



A rapid assessment of Farmer Business Schools from a gender perspective in Meghalaya, India

MAY
2019

Nozomi Kawarazuka (CIP) and
Bashisha Kharchandy (MBDA)



Food Resilience
Through Root and
Tuber Crops in
Upland and Coastal
Communities of
the Asia-Pacific
(FoodSTART+)



With funding by



**A rapid assessment of Farmer Business Schools from
a gender perspective in Meghalaya, India**

Nozomi Kawarazuka (CIP) and Bashisha Kharchandy (MBDA)

May 2019

A rapid assessment of Farmer Business Schools from a gender perspective in Meghalaya, India

© International Potato Center, 2019

CIP publications contribute important development information to the public arena. Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from them in their own publications. As copyright holder CIP requests acknowledgement and a copy of the publication where the citation or material appears. Please send this to the Communications Department at the address below.

International Potato Center

P.O. Box 1558, Lima 12, Peru

cip@cgiar.org • www.cipotato.org

Correct citation:

Kawarazuka, N.; Kharchandy, B. 2019. A rapid assessment of Farmer Business Schools from a gender perspective in Meghalaya, India. Food Resilience through Root and Tuber Crops in Upland and Coastal Communities of the Asia-Pacific (FoodSTART+) Project. Lima (Peru). International Potato Center. 16 p.

Design and Layout

Communications Department

CIP also thanks all donors and organizations which globally support its work through their contributions to the CGIAR Trust Fund. <https://www.cgiar.org/funders/>



© 2019. International Potato Center. All rights reserved.

This work by the International Potato Center is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at:

<http://www.cipotato.org/contact/>

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	4
Summary	5
Table of Contents	3
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Methods	6
3. Findings	8
1) Men’s and women’s roles and contributions to FBS	8
2) Gender-based challenges in FBS	10
3) Opportunities for increasing women’s active participation	13
4. Recommendations.....	15
References	16

Acknowledgement

We thank FBS members and facilitators for their time for interviews. We also thank Evangel Shanpru (Megha-LAMP), Jachang N Samgrua (FBS mentor), Welstare M Marak (FBS mentor), Beronica R Marak (horticulture consultant), Merryl Sangma (government officer), Andrew Akai M Sangma (Field Engineer, EFC Dadenggre) and Nino R Marak (Program associate, EFC Dadenggre) for their support. We thank Gordon Prain for his useful input on an earlier draft of this report.

Summary

Farmer Business Schools (FBS) have been initiated in East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills in 2018 as part of FoodSTART+ project activities. Six FBS were established and total 110 women and 55 men were registered. FoodSTART+ considers gender as an important component for inclusive and equitable development implementation. Having social diversity among the FBS members can strengthen FBS activities by sharing different ideas and experiences together. On the other hand, social diversity involves power dynamics, and careful analysis is required to understand whether and how members participated. This report evaluates FBS from gender and social perspectives to understand how women and men are involved in and benefit from FBS. The report is based on the fieldwork carried out in April 2019 through in-depth interviews with twelve women and twelve men FBS members.

Three key findings are presented. First, men are a minority group in FBS, but they play very important roles such as taking on the leadership, facilitating women's participation, offering labour, and utilising their knowledge, experiences and connections. On the other hand, women tend to play more supportive roles and there are some women whose participation is passive, simply listening to but not involved in decision-making. These gender differences are closely associated with gender norms in which men are more active in public activities, while women are decision-makers in the household. Second, there are clear gender differences in perceived challenges in participating in FBS. For women, husbands' disapproval prevents some women from participating in/continuing with FBS. For men, FBS is viewed as feminine small-scale income generating activities. As such, it is less attractive for the breadwinners, many of whom work outside their villages. Apart from gender differences, it is found that FBS has some barriers for young women and men to participate. Also, both women and men who have very limited education feel uncomfortable with school-style learning approaches, resulting in passive participation and depending on a small-number of educated members for decision-making. Third, some women are enthusiastic and have leadership skills. For example, women foster solidarity in FBS by sharing knowledge and skills learned in technical training with other members. Some women then formed a group and initiated selling snacks as a trial. To facilitate women's greater involvement in FBS decision-making and communication, and make their contribution more visible, this report identified potential areas where women can have more active participation.

The concluding section provides five practical recommendations for immediate improvement facilitating meaningful participation of different gender and social groups.

1. Introduction

FoodSTART+ considers gender to be a key element in facilitating development and adoption of root and tuber crop (RTC) technologies to strengthen food resilience. Interventions are designed in such a way that both women and men benefit, and neither will be harmed (Kawarazuka, 2017). To understand how this approach is being implemented in practice, a rapid assessment of on-going group activities in Farmers' Business Schools (FBS) was conducted in Meghalaya in April 2019.

In Meghalaya, three FBSs were officially launched in March 2018 in East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills respectively, under the Megha-LAMP IFAD Investment Project. A total of 110 women and 55 men registered for those six FBS, all are mixed gender groups. Female and male members have different opportunities and challenges shaped by gendered norms, capacities and resource access. These gender dimensions influence the efficiency of collective action as well as the sharing of benefits to individual members. The literature on gender and community development shows that group activities involve power dynamics in which gender is hidden but central (Thorp et al, 2003; Westermann et al., 2005; Pandolfelli et al., 2017). In some contexts, gender norms mean that women keep silent, sit behind men and not take leadership roles, and in consequence, collective action does not automatically entail that women participate in real participatory processes (Agarwal, 2001). This report builds on those critical gender analyses. Three questions are addressed: 1) How do men and women FBS members contribute to FBS activities? 2) What are gender-based challenges in participating in/continuing with FBS? 3) What are the opportunities for facilitating more active participation by women and minority social groups in FBS?

Findings are drawn from in-depth interviews of twelve men and twelve women FBS members including four male and one female community facilitators. During the fieldwork, the FBS activities were still at the planning/preparation stage. In East Khasi, the FBS selected organic potatoes as a potential commodity to sell. In response to this, complementary technical training on organic practices were provided and new seed potatoes were distributed. In West Garo, FBS selected organic cassava flour and its products for sale in the local and district markets. Complementary technical training on processing, cooking/baking and packaging were implemented in 2018.

This report consists of four sections. The following section describes methods employed in this study. Section 3 presents three key findings: 1) women's and men's roles in and contribution to FBS; 2) gender-based challenges in FBS; and 3) opportunities for increasing women's active participation. Section 4 provides some recommendations for the project team and FBS mentors to make FBS more inclusive and equitable.

2. Methods

Twelve women and twelve men FBS members were selected for in-depth interviews based on the criteria that they are regular members of FBS and have capacity to clearly describe their opinions. For the selection, we followed the recommendations from the FBS mentors (government officers who support FBS). Although the number of male members is half of that of women, we had an equal number of interviewees from women and men to sufficiently reflect voices of the minority gender group.

Both Khasi and Garo people have matrilineal and matrilocal kinship systems, though the two ethnic groups have different languages and cultural backgrounds (Nakane, 1967). In both groups women usually represent the household as de facto household heads, while most government officers are men, especially in East Khasi.

Women feel free to speak in public and they have more social ties in their community than men, since men come to live in the village of their wives after marriage. In both groups, marrying early during their late teens and having many children are relatively common practices with women in charge of domestic work including child caring. As such, most female FBS members are in the post child-rearing stage (late 30s or above). On the other hand, male members' age groups range from late teens to 60s. However, the purpose of interviews was to listen to voices of different social groups rather than to generalize information from representatives. We therefore intended to select a few young people as interviewees to reflect their voices as youth. While there was one young female member, she was traveling and not available at the time of the interviews. Hence, we selected three young men.

Table 1: the list of participants in West Garo

	Gender	Age	Marital status	FBS activities participated
1	F	50s	Married	Technical trainings, meetings
2	F	40s	Married	Technical trainings, market survey, Business Launch
3	F	40s	Married	ToT, meetings
4	F	40s	Single	Technical trainings, Business launch, meetings
5	F*	30s	Married	Technical trainings, Business launch, meetings
6	F	30s	Married	Technical trainings
7	M*	50s	Married	Technical trainings, Business launch, meetings
8	M	40s	Married	Meetings only
9	M*	30s	Married	Technical trainings, Business launch, meetings
10	M	20s	Married	Meetings only
11	M*	20s	Single	Technical trainings, Business launch, meetings
12	M	18	Single	Packaging training

*Those who are either a facilitator or a secretary

Table 2: the list of participants in East Khasi

	Gender	Age	Marital status	FBS activities participated
1	F	50s	Married	Market survey, Business launch, technical trainings
2	F	40s	Married	Technical trainings
3	F	40s	Widowed	Market survey, technical trainings
4	F	40s	Married	Technical trainings (not regularly)
5	F	40s	Married	Technical trainings
6	F	30s	Divorced	Technical trainings
7	M	50s	Married	Market survey, technical trainings
8	M	40s	Married	Market survey, technical trainings
9	M*	40s	Married	ToT, all activities
10	M	40s	Married	Technical trainings
11	M	40s	Divorced	Technical trainings
12	M	20s	Single	Technical trainings

*A facilitator (in East Khasi, there are no secretaries in three FBS groups)

Prior to this field visit for this assessment, the first author visited East Khasi and West Garo FBS sites three times and one time respectively. During her visit with the Megha-LAMP team, she established rapport with FBS members through participatory videos (Organic potato farming, 2017; FoodSTART+ West Garo, 2018). Therefore, most interviewees knew her and the interviews were conducted smoothly in relaxed circumstances. In West Garo, two young female and male government officers helped translation for female

and male interviewees, respectively. In East Khasi, the second author acted as a translator for both women and men. A verbal informed consent was undertaken before the interviews to ensure confidentiality. While we had common guiding questions to interviewees, actual interviews were conducted like natural conversations so that interviewees could feel comfortable and to be open with us. The first author took notes and data were analysed through thematic content analysis (Smith, 1992). All names of interviewees were changed to protect their anonymity.



Photos: Nozomi conducting interviews (photo credit: B. Kharchandy)

3. Findings

1) Men's and women's roles and contributions to FBS

Men's roles in a female dominant FBS

In the group formation of development/agricultural projects with participatory approaches, it is often pointed out that a small number of male members can certainly take on the leadership roles due to prevailing gender norms and expectations that men should undertake public activities, resulting in limited opportunities for women to participate in group management, including their involvement in decision-making (Odame, 2002). FBS groups in Meghalaya are mixed sex. In all six groups, the majority of regular members are women but there are a small number of very active men. Facilitators and secretaries are males except one female secretary. Men have been playing leadership roles and they are contact persons who communicate with the government officers and the project teams. Although men are indeed supportive for women's participation, there are certain norms that prevent women from significant involvement in decision-making in FBS management. For example, gender norms in this region mean that men play more roles in public activities while women have decision-making power and autonomy in the household. Furthermore, male participants also have more chances to go out for market surveys, the business launch events and training held outside the own village. This is because there are only a few regular male participants, so they are automatically selected; and they have less responsibility for domestic work and hence more time available for travel.

Nevertheless, men's presence has many positive impacts on FBS. In West Garo, it was found that men's presence in FBS helped women members in certain ways. Ms Marak said, "My husband initially disagreed with me going to Shillong city for the FBS business launch event (which involves a long travel and being away from home for four days). However, knowing that some men from the same village are going, he was reassured. He thought that those men could protect women participants and solve issues if something happened". She added that men's involvement was very important not only for her husband but also for other women and

their husbands. Unlike Hindu or Muslim communities in India, Garo women do not have restriction in physical mobility in everyday lives but women alone traveling to Shillong may still be very unusual and husband's approval was needed. Another example of the benefit of men's presence is that in East Khasi, during the market surveys in a regulated market where potato wholesalers/traders are Hindu men, Khasi men have fewer barriers to talk with them than Khasi women as Hindu men are more comfortable with male-male interactions in public and therefore more open to men than to women. These cases show that the of the few men certainly have positive impacts on women and the whole group, as they help women to expand their mobility and have different access and opportunities compared to belonging to the women-only groups.

We also found that men have different experiences and knowledge that are useful for the FBS. Mr Wankhar from East Khasi is a registered seed potato grower as well as a collector who collect potatoes from his village and sells them to traders. He has a lot of knowledge and information on potato production and selling. He also has broad social and business networks with traders, which potentially helps his group to exploit new market opportunities. He has been playing an important role in explaining the importance of the technical training to women participants and encouraging them to follow new practices learned in the training such as 'positive selection' for multiplication of healthy seed. Also, there are some male members or husbands of female members who occasionally participate in the group activities to undertake specific tasks such as physically-demanding roles like cultivating potato trial fields in East Khasi and pounding dried cassava in West Garo.

In this way, men's presence has positive impact on women members, and this is likely to lead to greater outcomes than those of the women-only groups.



Photos: Left: Men contributing to physical labour in the trial field in East Khasi (photo credit: Kwelstar Warjri) Right: Men members from West Garo visiting the food processing facilities (photo credit: Jachang N Samgrua)

Women's roles in the FBS

Women are the majority of the members. According to interviews, around half of them are regular participants. In contrast to men's roles to FBS which are visible, women's contributions are implicit but significant. In particular, women tend to be willing to share their knowledge and information with their peers. In West Garo, for example, some women who had participated in the cooking training taught what they learned to other members who did not attend the training. Since FBS activities did not progress as expected for a while, some women quickly formed a small group and initiated selling cassava chips and some snacks from cassava flour at a school and a local market near their villages. This is contrasted by some male members who started similar businesses alone.

Similarly, in East Khasi, women tend to be positive about collective action. Some women members discussed the importance of collectively growing organic potatoes by setting up the common farm for organic practices. Ms Mukhim volunteered using her farm land for her FBS so that they could have a standardised organic practice together instead of growing organic potatoes in each member's farm with different farming methods. Although her idea was not accepted by the (male) FBS facilitator, she still thinks that it is important to have common fields. Therefore, she keeps sharing her ideas with other female members to increase supporters of her idea, and if unsuccessful, she will try it with a small number of supportive group members in the next season.

In this way, women tend to be cooperative and interested in collective action and have greater interests in enterprise. It echoes relevant studies that show women's solidarity and positive attitudes to group activities (Westermann et al., 2005). Also, their desire of working as a group facilitates informal peer-to-peer exchange of learning practices which are considered as effective ways for women farmers to access knowledge and information (GENNOVATE RTB-HT team, 2017).



Photos: Distribution of potato seeds to the FBS members in East Khasi. Establishing a community field for collective action of organic practice is a challenge (photo credit: Aldreth Kharnaor)

2) Gender-based challenges in FBS

Husbands' disapproval as women's major constraints

Five women mentioned their husbands' disapproval as women's gender-based constraints in participating in/continuing with FBS. According to interviewees, intra-household gender relations are relaxed and both Khasi and Garo women make their own decisions to participate in new activities, and their husbands usually respect their wives' decisions. However, because it took a long time for FBS groups to develop plans and actions, some female members' husbands started questioning their wives' participation as it appeared to be a waste of the time. One male facilitator told us that although he was aware that, in his community, there was a lack of trust in FBS and some male villagers were questioning, he could not convince them because the concept of FBS was too abstract and he was even not sure if FBS could move forward and bring benefit to them.

Husband's approval is a common issue across the world that constrains women's participation in agriculture interventions (GENNOVATE RTB-HT, 2017). A similar problem was encountered in FBS groups in Indonesia too (personal contact, Agus Rachmad Nurlette, February 2018). This is closely associated with women's responsibilities for domestic work. Many women have to manage their housework responsibility when they attend the meetings/training. It is difficult for them to be absent from home without their family members'

understandings. To minimize these constraints, there is a need for FBS to quickly move to practical activities so that participants can have some concrete outcomes to share with their family members.



Photo: FBS members from West Garo attending the cooking class. (Photo credit: Jachang N Samgrua)

Gender-based constraints for men

Men have different constraints from those of women. Three main gender-based constraints are identified. First, men in both East Khasi and West Garo tend to work outside the village as wage laborers. Male FBS members are full-time farmers who do not work outside the village. There are some male members who are registered with FBS, but send their wives to participate on their behalf because they are absent from their village from 9am to 5pm. While those men may be able to benefit from FBS indirectly through their wives' participation, having diverse social groups is important for FBS so that the group can benefit from different types of knowledge, experiences, skills and ideas. Also, those women who attend on their husband' behalf are more likely to be passive participants (quietly listening). In addition, men's understanding is very important for women continuing with FBS activities. To accommodate the men, it may be a good idea to hold group activities sometime in the evenings or weekend so that more men in the community have understandings on FBS activities (e.g. agro-enterprises with organic potatoes) and what their wives are doing in FBS, thereby ensuring greater support to FBS activities that require taking collective action at a community level (e.g. organic potato farming).

Second, men are more responsible for earning incomes for their families than women although there are some women who are commercially minded and very interested in commercial activities. This matters in their perceptions of FBS. According to male interviewees, a small income generating activity is viewed as feminine work and not very attractive for men. In East Khasi, for example, for male full-time potato growers, potatoes are a major income source from which they maintain household food security and invest in their children's education. Mr Kharbani said, "Cultivating potatoes is a major livelihood means. It is difficult for us to take a risk to change practices because the production failure directly affects our family's wellbeing". Similarly, Mr Kropcha said "I am interested in organic farming to improve soil quality. I have a lot of land for potato farming, but I can only allocate small plots of land for organic purposes because I do not want to take a risk". This view is very different from women who see organic potato farming as an opportunity for growing tasty and healthy potatoes. This difference may be because those women have alternative main income sources from their husband' off-farm jobs. FBS needs to clearly show both advantages and disadvantages of growing organic potatoes from ongoing trials in order to convince male potato growers so that the community can eventually expand the scale.

Third, unlike women who have strong social and family ties with their community, many men came to the village after their marriages, and men are not used to working in group, especially for business. Mr Talang explained the reasons why many men do not join the FBS, “men are not comfortable to be in the group. They prefer to work individually”. Given the benefit of having men in the group as discussed earlier, FBS could have some independent components to allow men’s associate membership with activity-specific participation.

Youth involvement in FBS

The current FBS approach is not designed specifically for young people. Fortunately, however, both East Khasi and West Garo have a few young male members. Evaluating FBS from a youth perspective allows us to improve FBS approaches to be more inclusive. Now we introduce two young men’s cases, although both of them have not been very active members as they still do not find their appropriate roles as youth members to contribute to the group.

Mr Momin, 18 years old from West Garo, is still studying at class 10. He joined the group because he was interested in starting a business. His mother is also a member. While he has no problem to sit together with women in her mother’s age group, he questions if this group is attractive to other young men. He said, “young people will join if they see concrete benefit. So far, I am not inviting other people as there are limited progresses and not sure if FBS works or not”. Also, he pointed out that current FBS approaches do not suit youth’s needs and interests. For example, young people need to have quick outcomes and prefer to communicate by phones rather than organising regular face-to-face meetings.

Mr Mawlong, 22, is a single man from East Khasi. He has 13 siblings and he is the youngest male. His mother separated from his father, therefore he plays a father’s role in his family, cultivating his mother’s potato farm. Given that he is always around in the village, the male facilitator asked him to join the group. He said that there are many young women and men in his community but none of them wanted to join the FBS when he invited them. He thinks that it is because young people have different interests and they may hesitate to join the group which is dominated by senior women and some senior men. He also pointed out the difficulties of young married women to participate in the group activities as they are at child-bearing and child-rearing age.

Although youth inclusion is not a focus of this FBS, both Mr Momin and Mr Mawlong have strong interests and capacity to contribute to the group by bringing ideas from youth perspectives. The young generation is better educated and more familiar with information technologies. They could bring new ideas to FBS and provide their skills in specific areas of marketing activities. There is a need for creating an inclusive environment in which youth voices are heard and appropriate roles are assigned to them. They may be invited for specific tasks such as packaging, communication and organising events to advertise FBS products. In that case, their contribution should be visualized and acknowledged.

Constraints for women and men who are less educated

The literature on community development and collective action often points out that group activities support people who are already well-off, while the poorest of the poor have many constraints to participate in group activities in meaningful ways beyond passive attendance, as they have many social as well as economic barriers to join groups (Thorp et al., 2003). In both East Khasi and West Garo, the gap between the poor and well-off is very small. Although there are some people who have limited land, they can lease farm land. However, the experience with the FBS groups has been that limited education is more significant than limited

wealth for the level of participation. Specific challenges mentioned by less educated women and men (below three years' education) were lack of confidence in following training that are designed as class-room styles and based on written documents. Ms Tynsong told us that many FBS members (both men and women) did not go to school and it is difficult for them to read documents (even in their own languages). She added that even signing the attendance forms are difficult for some women. In this situation, there are large gaps in the contents of market theory in the FBS manual and their actual levels of understanding. As a result, theoretical parts of FBS were skipped and practical activities (e.g. market surveys, business launch) were undertaken by a small number of well-educated participants who were capable of doing it. There are some very passive members who cannot understand what is going on with FBS.

A similar situation occurred in relation to practical training in East Khasi. Mr Lapang pointed out, "although many women participated in the technical training as a representative of the household, they did not understand this well because this sort of training is new for them". His opinion agrees with our findings in East Khasi that actually many female interviewees attended the technical training but they could not explain to us what they learned or they did rarely adopt new practices on their farm. He suggested providing opportunities for repeating the training among the members on their own fields by peer-to-peer learning methods. Also, we found that many members do not know how to convert soil from conventional to organic farming. It may be useful to have a particular monitoring system to assess the levels of understanding of men and women and the gaps in knowledge.



Photos: FBS members conducting the market surveys. Women's active participation beyond listening is a challenge (Photo credit: Aldreth Kharnaor)

3) Opportunities for increasing women's active participation

Above sub-sections show that, so far, facilitating roles have been undertaken by men, and a small number of male participants communicate directly with male FBS mentors (government officers). Although women are the majority gender group, around half of them are not regular participants and their involvement remain rather passive (e.g. being informed about activities, quietly listening). This sub-section describes challenges in FBS group management and communication and seeks to identify feasible areas where women can have greater involvement.

First, designing women-friendly training of trainers may be an entry point of increasing opportunities for women to have more active participation in FBS management and decision making. Ten men and eight women joined the training of trainers for facilitators at the beginning of the FBS process.

A single training was held in Shillong City, involving a nine-hour bus journey for West Garo participants, and a stay in Shillong of five days. This prevented some active women from participating due to their housework

and subsistence farming activities and/or husbands' disapproval. In consequence, relatively senior women were selected as they have daughters who can look after their family during their absence. In the training, English was the common language among the mixed Khasi and Garo participants, but some men and women participants could not follow the training due to their limited English. Three interviewees who participated in the training of trainers said that their understanding was very limited, and thereafter they had no confidence to play the leading roles in their FBS. As a result, FBS heavily depend on male mentors (local government officers) and some male members who were educated. In future FBS processes, it is recommended that Training of Trainer courses be organized in their own district and in their own language so that active women who indeed have high motivation and leadership skills can be facilitators.

Second, leadership training and team building activities could help facilitate collective action in effective ways. Forming groups and taking collective action is very new to both East Khasi and West Garo communities. All interviewees except one said that this was their first time to join group activities. In the project sites, women's self-help groups are not common, and men do not take collective action beyond their close relatives in farming. There was some frustration by female members about the management of FBS. Ms Dkhar from East Khasi pointed out that her FBS lacks ownership and that was a main reason why the group did not have progress. She said, "up to now, nobody knows what will happen with this FBS". Similarly, Ms Sun told us that lack of communication and trust is a main issue of her FBS as a small number of men discuss and decide. She is an organic vegetable seller in a local market and understands it well. However, she and other female members were not well informed about FBS activities and a market survey was conducted by male members only. In West Garo, lack of leadership is also suggested as a key issue. Ms Marak said, "everybody is passive participants in the group, and nobody knows if FBS can continue or not". In such a context, there is a need for leadership training and team building activities. Hence, this may be an area where women members can take the lead. There are many enthusiastic women members who may be able to harmonise the team and take leadership. This position should not be limited to the people who have capacity to understand English and the FBS market concepts. Also, strong support from the FBS mentors (local government officers) and the project team (Megha-LAMP) would be very useful to address current issues of lack of ownership, leadership and communication.

Third, for technical training such as cooking/processing in West Garo and potato growing in East Khasi, it may be a good idea to establish women field leaders who can pass information, knowledge and practices to other women and men members who missed the training or did not understand well. In such a way, the project would be able to give space for women to take on the leadership and visualize women's contributions in the FBS.



Photos: FBS members from East Khasi attending the technical training (photo credit: Aldreth Kharnaor)

4. Recommendations

Having discussed gender-based dynamics, opportunities and challenges in FBS group activities, this last section proposes five practical recommendations for making FBS more inclusive.

First, it would be very useful for FBS groups to have female representatives who are directly involved in communications with the FBS mentors and the project team from Megha-LAMP. This enables information to flow smoothly and transparently. It also helps reflect women's voices in the management of FBS groups.

Second, gender-sensitive monitoring systems are required to evaluate the levels of understanding of technical training and the levels of satisfaction of FBS activities for men, women and young members, so that gender-based knowledge gaps can be identified and addressed.

Third, it can be a good idea to select women field leaders who can organise follow-up technical training (peer-to-peer learning) in the fields. This helps women take on the leadership. Furthermore, a peer-to-peer learning is effective for women, and through these activities, women's contribution are visualised and they can be more actively involved in FBS.

Fourth, young people are also interested in enterprise but current FBS approaches do not fit very well with their needs. It can be very useful to invite them as associate members who will be in charge of specific tasks such as packaging, advertising and selling as young women and men also have different social networks, ideas and skills. In that case, young women and men's contribution should be explicitly acknowledged.

Fifth, men who have off-farm jobs and work outside their villages also have specific skills and knowledge that can be useful for FBS enterprise. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, men's involvement in FBS and their understandings for FBS are very important for women members (their wives) to continue to participate in FBS. Men could also be invited as associate members to contribute to specific tasks and thereby increasing supporters of FBS in the community.

Overall, FBS in Meghalaya still needs to have some guidance from the project team and the FBS mentors to make it a truly participatory approach in which both women and men are able to express their opinions, take initiatives in and influence the group's decisions. When above points are addressed, FBS has a great potential for not only establishing successful new micro-enterprises in the communities but also empowering women in the public sphere through their leadership roles and visualized influence in the community.

References

- Agarwal, B. (2001).** Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World development*, 29(10), 1623-1648.
- FoodSTART+ in West Garo Hills (2018).** YouTube video, added by Kawarazuka, N. [Online]. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyMkavarZv8> [Accessed 5 May 2019].
- GENNOVATE RTB-HT team (2017).** Gender in Agricultural Change: Towards more inclusive innovation in farming communities. GENNOVATE Report to the CGIAR Research Programs on Roots, Tubers and Bananas and Humidtropics. GENNOVATE Research Paper, RTB, Lima, Peru. pp.60. Retrieved from <http://gennovate.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CRP-RTB-HT-Gennovate-Report.pdf>
- Kawarazuka, N (2017).** Gender Strategies for strengthening food resilience. FoodSTART+. International Potato Centre, 2p.
- Kawarazuka, N and Prain, G (2018).** Gender dimensions of farming practices in root and tuber crops and proposed gender and social considerations for interventions. A technical report for FoodSTART+. International Potato Centre. 25p.
- Nakane, C. (1967).** *Garo and Khasi: A comparative study in matrilineal systems*. Mouton & CO: The Hague.
- Odame, H. H. (2002).** Men in women's groups: A gender and agency analysis of local institutions. In F. Cleaver (Ed.), *Masculinity matter: Men, gender, and development*. London: Zed Books.
- Organic potato farming (2017).** YouTube video, added by Kawarazuka, N. [Online]. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbpkGK3SvYg> [Accessed 5 May 2019].
- Pandolfelli, L., Meinzen-Dick, R. S., & Dohrn, S. (2007).** *Gender and collective action: A conceptual framework for analysis* (No. 577-2016-39222).
- Smith, C. P. (1992).** *Motivation and Personality: Handbook of Thematic Content Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thorp, R., Stewart, F., & Heyer, A. (2005).** When and how far is group formation a route out of chronic poverty?. *World development*, 33(6), 907-920.
- Westermann, O., Ashby, J., & Pretty, J. (2005).** Gender and social capital: The importance of gender differences for the maturity and effectiveness of natural resource management groups. *World Development*, 33(11), 1783-1799.

WWW.CIPOTATO.ORG

CIP is a research-for-development organization with a focus on potato, sweetpotato and Andean roots and tubers. It delivers innovative science-based solutions to enhance access to affordable nutritious food, foster inclusive sustainable business and employment growth, and drive the climate resilience of root and tuber agri-food systems. Headquartered in Lima, Peru, CIP has a research presence in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

www.cipotato.org

CIP is a CGIAR research center

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food-secure future. Its science is carried out by 15 research centers in close collaboration with hundreds of partners across the globe.

www.cgiar.org

For more information, please contact CIP Headquarters. Av. La Molina 1895, La Molina. Apartado 1558, Lima 12, Peru.

📞 +51 1 3496017 ✉ cip-cpad@cgiar.org 🌐 www.cipotato.org | 📘 @cipotato 🐦 @Cipotato 📷 @cip_cipotato
