

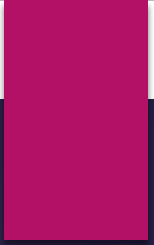
# Unpacking Intra-Household Decision-Making on Smallholder Farms in Colombia and Nicaragua to Foster Climate Change Adaptation

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Why does household  
decision-making matter  
for climate change  
adaptation?

# Gender and climate change adaptation in climate vulnerable, developing nations

- ▶ Climate vulnerability, or “the degree to which geophysical, biological and socio-economic systems are susceptible to, and unable to cope with, adverse impacts of climate change” (IPCC 2007), disproportionately affects individuals according to their social status gender, and ability to access resources.
- ▶ Women living in rural areas of climate vulnerable, developing nations are in a particularly delicate situation due to existing gender inequality, expected to deepen with climate change.
- ▶ As a result, women are expected to encounter greater obstacles when adapting the climate change due to inequality and time poverty.
- ▶ **Key message: *Climate change is expected to create more gender inequality and make climate change adaptation for women more difficult.***

# Tackling the dual issue of gender inequality and climate change adaptation: what can we do?

- ▶ Up until now, most initiatives to work on gender and climate change have used gender-sensitive or gender-responsive approaches
- ▶ These have been useful for visibilizing women and their needs, but have dealt less with inequitable relations of power.
- ▶ This is particularly important because of the absence of women and feminine perspectives in the broader climate change discourse (Gonda 2014)
- ▶ One way of overcoming this challenge is to take a gender transformative approach that specifically is focused on changing gender relations, challenging patriarchy, and promoting gender equality.
- ▶ **Key question: *How might we work towards a gender transformative approach to climate change adaptation?***

# Decision-Making as a site of transformation

- ▶ Decision-making provides one avenue for change
- ▶ Its considered a key indicator in women's empowerment indexes and for gauging gender transformative change
- ▶ Kabeer (1999) called it the “observable” element of women's empowerment
- ▶ The power of decision-making as a site gender transformation in the context of climate change is that it represents a space where women's voices to be heard in the male-dominated, highly masculinized arena of climate change.

# Decision-Making as a site of transformation

- ▶ The call for increased participation of women in climate change decision-making is not new, nor are calls for gendered approaches to climate change adaptation (e.g., gradual inclusion of gender inequality and women's empowerment into climate change debates at various COPs beginning in 2001 at the 7<sup>th</sup> COP)
- ▶ This has been mainly emphasized at higher levels.
- ▶ **Key question: *What about the micro sites where decisions about climate change adaptation occur?***

# Narrowing in further: Household decision-making

- ▶ Where gender relations are put the test in intimate ways
- ▶ Household decision-making patterns reveal perceptions, preferences, influence, and interactions among and between family members
- ▶ They help us to understand relationships of power and reasons why people adopt certain practices over others
- ▶ From a gender perspective, household decisions tell us a lot about gender relations and to what extent women's and men's voices influence decisions related to climate change adaptation, why, and how.

# Putting it all together: Applying this to climate change adaptation decisions

## Theory:

***We can look at perceptions of (joint) household decision-making in theory and practice to unpack the extent to which men and women participate in agricultural decisions in order to better understand gender relations and the opportunities and challenges for gender transformative decision-making in climate change adaptation or, in other words, the extent to which you see men and women's voices and perspectives reflected in the decision-making process and its outcome.***



# What we know about household decision-making and agriculture

- ▶ Scholarship on decision-making perceptions reveals that men and women often do not have the same perceptions
- ▶ In survey and mixed-methods studies, men tend to report that they make agricultural decisions, while women say they make them jointly or on their own
- ▶ Studies of spousal discord, or the lack of agreement on who makes certain decisions, highlighted the need for more scholarship on decision-making perceptions, the relationships between them, bargaining power, and decision-making authority.
- ▶ A recent study by Acosta (2017) on joint decision-making and gender equality revealed that participation in joint decisions is not usually equal and raised the question of **whether joint decision-making should be used as an indicator of gender transformation and women's empowerment.**

# What we know about household decision-making and agriculture

Discussion about Decision	Decision Decision-Making Process
No conversation between the couple	Man “informs” about the decision to the woman, <u>after the fact</u>
	Man “informs” about the decision to the woman, <u>before the fact</u>
Conversation between the Couple	Man “informs” about the decision to the woman, <u>before the fact.</u> <u>Woman’s ideas not considered</u>
	Woman’s ideas are considered, but man has the final say

# Research study

- ▶ Conducted in two sites: Cauca, Colombia, and Tuma-La Dalia, Nicaragua
- ▶ Both sites are located in climate vulnerable areas
- ▶ Study emerged after data from a Gender Survey implemented in the sites in 2015 suggested that joint decision-making about agricultural decisions followed a similar pattern as found elsewhere: men claimed they made agricultural decisions, while women claimed that these decisions were made jointly or by only the woman.
- ▶ Study didn't tell us much about the couples perceptions of the decision-making process
- ▶ Mixed-methods study was conceived and consisted of a social/choice experiment, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews with households led by male-female couples and single-headed households.

# Research study

- ▶ Paper uses qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with male/female couples (18 couples in Colombia and 10 in Nicaragua)
- ▶ Data examined:
  - ▶ Theoretical perceptions of decision-making
  - ▶ Division of labor and decision-making
  - ▶ Spousal accord and discord on common household decisions related to food, agriculture, and income
  - ▶ Decision-making process

# Findings: Theoretical perceptions of decision-making

## Colombia

- ▶ Individual decision is a conversation with no agreement or when one spouse acts without informing the other spouse
- ▶ Joint decisions are characterized as a long or short conversation, an agreement, and a way to support each other
- ▶ Men and women tended to view individual decisions negatively (create conflict) and joint decisions positively (more equitable)

## Nicaragua

- ▶ Individual decisions is one made without consulting one's spouse.
- ▶ Joint decision-making implies reaching and agreement, typically through dialogue
- ▶ Men and women had slightly different views of individual and joint decisions. The differences were mainly predicated on men's concern with conflict generated by not making decisions together.

# Findings: Division of labor and decision-making

## Colombia

- ▶ Traditional pattern of men as head of households and making decisions about agriculture and the farm. Women were responsible for domestic and care work, generally making decisions about food.
- ▶ Patterns can be attributed to gender norms, particularly who has knowledge and power, as well as land ownership. Also gender equality training and women's rights.

## Nicaragua

- ▶ Traditional gender division of labor with patterns of decision-making following suit: men make decisions about agriculture and farm, and women are responsible for decisions related to food. Financial decisions about income or spending varied with some couples reporting these to be made jointly and others by the man.
- ▶ Factors explaining the gendered division of labor and decision-making include gender norms and also technical knowledge and experience, as well as time poverty.

# Findings: Spousal accord and discord

## Colombia

- ▶ Spousal accord/joint decisions about those related to the income of the farm, implementation of new practices (water harvesting, new bean varieties, and home garden)
- ▶ Spousal discord regarding farm and non-farm related activities. Tendency was for men to report decisions associated with the male's domain as joint decisions, while women reported those for the women's domain as joint decisions

## Nicaragua

- ▶ Spousal accord on decisions regarding food preparation (woman), fertilizers and agrochemicals (man), and how income is distributed (male or joint).
- ▶ Spousal discord followed same pattern of decisions regarding the male domain (agriculture) reported as joint by men and as the man's decision by women, and decisions in the female domain were reported joint by women and the woman's decision by men.

# Findings: Decision-making process

Typology	Colombia	Nicaragua
The man makes the decision (no discussion)		X
The man informs the woman before making the decision, and the woman conforms to what he says**		X
The man informs the woman before the fact, but he do not consider the woman's opinion	X	
The man considers the woman's opinion, but makes the final decision**	X	X
The woman considers the man's opinion, but makes the decision herself		X
The man and woman exchange opinions and make a decision together***	X	X
The man and woman exchange their opinions with other family members and make the decision as a family	X	X



# Examples of joint decision-making

## ► Colombia

- Man and woman discuss opinions together and make decision: “Sometimes she [his wife] thinks one thing and I think another, but we reach an agreement because I talk her. In other words, we understand each other. Therefore, what she says or what I say, it is respected by both.” (Man)
- Man considers woman’s opinion, but makes final decision: Before going to buy the fertilizer, he told me that we have to buy this one kind. Then we would put it on the coffee... He asked me if we should buy a different fertilizer or we should buy the fertilizer that we had planned to buy... this [decision about] the fertilizer is his because he’s the one who knows about it.” (Woman)

# Examples of joint decision-making

## ► Nicaragua

- Man informs woman of decision and she conforms: “At least when he sells a cow, he tells me and we talk... [He says,] ‘I’m going to sell it or maybe I’ll buy a calf. What they sell are calves. It’s going to cost money. At least, as you know, to fix the wire fence or something else.’ So I tell him, ‘yes, it’s fine.’” (Woman)
- Man and woman discuss opinions together and make decision: “Two years ago, it was rumored that climate change was going to make it a dry year. So she said to me, ‘The say that this year is going to be dry. Why don’t we plant a few of these beans?’ We planted them. I went and when I saw the beans, I told her and I changed varieties. We planted them, and this time we planted half a manzana and it’s been good for us.” (Man)

# Findings: Joint decision-making – perceptions vs. practice

## Colombia

- ▶ The theoretical perceptions of decision-making follow three patterns:
  - ▶ Men and women didn't share common understanding of what decision-making means and their examples follow their individual interpretations
  - ▶ Men and women shared common understanding of decision-making and this was evident in examples
  - ▶ Examples of decision-making did not coincide with examples (defined decision-making in an egalitarian way but example showed otherwise)

## Nicaragua

- ▶ Spouses did not share the same perception of joint decision-making
- ▶ Some men acknowledged the role and value of partner in joint decision-making, but made final decision themselves, especially about decisions related to their domain of agriculture
- ▶ In cases for which men and women shared a common concept of decision-making as an egalitarian practice, the men aptly articulated decision-making as a process and underscored their interest in and respect for spouses. Others that could not describe a joint decision in theory also ad trouble describing one in practice.

# Discussion: Gender relations

- ▶ Men and women subscribe to traditional gender roles, traditional gender division of labor, and the way they make decisions often follows these patterns.
- ▶ Echoing Acosta (2017), substantial inequality in decision-making and men and women
- ▶ Men and women had different perceptions about the extent to which they participated in decision-making
  - ▶ Men generally reported making agricultural decisions on their own and some were reported as joint decisions, but almost none were reported as being made just by women.
  - ▶ When men reported agricultural decisions as joint decisions, women often reported these same decisions as made by men.
  - ▶ “Reaching an agreement” can mean different things for the extent to which each spouse participates in decision-making. It can mean fully engaging in the dialogue and sharing opinions (more egalitarian) or simply conforming to one’s spouse.

# Discussion: Opportunities and challenges for gender-transformative decision-making

## ► Obstacles

- Traditional gender norms and perceptions of agricultural decision-making as men's domain
- Deepening knowledge about gender equality and women's rights (linked with more egalitarian forms of decision-making that suggests more empowered women)

## ► Opportunities

- Examples of progress on gender norms (e.g., negative perceptions of *machismo* in Colombia, recognition of women as integral to decision-making by some couples)
- Impact of gender sensitive and gender responsive approaches to development projects and interventions, but this needs to be broadened to include more technical training and gender equality/human rights training

# Questions for more inquiry

- ▶ Findings point to the need for more investigation as to why the results of this study in terms of how men and women report who makes what decision contradict previous studies.
- ▶ Findings point to knowledge, norms, and agreed perceptions of the meaning and practice of decision-making as factors to indicate gender transformative decision-making. Are there other factors?



Thank you for  
joining us!

