessments, a data management system and a reporting framework.

The index was developed by FANRPAN who partnered with World Vision International, the Southern Africa Trust, the University of Venda and Development Data to develop the index to assess vulnerability at household level. The index improves planning and targeting of humanitarian and development interventions.

Kureya says the results show a sharp decline in consumption of purchased foods such as oil, sugar and rice, while maize and leaf vegetables form the base of foods consumed.

"The most common coping strategy, according to the research, indicated that 38 percent of households were changing diet to cheaper and available foodstuffs. Most households indicated that they changed from bread and eggs for breakfast to meal porridge.

"Other strategies included reducing the size of meals, working harder and working overtime, consuming more of their small livestock, and borrowing. On average, low vulnerability households eat eight different types of foods per week, compared to seven for medium vulnerability households," says Kureya.

It also found that the majority of seed farmers will require some level of assistance, but immediate steps should be taken to rescue the up to ten of the 483 seed farmers who are on a downward spiral.