

ABSTRACT

Enhancing the Participation of Women in the Rural Development Process in
Trinidad and Tobago

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The action-research study was designed to determine whether the application of a gender-sensitive, agricultural extension methodology as embodied within a pilot, technical cooperation project would positively affect the development of rural women. The methodology is based on the promotion of value-added, commercial activities and the introduction of medium- to high-level, labour-saving technology, in association with training, targeted at small scale, rural, female producers, on the one hand; and training of extension staff in gender analysis, on the other.

A baseline survey was completed in 1992. One hundred and twenty nine (129) women among seven groups were pre-selected as the primary, beneficiary, target population. The analysis of the characteristics of the sample, utilising a gender analytical framework, was conducted to determine the need to design a differentiated approach to enhance their income-generating capacity. These interventions were implemented up to December 1995, at which time a post evaluation, panel survey was conducted.

Although, as a pilot, the number of project participants was necessarily small, it was possible to conduct an impact assessment from the longitudinal survey by developing cross tabulations of a number of independent variables and the indices for measuring success of the project intervention. Using chi-square tests of the cross tabulations, it was possible to make some inferences based on the test of the hypothesis that the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach to agricultural extension led to an increase in income/saving and in the rate of participation in rural development activities among rural, female producers. The main conclusion is that the target groups benefited from the strategies designed to meet the needs of women. This study provides valuable data on women at the micro-level, which can inform future, extension policy measures and the design of appropriate intervention programmes concerning female farmers.

[Key words: Women; Agriculture; Action-research; Impact Assessment; Gender Sensitive Extension Methodology]