



GENDER Impact
Platform

Review of key agricultural extension policies in Kenya and Siaya County for gender responsiveness

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Summary

Making agricultural and agricultural extension policies gender responsive is not only essential for tackling poverty and hunger but is also key in enhancing women agency, empowerment, and participation in agriculture. This study assessed Kenya's national agricultural extension policies and strategies and the Siaya County agricultural sector policies and strategies during July–October 2024 using the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Gender in Agricultural Policies Analysis Tool (GAPo). The analysis showed that both the national and the Siaya County policies acknowledge that some sociocultural norms impede equitable access to extension services by both women and the youth. The policies lack explicit objectives and budgets that address gender inequity, and the measures they outline to mainstream gender in agriculture and extension are general and noncommittal. To make extension policies gender responsive, it is imperative to explicitly have gender equality as a policy objective, include measures to address discriminatory gender norms, have monitoring and evaluation tools that track gender outcomes, provide capacity building for extension agents, and consider the gender needs in extension delivery and technology innovation and dissemination.

Key results

1. The Kenya national agricultural extension policies and Siaya County agricultural policies and strategies acknowledge the contribution of both women and the youth in agriculture and the challenges they encounter in accessing production resources.
2. The policies point out that social norms influence access to extension services by women and the youth.
3. Gaps exist in the measures outlined to make extension services gender responsive and inclusive. The policies and strategies are generic in nature and lack specific measures to promote gender equity.
4. The policies lack explicit objectives that promote gender equality in agriculture and rural women's rights.
5. The policies lack structures to include women in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes.
6. No specific budget is proposed to actualize the actions in the monitoring tools, and the policies lack gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation systems.

Background

Agricultural extension is a policy tool designed to transform and support farmers to transition from subsistence to business farming and to achieve the nation's vision of attaining 100% food security. While agricultural extension service delivery has been devolved to county governments, the counties are still guided by the National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy. In Siaya County, over 70% of households rely on farming as their main occupation and over a third of the households are female headed, which underscores the high contribution of women in the sector. Farming has for long been intertwined with sociocultural gender norms, for example in regard to what men and women can grow, who has access to which resources and who makes decisions or has power over key agricultural issues (Aberman et al., 2018; Djurfeldt et al., 2018; Ragasa et al., 2019; Witinok-Huber et al., 2021). In Africa, in particular, women are perceived as key players in agriculture, through which poverty and food security issues are addressed (Kingiri, 2013). However, gender inequalities regarding what women can have and what they can do have been regarded to significantly contribute to the

persistence of rural food insecurity and poverty (Kingiri, 2013; Witinok-Huber et al., 2021). Extension policies cannot effectively deliver as a tool for agricultural improvement without consideration of the sociocultural environment within which they are implemented. For instance, the gender productivity gap has been estimated to be as high as 30%, a situation that aggravates poverty and food insecurity especially in female-headed households. Closing the gender gap requires the review of agricultural extension policies to identify the extent to which they integrate gender considerations and further to provide suggestions to make them gender responsive.

Table 1. Major agricultural and extension policies and strategies reviewed

Policy or strategy	Period
National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy (NASEP)	2012
Guidelines and Strategies of Agricultural Extension Policy	2017
Draft Kenya Agricultural Sector Extension Policy	2022
Siaya County Agricultural Sector Strategy Policy	2021–2024
Siaya County Agri-Soil Management Policy	2021
Meteorology Policy	2022
Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy	2019–2029
Siaya Youth Agribusiness Strategy	2020–2024

Methods

The assessment of the extent to which selected national and Siaya County agricultural extension policies (Table 1) integrate gender considerations utilized GAPO (for details on this toolkit see <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/i6274en>). This tool is a framework that assesses if gender issues are integrated in the main components of an agricultural policy document. Six policies and two strategies were reviewed in three thematic areas, that is if they (i) integrated in their key areas such as objectives sex-disaggregated data etc., (ii) promoted gender equality and women's empowerment in the agricultural sector, for example through fostering their land ownership and participation in agricultural research and technology etc., and (iii) included a gender-grading section to assess the overall gender consideration status of the policy document.

Results

Key result 1. Roles of women and the youth are recognized and inequalities in agriculture and extension delivery are acknowledged

Both the national extension policies and the Siaya County agricultural policies acknowledge the roles of women and the youth in agricultural and rural development. The Siaya County agricultural policy specifically highlights the fact that in a farm household all members have ascribed gender roles to play in both farming and income generation. While the policy states that women immensely contribute towards attaining food security, it acknowledges that their roles alongside those of children are unremunerated. Because of such inequalities, agricultural production cannot be optimized, commercialized or sustained as envisioned in the Siaya County Integrated Development Plan.

Key result 2. Sociocultural norms influence access to and control over key agricultural resources

The policies recognize the existence of social, cultural, and economic inequalities that hinder effective participation of women, the youth, and persons with disabilities in agriculture. Sociocultural norms are strongly highlighted in the policies as influencing agricultural activities. The Siaya Agri-soil Management Policy, for instance, mentions that women and youth farmers are unable to adopt the preferred climate-smart agriculture technologies owing to norms that influence access to and control over land resources. Similarly, the National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy (NASEP) specifically highlights the fact that extension services lack inclusivity, as the pertinent policies hardly consider the social, cultural and economic inequalities that women, the youth, and persons with disabilities experience. NASEP specifically notes that women and youth farmers lack access to production resources such as land, information, and finances and therefore cannot effectively engage in agricultural activities. The policy acknowledges that the agricultural technologies and interventions are not gender sensitive and as result do not adequately meet the needs of women, the youth, and persons living with disabilities.

Key result 3. Extension approaches and methods, technologies and interventions are not tailored to the needs of women and the youth

The policies acknowledge that extension delivery approaches are not inclusive, but they do not outline deliberate action to address such gaps. The extension approaches applied in delivering pro-



grams are not suitable for the youth, who make up to 56% of the country's labor force. Specifically, NASEP says that the extension approaches and methods used to disseminate knowledge and skills are not youth friendly. Studies have shown that access to weather and climate information is essential in making farming decisions and that men, women, and the youth access information in different ways. However, policies such as the Meteorology Policy only assert that weather services shall be provided in a nondiscriminatory manner in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc. without making any provision for meeting the differentiated needs of men and women farmers. Furthermore, the proposed measures do not include modalities to close the identified gender gaps that impede access to information and resources. Without an outline of specific strategies to enhance information access and promote use of gendered innovations and access to agricultural inputs, the policies will score low on gender responsiveness.

Key result 4. There is an absence of gender equality and women rights as policy objectives and of budgets to actualize policy actions

None of the reviewed policies explicitly includes gender equality and women rights as policy objectives and no budget is proposed to actualize the policy action on gender and the youth. All the policies reviewed lack explicit objectives on gender equality in agriculture and rural women rights and they do not provide structures to include women and the youth in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes. They also do not have an indication of the intention for collection and use of sex-disaggregated data for policy monitoring or a requirement for a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation system in the agricultural and extension programs.

Key result 5. Gender is portrayed as a cross-cutting issue

In the extension policies, gender is included as a cross-cutting issue alongside HIV/AIDS, climate change, and environment and is, therefore, not granted much attention. This would not have been the case if gender had been treated a stand-alone issue deserving deliberate attention. Consequently, the actions suggested to actualize gender objectives are of a general nature, for instance promoting alternative income-generating activities for different groups. While the policies task extension agents with the duty to mainstream all these issues in their work, expertise in gender is not one of the technical or personal skills required from the agents.

Key result 6. A strategy to strengthen gender capacity in institutions is lacking

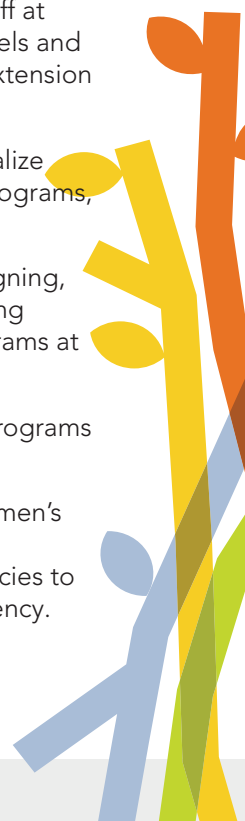
The policies lack explicit actions on strengthening of the capacities of extension staff on gender and, therefore, it is highly doubtful that they can deliver on this. Extension agents, as has been highlighted in Christoplos (2012), are not experts in everything including gender and climate change, and therefore they lack the capacity to effectively integrate gender in their duties, including in project implementation and dissemination of gender-sensitive technologies. Further, without such expertise and resources, extension agents cannot effectively create awareness or change attitudes on the cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequalities in local communities. NASEP tasks agricultural extension institutions with the responsibility to influence the mainstreaming of gender issues in school and training institutions' curricula.

Conclusion

This brief has drawn attention to existing gender gaps in agricultural and extension policies at both the national and county levels. Most of the policies recognize gender inequalities in agriculture and extension delivery and include a few measures to address them. However, most of the measures are generic and noncommittal.

Policy recommendations

1. Include gender equality in agriculture and/or rural women's rights as explicit policy objectives.
2. Explicitly include considerations or measures to address discriminatory gendered social norms.
3. Strengthen the capacity of extension staff at both the technical and management levels and of stakeholders on gender-responsive extension service, policies, and programs.
4. Develop county strategies to institutionalize gender at all levels, that is in policies, programs, and human resource management.
5. Integrate gender considerations in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating agricultural extension policies and programs at both national and county levels.
6. Track gender outcomes in agricultural programs and policies.
7. Utilize gender analysis tools such as Women's Empowerment in Agrifood Governance (WEAGov) to analyze programs and policies to empower women and enhance their agency. For details on the WEAGov framework



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