



LESSON LEARNED Synergies can be cultivated between between land restoration and gender equality goals

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This study describes an initiative that focused on finding and fostering synergies between ecological goals and gender equality goals in target communities through the promotion of land restoration techniques. Although women saw their already heavy labor burden increase, their agency and decision-making power increased.

Important Details

time (or time period)	2015 - 2020
country & region	Kitui, Makueni and Machakos counties in Southeastern Kenya
context & agro-eco landscape type	small-scale, rain-fed agriculture in semi-arid region
key actors, stakeholders & beneficiaries	over 2000 famers
model and/or tools used	-

Description & takeaways

Southeastern Kenya is a semi-arid region prone to drought and largely dependent on small-scale, rain-fed agriculture, leading to frequent crop failures, high levels of poverty, and widespread dependency on food aid. An IFAD-EC initiative involving 2,000 farmers across the region used planned tree-planting strategies, planting basins, and a simple soil water conservation technique in order to boost agricultural productivity and increase water availability. This initiative focused on finding and fostering synergies between these ecological goals and gender equality goals in the target communities.

TRADE OFFS: The program, and uptake of the technologies it promoted, caused shifts in labor and household decision-making. Women saw their already heavy labor burdens increase with the use of planting basins, but enjoyed more agency and decision-making power in relation to land preparation, which used to be primarily a man's task. Shifts in gender roles thus allowed women to participate more meaningfully in a broader range of activities, but also increased their drudgery and labor burdens.

SYNERGIES: The use of planting basins not only benefited communities by enhancing agricultural productivity, but also provided benefits to women because the basins required less weeding than traditional methods — a task normally relegated to women. The uptake of planting basins and other

technologies also generally enhanced joint decision-making between husband and wife, which made all household members feel invested in the initiative. Women's involvement in trainings on these and other agricultural technologies improved public perceptions about women by increasing their real and perceived knowledge and capacities in these areas.



Figure 1. Participant in on-farm comparisons for various land restoration options, including plating basins with and without farmyard manure and tree planting/agroforestry practices with a selection of tree species.(photo credit: L. Winowiecki / World Agroforestry Centre)

Restoration initiatives can generate positive synergies between environmental and equality goals. This requires the inclusion of gender-responsive targets and a deep understanding of context-specific social dynamics and power differentials, which are instrumental to whether and to what extent a community will buy into an initiative and sustain it over time. A thorough gender analysis is crucial for understanding the socio-cultural factors that can make or break a restoration program and to develop initiatives that maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs for marginalized community members.

Key references

World Agroforestry Centre: Achieving food security and reducing poverty through land restoration project website:

<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/project/restoration-degraded-land-food-security-and-poverty-education-eastafrika-and-sahel-taking>