

The Disaster of Development: How Women's "Empowerment" Projects are Damaging Indonesian Smallholder Farming, Rural Families, and the Environment

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Abstract

Ecofeminism, or ecological feminism, is based on a belief that the social mentality that leads to the domination and oppression of women is directly connected to the social mentality that leads to the abuse of the natural environment¹. This paper, based on field assessments conducted from March–June 2013, will show that agricultural development models focused on income generation, as most of the women in agriculture projects are, are based on “gender strategies” that instrumentalize women to achieve productivity goals. These ideological hierarchies that instrumentalize women, also allow for the systematic domination of industry over smallholder farmers, and commodities over food security. In conclusion, these combined “strategies” are leading to the degradation of both rural, agricultural families and rural ecology in Indonesia.

Keywords: ecofeminism, disaster, environment, empowerment.

1 MacGregor, Sherilyn (2006). *Beyond mothering earth: ecological citizenship and the politics of care*. Vancouver: UBC Press. p. 286. ISBN 0-7748-1201-X; <http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Ecofeminism.html>

Introduction: Women's "Empowerment" Projects

"The conclusions are clear: (i) gender equality is good for agriculture, food security and society; and (ii) governments, civil society, the private sector and individuals, working together, can support gender equality in agriculture and rural areas" (FAO, 2011:61).

Gender equality and empowerment are core development objectives, fundamental for the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. As a basic human right, a gender perspective and a strong commitment to women's rights must be central to any development framework. The objectives of these programs specifically in the agricultural sector are increased productivity of farm commodities, poverty reduction for women farmers and their dependents, and the empowerment of women as a marginalized social group. These are broadly accepted positions, presented in language that embraces the key terms sought by donors. These positions are based on approaches to gender analysis that rely on sex disaggregated data collection on work and resource allocations at the level of households, and focus on differences in workloads, access to and control over resources, income, and leadership by women and men².

Following a series of field-based assessments of 45 gender and agricultural projects and interviews with over 400 female farmers, it became clear that our findings were not as positive as those reported in FAO, WB and other donor agencies' reports. Throughout our analysis, we felt conflicted over several issues including basic 'key words': empowerment, equality, and sustainability, which we felt were not clear in these projects. Definitions seem to be tied to a rather disempowering³ mindset through approaches that endeavored to re-create a set number of relations and activities rather than strengthen existing knowledge or ideas. We saw no holistic approaches geared toward encouraging specific changes in power relations between government, farmers, genders and their environment. While project documents were clear

2 <http://www.ifpri.org/publication/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index>

3 <http://www.how-matters.org/2011/01/17/confessions-of-a-recovering-neocolonialist/>

in their gender strategies at theoretical levels, practical application in all but one of 45 projects analyzed was ultimately based on a belief that increased productivity and income is the key to all improvements (Berman et al 2013⁴). Quantitative measures of success meant simply increased production and, hence, increased income. Our fieldwork, however, looked beyond these narrow indicators at the impacts of these increases over time and in the family and found very little that we would call empowering.

The questions that we attempted to answer during our assessments were: Does increased income lead directly to increased power for women? Does more money lead to better health and education outcomes for her children? Does increased income require shift to a commodity-based approach? How is sustainability ensured for families, especially after the end of the project cycle? How does project design and implementation directly affect families and women in particular? Finally, we looked at the history of farming in Indonesia and how such a bleak past affects current situations.

Defining Empowerment

“Economic indicators and social well-being indicators do not correlate” (Bissio, 2012).

Empowerment is not a project goal in itself but a long, complicated process of behavior change through which power structures in society and how they interact can be altered so that more effective and equitable goals can be reached. In project design, empowerment should be a ‘bottom-up’ process of transforming power relations through individuals or groups developing awareness of their own subordination and building their own capacity to challenge it. A clear concept of what empowerment means and what steps individuals must pass through in this process of change is essential to program design. Yet, we found in our research that women or men, project staff or beneficiaries, had no clear idea of what empowerment was. None had a vision or concept of what this would be in practical terms beyond earning more money.

4 https://www.academia.edu/4564496/Womens_Empowerment_in_Agriculture_Assessment._Indonesia_2013

Of the 45 women in agriculture projects observed, only one actually collaborated with beneficiaries in designing the project. How can a project 'empower' people when the project itself positions them as passive receptors of some centrally designed project with a narrowly defined goal?

Further of concern, projects that list empowerment as a goal did not recognize the gendered roles that are socially constructed in daily life, the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are learned and influenced by social class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, ability, disability, history, and culture in which beneficiaries live. Focusing only on her *productive* role, i.e., market production and home/subsistence production undertaken by women which generates an income, projects ignored her *reproductive* role, i.e., the child-bearing, child-rearing and care-taking responsibilities borne by women, which are essential to the reproduction and health of the workforce and her *community management* role, i.e. *adat* or religious activities undertaken by women to ensure the provision of resources at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role. Since these all tend to be un or underpaid, they are not considered *work* by project implementers or beneficiaries themselves. For example, all our informants, from beneficiaries to project managers and facilitators, acknowledged that women make for better project outcomes because they are "more diligent", "more detail oriented", "more reliable", "more honest", "more hard working than men"⁵. Yet, we found women still *rightly* earned a lower wage, and remain largely absent from decision-making in the projects that focus on them, and in their own communities, if not in their households. Despite the widely published fact that more women work in agriculture than men, they work longer hours, and they earn less money, over 400 women farmers interviewed for this study referred to themselves as "*penganggur*", unemployed.

Women as main beneficiaries may be a common starting point in most projects, but by not recognizing her reproductive and community roles also, these projects are at risk of further increasing women's burden. No program we visited had a baseline assessment of women's multiple roles from which to monitor the actual benefits or burdens a

5 Field notes.

project is providing her. Without a good baseline understanding of her world, the only indicators of a project's success are those that measure income or production increases. We argue here that productivity is not an appropriate indicator of the success of a project, and most definitely not an indicator of empowerment. In fact, this is where we argue that government and donor/NGO projects instrumentalize women as cheap, reliable labor in order to achieve 'successful' outcomes without concern for improvements in other aspects of her life. These project interventions are based on gender-blind or gender-neutral policies that may be enforcing women's "traditional" roles and may be more of a threat to gender equity than a benefit. Empowerment in these agricultural development programs is misunderstood as income generation and involvement rather than as a critical step towards reshaping economic, political, and social conditions to allow for better opportunities and results for both women and men.

The Past Impacts the Present

Economic growth "is only one of many different concerns that need attention. Growth rate is a very daft—and a deeply alienated—way of judging economic progress." (Sen quoted in Mishra 2013)⁶

Reports⁷ show that agriculture remains one of the highest sources of employment for Indonesians. While the majority of rural women still work in agriculture (61%), less than 40% of active farmers are women⁸. Despite agriculture being the largest employer, in the last 10 years, technical and agricultural schools at all levels are closing because of a lack of student enrollments. In 2011, merely 4.1% of the state budget

6 In Mishra, P. "Which India Matters?" *New York Times Review of Books*. Nov 21, 2013

7 The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org>; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <http://faostat.fao.org>; Department of Agriculture, <http://deptan.go.id>

8 It must be questioned if the term 'active' under-represents women. None of the sites clarifies what active means or how it is determined. For example, they do not show what percentage of male farmers have migrated to urban areas and overseas in search of a more livable wage than they could get as a farmer, leaving women to take on activities which were traditionally dominated by men.

went to agriculture. In 2013, that number was reduced to 3.5%⁹.

How can a so-called agrarian nation neglect its farmers? It is important to recognize Indonesia's long history of marginalization of smallholder farmers. Land reform, farmers' insurance and social supports were major issues starting in the 1920s, taken up primarily by the Indonesian left in the 1950s and early 1960s, but never fully implemented. The Basic Agrarian Law (BAL) of 1960 was the centerpiece of Sukarno's efforts to fuse nationalist, socialist, and populist political commitments. It asserted the "social function" of land and other resources, reiterated the state's responsibility for managing those resources in the interests of "the people" (Lucas & Warren 2013:2¹⁰).

However, the populist-socialist construction of the BAL, designed specifically to prevent the uncontrolled transformation of land into a commodity, became just that under Suharto's regime. Since 1968, state policies allowed for the confiscation of customary lands for the mining, timber, and plantation concessions liberally dispensed to Indonesian conglomerates and foreign investors (*ibid.*).

Land reform, social safety nets, and the issues of women farmers in particular were a central part of the Indonesian Communist Party political program¹¹. As a result, in the New Order era (1966-1998), any mention of these issues risked political suspicion, effectively shutting down meaningful discussion of farmers' reforms and gender issues in agriculture. The same issues that spurred large-scale peasant unrest fifty years ago remain today: access to land that can be taken away at any time¹², lack of infrastructure, lack of any security measures or

9 <http://www.anggaran.depkeu.go.id/dja/acontent/NK%20dan%20APBN%202013.pdf>

10 Lucas, A. & C. Warren. *Land for the People: the State and Agrarian Conflict in Indonesia*. Ohio University Research in International Studies Southeast Asia Series No. 126 Ohio University Press Athens. 2013.

11 Seminar Nasional Wanita Tani. 1961. *Proceedings*. Yogyakarta 17-20 January.; Wieringa, S. 1995. *The politicization of gender relations in Indonesia: The Indonesian women's movement and Gerwani until the New Order state*, Amsterdam: Universiteitsbibliotheek (PhD thesis).

12 See <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/features/identity-and-resistance-in-yogyakarta-chili-farmers/>; <http://kulonprogotolaktambangbesi.wordpress.com/2009/10/21/ribuan-petani-kulon-progo-melawan-kejahatan-korporasi-hingga-bertempur-terhadap-polisi/>; <http://kulonprogotolaktambangbesi.wordpress.com/page/2/>; [Indonesian Feminist *Journal* 71](http://politik.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

safety nets, lack of farmers' organizations able to negotiate fair pricing, plus social and structural gender discrimination. As of this writing, residents of the so-called protected forests in Jambi are being violently evicted by P T Asiatic Persada personnel with the support of Brimob and TNI¹³ so that more land is made available for palm oil plantations.

These agricultural policies, which favor commercial producers and do not further any goal of increasing the standard of living for farmers, date back to the Green Revolution policy of 1968¹⁴. As Cullather (2010¹⁵) writes, the result is a "narrowing of [domestic agriculture's] genetic base, supplanting indigenous, sustainable practices; displacing small and communal farming with commercial agribusiness; and pushing millions of peasants into urban slums or across borders." These Green Revolution program structure still exists today and continues to shape agricultural projects that cause the same problems in terms of disempowerment of farmers, dependency on outside/government inputs, cropping regimes that strain soil fertility, over application of chemical inputs, disrupted environment due to pesticides and subsequent pest and production problems (Hidayat, 2000¹⁶). The Green Revolution-inspired approach to agricultural extension services was and remains based on a top-down model of technology transfer that largely focused on male farmers with few measures to address women's

kompasiana.com/2013/01/08/nasib-petani-di-kulonprogo-dipertaruhkan-517695.html for a current conflict over a foreign mining firm leasing kraton land that has been farmed collectively for generations.

13 <http://www.berdikarionline.com/kabar-rakyat/20131217/ratusan-warga-sad-masih-bertahan-di-pendopo-kantor-gubernur-jambi.html>; <http://www.berdikarionline.com/kabar-rakyat/20131213/warga-suku-anak-dalam-kami-diancam-dibunuh-bila-tidaktinggalkan-kampung.html>

14 See <http://eclectic.ss.uci.edu/~drwhite/Anthro129/balinesewatertemplesJonathanSepe.htm> for a paper on how this policy destroyed social, cultural, environmental, and irrigation systems by placing economic gain above all else.

15 Cullather, N. *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*. Harvard University Press. 2010.

16 See also <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/06/30/forty-years-after-green-revolution039.html> for a discussion on the chaotic and inappropriate development of agricultural extension.

technology needs or social conditions¹⁷. Women have shifted to a more central position now given the necessity of meeting gender quotas in all extension activities¹⁸. These quotas are met through the use of existing women's social groups (such as the Family Welfare Program, or PKK), which officially maintains a hierarchical structure (the village head's wife is the leader), while reinforcing a version of womanhood that promotes women's secondary status and domestically oriented skills such as cooking, sewing and childcare. Our question, then, is: are these projects empowering women, as they claim to be, or are they reinforcing traditional roles?

Our fieldwork revealed that farmers as beneficiaries of donor and government extension projects accept the instructions given to them, despite concerns and disagreements, boredom and irrelevance. When we asked why they do not organize and make demands, the answer was always the same, "takut" (afraid). Farmers remember what happened to their parents and grandparents following the so-called communist purge in 1965-6.

Our most shocking findings from our field assessment revealed that a whopping 96% of our respondents realized that they did not have the vision, choice, power or funds to change their own lives. The only viable option they saw was to invest in their children's education as an investment in their own futures – and insurance that their children do *not* become farmers. The lure of quick cash to provide the education their children need (with no guarantees of a better future) too often translates into migration¹⁹ in search of better wages or selling land to palm oil or other conglomerates²⁰. It also warns of several potential

17 Pingali, P. 2012. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3411969/>

18 Presidential Instruction No.9/2000 instructs and provides guidelines to the executive branch of the government (including ministers, governors, regents and mayors) to promote the implementation of gender parity in formulating and implementing development programs in national and regional levels.

19 As reported by Economics Minister HattaRajassa, smallholder farmers' numbers have dropped by 4 million in the past year. <http://www.indonesiarayanews.com/news/nasional/02-10-2013-22-10/ini-tekat-pemerintah-kurang-jumlah-buruh-tani-di-indonesia;>

20 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/ai411c/AI411E04.htm>; <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/green-activists-sound-warning-on-foreign-investments-in-oil-palm-estates-2/>

crises. We saw that where a project succeeded in raising women's status and income, men often left her in charge and went in search of migrant work to support income. Where success was unclear, women were taking up the burden of migrant labor with over 78% of the force being female²¹. In both cases, families were broken up in the search for income. Additionally, a food security crisis looms, caused by a single staple-food policy, poor agricultural policies, productive land conversion, poor infrastructure, a pro-import attitude, and a belief that all can be solved through quick-fix solutions²². With the smallholder-farming sector under threat, the risks for women continue to mount²³.

Commodities or Food Security?

It is a mistake to think of agriculture as simply about productivity. Agriculture provides employment and livelihoods, it underpins food quality, food safety and nutrition, and it allows food choices and cultural diversity. It is also necessary for water quality, broader ecosystem health, and even carbon sequestration. Agriculture, concluded the IAASTD, should never be reduced merely to a question of production. It must necessarily be integrated with the many needs of humans and ecosystems (IAASTD, 2007²⁴).

Food security is not simply a problem of food supply, isolated from broader political issues. It also involves the social inequalities that marginalize rural and poorer communities from basic services including education, information, nutrition, and secure property ownership, as well as the policies that favor cash crops over food, or urban over rural development and needs (Cullather, 2010). Focusing on productivity and income generation ignores all these other facets of rural life.

21 <http://www.paulhastings.com/genderparity/countries/indonesia.html>

22 <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/08/12/indonesia-crossroads-addressing-food-security.html>; <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/10/17/lack-farmland-hampers-government-self-sufficiency-program.html>

23 See also <http://www.fao.org/sd/wpdirect/wpan0027.htm>

24 <http://www.unep.org/dewa/Assessments/Ecosystems/IAASTD/tabid/105853/Default.aspx/> and <http://www.greenmedinfo.com/blog/how-agriculture-can-provide-food-security-without-destroying-biodiversity>

In most projects assessed, focus on a single commodity did result in a boost in income but this was not sustained. Water shortages, diminishing land for agriculture, soil depletion, overuse of expensive chemical pesticides and fertilizers, disease, inefficiency and low prices for produce result in millions of farmers living at or below the poverty line. Further, the assessment found that 'coordinating' farmers benefited project managers and buyers, but not necessarily farmers, whose lack of a collective voice meant they were subjected to the whims of these more powerful others²⁵.

In all locations visited, income from farming alone was never enough to cover basic household needs. Both men and women needed to find day wage labor work in fields or in construction and women very often also sold goods they processed, grew or were given on consignment at market. These issues are all contributing to several problems for women and farming families, none of which were identified in project reports: the overwhelming desire for smallholder farmers to move out of farming, increased burden on families to meet financial needs, the shame associated with farming, the lure of migrant labor, and the time-saving use of instant foods and the resulting under-nutrition in children.

The dilemma over project design involves the conflict over the issue of high-value agriculture, which does increase income and allows a family access to a better lifestyle. But at what cost? When these national and international projects influence farmers' decisions, local people appear very responsive to such economic opportunities. They readily change their 'traditional' livelihood system from intercropping the new cash crop with upland rice and food crops that maintain food security to more monoculture plantations if it can increase their income²⁶. The lure of a promised high income resulted in many farmers shifting away from a variety of crops to monoculture so that they could reap as much financial benefit as possible. But this also places farmers in exceptionally high risk positions that are beyond their capacity to

25 See also Cullather, 2010 and <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic48666.files/Hungry%20World%20roundtable.pdf>

26 Personal communication from farmers and project managers. See also Feintrenie, et al. 2010.

manage-*if* problems arise. Without direct links to markets themselves and without infrastructure and capacity to move their harvests, smallholder farmers are dependent on local buyers who control prices and project managers who control connections.

None of the projects visited offered any type of safety nets or insurance for farmers. The ecological and social devastation wrought by over reliance on cash crops, irrigation, and agrichemicals did not create the abundance it promised. Yields increased, but prices dropped. Today, as Cullather devastatingly notes, "the green revolution epicenters—Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mexico, the Philippines, and Indonesia—are all among the most undernourished nations, each with higher rates of adult and childhood malnutrition and deficiency diseases ... than most Sub-Saharan countries."

Field Narratives - Cocoa: From around 1999, men in North Sumatra, Central and South Sulawesi decided to clear any other crops from their fields and focus on the current cocoa boom²⁷. Women described to us how extra cash was translated into 'luxury' items such as TVs, scooters on credit, fancy hand phones, rice cookers²⁸. But poor techniques had left trees vulnerable to disease that has seriously damaged the crop. Prices to farmers have dropped to \$1.60/kg, which all but wipes out any profit²⁹.

Oranges: Following the fly infestation that destroyed over 50% of the orange crop in North Sumatra³⁰, men were told by agricultural 'experts' to destroy their trees. The fly was impossible to kill³¹.

It was women who filled the income gaps following crop failures

27 Personal communications, cocoa farmers in N. Sumatra, S and C Sulawesi.

28 Field notes, FGD with women farmers in N. Sumatra, S & C Sulawesi.

29 Personal communication, FGD, and <http://www.bisnis-jatim.com/index.php/2013/03/11/petani-kian-tergencet-indonesia-importir-kakao-pada-2014/>; <http://yansulaeman.com/index.php/sample-sites-2/85-mengapa-petani-kakao-sultra-tidak-sejahtera>

30 http://www.medanbisnisdaily.com/news/read/2013/02/14/12604/rp_4triliun_habis_untuk_impор_jeruk/#.Ub7tqutWpz8

31 <http://kliniktaniorganik.com/?p=13616>; and personal communication, Karo farmers.

by quickly growing vegetables for both personal consumption and market. In Central Sulawesi, community women formed a horticulture cooperative to maintain the family's income, albeit much smaller than the cocoa crop had provided. When such threats to a family's security hit, men look for migrant or more wage labor work, sometimes beyond Indonesia's borders. Women are the ones left to find solutions that maintain her family's survival.

There are three main pitfalls that explain why so little real empowerment has reached women smallholder farmers:

1. Adherence to traditional women's roles as secondary support to men;
2. Ignoring women's unpaid work in the home and community;
3. Instrumentalizing women – exclusively or primarily focusing on women as a means to deliver broader economic gains rather than for reasons of gender equality or women's empowerment in their own right.

These three pitfalls result in women smallholder farmers facing a series of distinct challenges, the most significant being the burden she takes on in terms of unequal distribution of tasks, the absolute lack of free time, and the unquestioned triple burden.

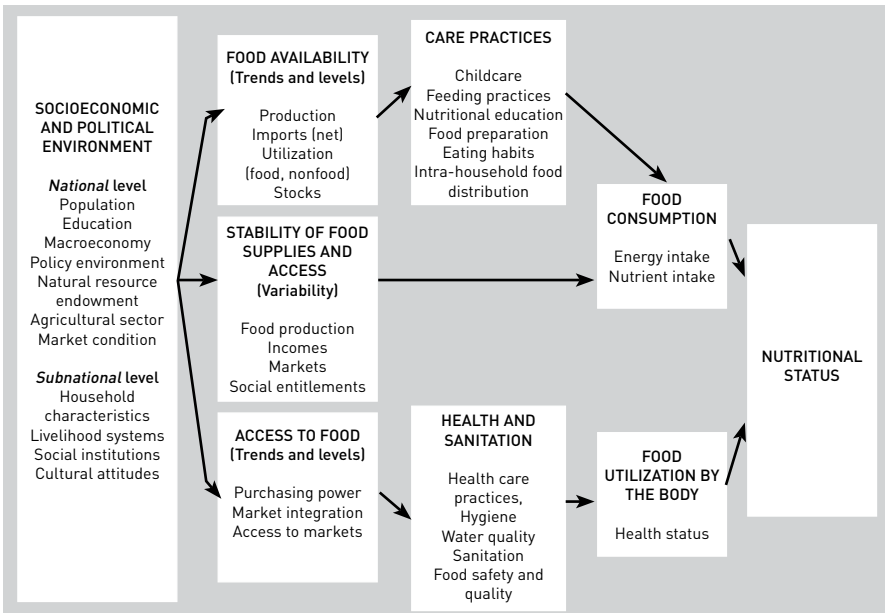
Gender differences in access, control and use of assets have a profound effect on household welfare and agricultural development. But while focusing on gender issues, it is important to recognize that this does not mean just women's disadvantages. We would be neglecting the very real contextual issues of disadvantages felt by rural poor farmers (small landholders and wage laborers) in general. Treating gender simply as economic and social difference is problematic here because it focuses attention on the separate characteristics of women and men rather than on the way a family and a community work together to create and maintain advantage and disadvantage.

Women, Time, and Family Nutrition

“Don't be like us, a slave to others”, advice from a female farmer to her children, North Sumatra, 6 May 2013.

A recent USAID study³² showed that less than 10% of Indonesian children were fed properly. Most babies between 4–5 months are fed instant baby food that often contains high amounts of sugar, little or no fat, and little or no protein, thus putting a child at risk for deficiency if other foods are not added. Older children fill up on ready-to-eat, non-nutritious snacks bought from street vendors (costs \$.05 – 2.00/day). Mothers often complained that their children will not eat more complete, nutritious meals and instead demand more snacks – which they are given.

Figure 1:
Elements of Food Security



Food insecurity and under-nutrition are persistent challenges, and the country’s stunting levels are alarmingly high at over 30% in most districts³³. Provinces such as NTT and Papua have been classified as

32 Dickey, V., Sri Boedihardjo & T. Bardosono. 2010. USAID/Indonesia Nutrition Assessment for 2010: New Project Design. USAID: Washington DC.

33 <http://www.wfp.org/countries/indonesia/overview>

chronically food insecure by the Indonesian government³⁴. As Figure 1³⁵ shows, food security involves a great deal more than income generation. Discussions with women and men revealed little understanding of child nutritional needs and feeding practices. How the trend toward monoculture high value commodities impacts smallholder farmers and farm laborers needs to be more intensely analyzed to ensure it is not causing more harm than good in the longer term given too the extensive impact of under-nutrition on all development indicators.

While it is clear in the literature and in our own fieldwork that women's groups are the main targets for all kinds of interventions, we did not see educational or general improvement activities to coincide with any of these income-generation activities. Large numbers of studies have linked women's income and greater bargaining power within the family to improved child nutritional status, which in turn influences health outcomes and educational attainment (FAO, 2012:45). We saw no such evidence. Women had no understanding of nutritional needs, dietary requirements. They only knew that instant porridge and snacks (*jajan*) are what everyone uses and most importantly, they save time.

Women reported that they rarely breast-fed for more than a few months and introduced instant porridges within weeks of birth. Time is clearly a huge issue where women chose time-saving methods that may have highly negative impacts on the health and safety of their children – choices that in turn impact her again, as she must be the care-giver for the ill and infirmed. The power to change such gender relations does not lie in individuals but rather in the community as a whole. There is strength in numbers and men and women need to openly support one another in order for economic growth to be sustained and advantageous to other facets of life.

Given the rapidity with which traditional diets and lifestyles are changing, it is not surprising that food insecurity and under-nutrition

34 See World Food Program. 2009. A Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas of Indonesia; <http://www.foodsecurityatlas.org/idn/country/fsva-2009/executive-summary>; websites for WHO.or.id; UNICEF.or.id

35 Source: World Bank. 2009. Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook. The World Bank. P. 12.

persist³⁶. The root cause of malnutrition is not just poverty. It is ignorance and the absolute lack of time in which to prepare nutritious foods. Marketing and modernization have convinced many that anything modern, quick and easy is good. Eliminating these causes requires political and social action of which nutritional programs can be only one aspect. Sufficient, safe and varied food supplies not only prevent malnutrition but also reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Time is a valuable resource and one our assessment found overwhelmingly was not one women could control. Daily division of activity profiles between women and men exposed major discrepancies that women themselves had never considered. On average, women wake up far earlier than men, have far less time during the day to rest, and go to bed later than their husbands. While men do take over women's tasks when she is ill or unable, this is limited strictly to specific times. Overall, it is essential that projects ask: (1) Did the project increase the time spent by women in production-related activities? Is this fair to women? How can the project, or her husband/family, help by compensating for some of this time? (2) Did participation in the project take time away from her other income generating activities and negatively impact family income? (3) What technologies could be added to the project to help save women's time and make their labor more productive?

Time is important, as are changing relationships in what men and women, girls and boys do and can be expected to do on a daily basis. Projects must consider time as another resource that has value. But as we found in our FGDs, women were unaware of a value for her time. When she did have some to spare, it was used to watch TV or attend to community activities. Ways of self-improvement or personal expansion, study or accessing new knowledge or technology were simply not options – ones she either could never access or could not

36 According to UNICEF, Indonesia has the fifth highest number of stunted children in the world— more than 7.6 million. The number of wasted children is 2.8 million, and 3.8 million more are underweight. Further, there is a growing percentage of children who are overweight (12.2% nationally). The immediate causes of maternal and child under-nutrition are poor dietary intake (Dickey et al, 2010). Our own discussions with women from Sumatra to Papua confirmed such practices were widespread.

even imagine were available. This lack of choice or vision is one of the biggest obstacles we found to changing women's situations.

Conclusions

Women farmers in all areas of our assessment saw their daily burdens as *normal* with no opportunities for 'self-improvement' since 1) she had no time, and 2) she had no concept of a different life. If women have no idea of what empowerment would be, or look like, or feel like, or how it will improve her and her family's life, then it is not going to happen. It is a myth that a project can 'empower' anyone. Women can only empower themselves if the knowledge, awareness and the decisions are hers to take and supported within the context of her family and community life. In short, women's empowerment can only occur if the context allows it and if it is part of a broader social, economic and political change in the region. This will require major changes in the way projects are implemented. Projects must be designed to empower from the start and not as a final goal. They require further and continuous education and training through long-term, multi-level initiatives that recognize the holistic nature of women's roles within the contexts of the social, economic and political worlds she inhabits and not simply target one facet of it.

Projects must also recognize the absolute need for a gender strategy that does not instrumentalize women to achieve productivity goals, but that strategically and intentionally opens spaces for women to gain the knowledge, access, voice, and respect that helps them to achieve more power at productive, reproductive, and community levels. Women should have enough information to, at the least, form a clear vision of the future they want, the society they need to build, and the environment that provides them with a sustainable livelihood. They must also have a connection with those who lead, buy their goods, make decisions, and teach their children, and be able to mobilize these energies to create communities where members can be content, creative, safe, and happy.