



Framework for women empowerment in farming

by Clara Anahi Friis-Rasmussen 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and context of the framework

As an NGO advocating for pro poor agrarian reform and food sovereignty, Surplus People Project (SPP) recognizes that gender dynamics is a highly relevant topic for investigation in building strategies for agro-ecological production and development.

In spite of SPP's strategies to facilitate women empowerment, the organisation still identifies a need for a clearer framework and practical guidelines for facilitating women empowerment both internally within the organization and externally towards collaborators.

The aim of the research leading up to this framework has been to get the opinions and voices of the women farmers on how SPP better can facilitate women empowerment in the communities SPP collaborate with.

SPP is aware of how the social, cultural and climatical conditions in the rural areas challenge and compromise the quality of women's lives. This raised awareness towards the challenges faced by women is reflected by research conducted by SPP in 2010 1.(SPP, 2010). In this research SPP analyzes the obstacles faced women farmers in particular. In addition SPP has facilitated a Rural Women's Conference in

die Strand (2009) and a workshop in Lamberts Bay (2011) - exclusively for women farmers, in order to discuss their needs and challenges in regard to land and agriculture.

One of the key recommendations identified through these activities states that women must stand together in claiming ownership of land. Women must begin to active part in their communities in organizing themselves on a small scale and thereafter expand to collective social action in the broader community. Also great emphasis was placed on the need to address issues concerning rape and sexual abuse of women and children, as this is expressed as a great obstacle for women in order to be able to put their full attention to the importance of food production.

These recommendations are summarized in the strategic plan of 2011-2015 by SPP. During this period SPP aims to increase their focus on women farmers in addition to other target groups including young farmers, farm dwellers and farm workers. SPP stresses that women's ownership of land and their involvement in the food production is an important part of women empowerment, because this potentially offer women livelihood security - as ensuring daily nutrition to the household is widely considered a responsibility of women.

Empowerment of women through ownership of land is considered very important, which is reflected in the gender sensitive indicators for SPP's strategic outcomes with regard to agrarian transformation. Some of the indicators underline the fact that that 60 percent of the total amount of farmers, farm workers and dwellers that access either new or additional productive land for sustainable livelihoods should consist of women 2.(SPP, 2010 : 26). There is also a particular emphasis on women when it comes to secure tenure for rural farm dwellers.

SPP states that women should play a central role in an autonomous social movement for food sovereignty 2.(SPP, 2010: 34). The strategy to achieve this outcome includes women as an important interest group that should participate in the process of advocating for policy result in land access, water rights and access and appropriate extension support, production resources and marketing support.

SPP is seeking to clarify how women are represented in the social movement of the Food Sovereignty Campaign. SPP wants to investigate in what areas and to which extend women are taking leadership in the Food Sovereignty Campaign and in the agro-ecology work of SPP. Do women farmers act upon the choices and influence decisions they find crucial for living the life they want?

1.2 Women Empowerment Framework

1.2.1 Objective

The aim of the framework is to investigate how Surplus People Project might strengthen the power and position of rural women farmers in the Northern and Western Cape in South Africa as a part of process of social change.

1.2.2 Assertions

Institutions are key to producing and maintaining social inequalities, including gender inequalities. Four key institutions are the state, the market, the community and the family. These have rules (how things get done), resources (what is used and/or produced), people (who is in/out, who does what), activities (what is done), and power (who decides, and whose interests are served), all of which engender social relations (Kabeer, 1994).

This paper focuses on the aspects of family- and community institutions that produce and maintain gender inequalities.

1.2.3 Value Proposition and audience of the framework

The framework will include recommendations and guiding questions that should help SPP to integrate a gender sensitive perspective in their work with men and women farmers. These recommendations do not necessarily only address Surplus People Project, but also other NGOs and organisations that seek to improve their strategies towards facilitating women empowerment.

1.3 Report Structure

Section 1 introduces the theoretical and methodological context of the research as well as a general overview of the research activities.

Section 2 analyzes SPP's understanding of women empowerment and how it is being practiced in collaboration with the farmer communities. Further more the findings from the research activities are being analyzed in order to answer the research questions.

Section 3 summarizes the key findings from the research analysis. In addition the section includes recommendations and guiding questions that SPP can take further in their future work with women empowerment.

SECTION A

THEORY & METHODOLOGY



Antie Rose - iThemba Farmer Association

2. THEORY & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research questions

How is SPP's understanding of facilitating women empowerment reflected in the findings from the following research questions:

- How are women represented in the Food Sovereignty Campaign?
- How do women participate in the Food Sovereignty Campaign?
- Do women take a leading role in the Food Sovereignty Campaign and in agro-ecological farming?
- Do women influence decisions that have an impact on their lives?
- How does SPP provide spaces for women that can help them to discuss their issues, struggles and aspirations? What are the different gender dynamics emerging from only women groups?

2.2 Theory

2.2.1 Gender

The way gender is conceptualized in the framework is based on the notion of the term in the publication of Chandra Mohanty *Under Western Eyes* (1984). Mohanty problematizes Western feminists theorization of "third world women" as a group and a stable category of analysis in the implied assumption of an ahistorical universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their common subordination.

When women are constituted as a coherent group, sexual difference is equated with female subordination and power is automatically defined in binary terms: people who have it (men) and people who do not (women) (Mohanty, 1984: 344). This simplistic definition of power is not useful in a framework for women empowerment and social change. Such power will only reinforce binary divisions between men and women. Therefore gender identities are understood as being socially constructed in a variety of social institutions, such as the family, rather than constituted prior to their placement in society. This notion of gender implies that oppression produces particular forms of gender, rather than gender taken to be the origin of oppression. This understanding of gender as produced through power-relations in society within a socio-political context give women subjectivity and agency, rather than being a homogenized object.

2.3 Empowerment Theory

The frameworks understanding of power and social change relates to Naila Kabeer's theory of women empowerment: Resources, Agency and Achievement: *Reflections on the measurement of Women Empowerment* Naila Kabeer is a Professorial Fellow at Institute of Development Studies at University of London. She has been active in developing frameworks and methodologies for integrating gender concerns into policy and planning (www.ids.ac.uk).

2.3.1 Choices

According to Naila Kabeer one way of thinking about power is in the terms of the ability to make choices. Kabeer emphasizes that her conceptualization of empowerment is that it is closely connected to the condition of disempowerment.

Empowerment entails a process of change where those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability 1.(Kabeer, 1999: 437).

Therefore empowerment is only capable of evolve from the state of disempowerment.

She explains that to make empowerment relevant in the analysis of power, the notion of choice has to be qualified in a number of ways. Kabeer points out that not all choices are equally relevant to the definition of power. Some choices have a greater impact on people's lives than others. On the basis of this clarification of the definition of choice, Kabeer differentiates between first and second order choices. The first order choices, she describes as *strategic life choices*, which are choices that are critical for people to live the lives they want. Kabeer accentuates that *empowerment refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously*

denied to them 1.(Kabeer, 1999: 436). The *strategic life choices* help to form the second order choices, that have less consequences for peoples lives, but may be important for the quality of ones life.

2.3.2 The tree dimensions of empowerment: *resources, agency and achievement*

Naila Kabeer states that changes in the ability to exercise choice can be thought of in terms of changes in three interrelated dimensions of power, which make up choice:

Resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made;

Agency, which is at the heart of the process by which choices are made;

Achievements, which are the outcomes of choices.

She underlines that these dimensions are inter-dependent because changes in each contributes to, and benefits from, changes in the others 1.(Kabeer, 1999: 435).

2.3.3 Resources

Within the first dimension of power, Kabeer divides resources into three categories, which she defines as the *economic, human and social resources*.

This division suggests that beside material

resources as land, equipment, finance and working capital, the individual also possess human and social resources that serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice.

Human resources are embodied in the individual and encompass his or her knowledge, skills, creativity, imagination and so on. *Social resources*, on the other hand, are made up of the claims, obligations and expectations which inhere in the relationships, networks and connections which prevail in different spheres of life and which enable people to improve their situation and life chances beyond what would be possible through their individual efforts alone 1.(Kabeer, 1999: 435).

According to Kabeer, resources are distributed through a variety of different institutions and processes and access to resources will be determined by the rules, norms and practices, which prevail in different institutional domains.

2.3.4 Agency

The second dimension of power relates to *agency*, which Kabeer defines as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. She stresses that agency is about more than observable action; it also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose, which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or the pow-

er within.

Kabeer draws attention to agency as having both positive and negative meanings in relation to power. In the positive sense of the power to, it refers to people's capacity to define their own life-choices and to pursue their own goals, even in the face of opposition from others. *Agency* can also be exercised in the more negative sense of 'power over', in other words, the capacity of an actor or category of actors to override the *agency* of others, for instance, through the use of violence, coercion and threat. However Kabeer singles out that power can also operate in the absence of any explicit agency. This power is embedded in the hidden norms and rules in society governing social behavior ensuring that certain outcomes are reproduced without any apparent exercise of *agency*.

Resources and *agency* together form the potentials that people have for achieving valued ways of being and living.

2.3.5 Empowerment: Dimensions, levels and processes of change

Kabeer emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between choices made from the vantage point of real alternatives and choices, which reflect their absence or punishingly high costs. She further evaluates on these choices in terms of their trans-

formatory significance. By this qualification she refers to the potential choices may have for challenging and destabilising social inequalities and the extent to which they merely express and reproduce these inequalities.

Kabeer suggests that such a conceptualisation of empowerment reflects change at a number of different possible levels:

The first are the *immediate levels*, referring to individual resources, agency and achievement. Changes on these levels are reflected in the sense of selfhood and identity of individuals and groups, how they perceive their interests and in their capacity to act.

The second are the *intermediate levels*, which are constituted by institutional rules and resources.

Changes are on these levels reflected in the rules and relationships, which prevail in the personal, social, economic and political spheres of life.

The third level of the structural dimension of empowerment is referred to as the *deeper levels*, meaning the structural relations of class, caste and gender. Change on these levels can occur in the deeper, hidden structures, which shape the distribution of resources and power in a society and reproduce it over time 2.(Kabeer, 1999: 10)

According to Kabeer, the project of women empowerment is dependent on collective solidarity in the public arena as well as individual assertiveness in the private. Therefore women organizations and social movements in particular have an important role to play in creating conditions for change and in reducing the costs for the individual.

2.4 Methodology

The applied research approach of this framework is based on methodologies within the field of action research. This also implies an increased focus on qualitative research activities as well as allowing space for improvisation and interpretations based on the full immersion and direct interaction with the subject for investigation. This research approach is considered crucial in the development of policy and practice based on indigenous knowledge, existing systems, social dynamics and focus on local ownership and application.

The basic tenet of action research was found relevant to this research in that human systems can only be perceived and changed if the researcher involves the members of the system in the inquiry process itself. This belief also derives from the value shared by action researchers, which is the respect for people's knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities (Brydon-Miller, 2003: 13). If women should be empowered to imagine their world differently and to realise that vision by changing the relations of power that have been keeping them in poverty – they should be the ones to determine the nature and operation of the things that affect their lives.

Throughout the research process 19 individual and 2 focus group interviews have been conducted. 7 interviews were conducted with women farmers, 2 with the women trade union Sikhula Sonke and the consultant Frank Julie and 12 with SPP staff members. The interviews were semi structured and the questions asked were open-ended to permit the respondents to answer the questions in their own words. However I sometimes interfered during the interviews by including my observations and thoughts in order to stay critical towards my own preconceptions. This method reflects the action research approach that challenges the claims of a positivistic view of knowledge, which holds that in order to be credible, research must remain objective and value-free.

SECTION B

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

2.5 Research Activites

In order to identify how SPP might strengthen the power of women in farming communities, first I had to pursue an understanding of how staff members internally within the organization understand women empowerment and how is or is not being practiced with and within the farmer communities. From the understanding of gender as a social construct, I also interviewed staff members of SPP about the internal dynamics of power within the organisation structure. I found this important in order to analyse how the power relations within the organization affect the collaboration with the different farmer communities.

I have interviewed women farmers from the women groups (*Carnarvon, Williston and Melkkraal*) in the Hantam Karoo region of South Africa. Also interviews were conducted with two women from the farmer Association Ithemba. All of them are part of the Food Sovereignty Campaign and the agro-ecology work of SPP.

I have interviewed the first female convenor of the Food Sovereignty Campaign for the period 2009-2010, Davine Witbooi. The purpose was to get her version of out how spaces are created for women to take a leading role in the campaign.

In addition an interview was conducted with the women led trade union, Sikhula Sonke - meaning we grow together (*IsiXhosa*). Sikhula Sonke operates as a social movement dealing with all livelihood challenges of farmwomen, mainly in the Western Cape Province.

Also one interview was conducted with Frank Julie (consultant) from the community development consultancy *Frank Julie and Associates*, located in Cape Town. The consultancy focuses on strengthening the leadership and management capacity of NGOs/CBO to assist them to deliver on their developmental mandate (www.nonprofitconsultant.weebly.com). I found it relevant to investigate how Frank Julie will consult NGOs like SPP focusing on women leadership in particular.



Women farmers - Williston Women Groups

3. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

In the following chapter it will be analysed how SPP's understanding of facilitating women empowerment correspond with the findings from the investigation of the research questions. First I will start with analyzing to which extent women influence *strategic life choices* and take a leading role in their work with agro-ecology. Afterwards I will focus on issues related to the power of women in the Food Sovereignty Campaign.

3.1 SPP's understanding of women empowerment

The staff members of SPP have different ways of describing their understanding of empowerment. However there is a general emphasis on empowerment as a process involving both external and internal aspects. The internal factors relate to the individual awareness and belief in oneself and the possibilities of change in livelihood. The external factors are described more as involving outside dynamics to the individual such as the community and NGOs like SPP. It is recognized by SPP that their organisation plays an important role in facilitating the process of women empowerment in the rural areas of the Western and Northern Cape, due to the fact that the social context of their work is highly influenced by patriarchal structures.

3.2 SPP's understanding of facilitating women empowerment in the rural areas of the Western and Northern Cape

The Programme Manager of the West Coast region of the Western Cape Province, Henry Fredericks, accentuates that it is important as facilitator to be consciously aware of gender disparities within the communities, considering socially constructed roles and responsibilities. In terms of women empowerment he therefore points out the necessity to address the observed gender dynamics.

The different development facilitators of SPP express that they address the observed gender dynamics by creating spaces for equal participation of men and women during activities. Some development facilitators explained how they challenge gender inequality by sharing observations and asking critical questions to people in the communities about household setup and democratic decision making in organizational structures.

SPP points out that their role in their commitment to empowerment of women only is to be the facilitators of that process. This entails that the development facilitators whenever possible support women farmers to make their own decisions around farming.

During the research it was observed and experienced that SPP's understanding of women empowerment as a personal process comes through in the development facilitators work with women farmer groups. The development facilitators help the women to believe in themselves, which enhances their capacity to make own decisions and take ownership of their own development. However, many challenges were still identified related to women farmers possibilities for empowering themselves.

CASE STORY

Antie Kula



Antie Kula - Carnarvon

3.3 To what extent do women farmers influence *strategic life choices* and take a leading role in their work with agro-ecology?

3.3.1 Antie Kula

Antie Kula is a good example of one of the many women farmers I have met who take a leading role in SPP's involvement with farmers working with agro-ecology. Antie Kula is 67 years old and member of a women group in Carnarvon, consisting of two other members. Antie Kula has a strong belief in herself and the other women of the group. She tells me with a big smile lightening up her face, that she is proud of what they together, as a group has accomplished. She describes the group, as "We are the women that make something of nothing." Before the women applied for access to the ground, no one

had used it for 45 years. The bushes were growing and there was no water. Today the garden looks beautiful because of many years of hard work of the women with help from and the community and SPP.

But one should not believe that the development of the garden was made without struggle. Because of scarcity of money, many people left the farmer group to find another way of surviving. Now there are only the two other women left, besides Antie Kula. Still it is challenging for all of them to grow the garden. Without ownership of land the women must struggle every day to earn enough money to pay the municipality. This situation leaves them without control of how to produce the land. Antie Kula also expresses that one of the greatest challenges for them to work on the farm is that they do not have a storehouse for their things, which is problematic because they experienced several incidents

of stealing. Also they need a toilet and a hut where they can sit when the weather gets too extreme. Without daily access to these basic facilities the women become less capable of working the whole day.

Although the lack of *material resources* constraints them in influencing their *strategic life choices*, Antie Kula is resilient and does not easily give up. She has *human resources*, such as creativity, skills and knowledge of farming and life experiences that constitutes the power within, which enhance her ability to exercise the choices relevant to the quality of her life. She says:

We cannot go on like that. We need the money to do something. We cannot always look in the government's eyes. We do not want to. I do not like it. I want to make something of my own hands. There is no money, but it will not stop me. I shall never stop to make these things. Some people give up. I will try and try. We thought if SPP is coming here they must give us money or something to help us. Then I realized that SPP is here to give you a brain to do these things by yourself to find money. SPP taught me something to do for myself. I am proud of myself.

This strong and reflective sense of selfhood, which Antie Kula has translated into action is an example of a process of empow-

erment that cannot be bestowed by a third party. SPP has played a significant role in encouraging Antie Kula and the rest of the group to believe in a future with possibilities. However the power within comes from the women to believe in themselves and the community and choosing to use this power to change their lives. This individual empowerment process leads to collective changes because the women and men in the community support each other. The social resources in the community enable the women farmer group to improve their situation beyond what would be possible through their individual efforts alone. Antie Kula tells me that people from the community help with working in the garden. She finds meaning in her work and life by giving back food to the people of the community. Also she shares her knowledge and skills of farming with the community members:

That is what SPP teach us - to teach other women. Everything what SPP learned me and gave me and taught me I bring back to the other women. I say "these seeds must be in this way". So I tell many of the women, "do this in your back backyard" - and they do it. They say "Antie Kula come to my home and take a look at what I've done".

KEY FINDINGS

Antie Kula teaches other women from the community skills in producing agro-ecologically.

According to Anti Kula she has accomplished to grow the garden successfully because:

- SPP encouraged her to believe in her own power.
- The women and other people from the community helped her

to challenge patriarchal norms. Theoretically this can be explained by the differences between women transferring human resources and social resources into action. It was explained from Coleen Mattheus, the development facilitators of SPP in the Hantam Karoo Region, that some women groups do not have capacity to make own decisions to the same extent as other groups.

Antie Rose from the Ithemba Farmer Association is among other women farmers consciously aware of how lack of material resources affects possibilities for living she wants. Like Antie Kula she has the *power within* to define her own goals and act upon them being member of the committee of the farmer associations that advocates for land rights. She says:

I do not want to stay here. I want another place. I want a place of my own to do what I want to do that I cannot do here. There is so much I want to do in my other place. The negotiations with the government take so long. I want to buy more cows and get more livestock. And yes I want to do more with my crop farming.

Antie Rose also has the vision to bring all the women of the community together. Not all the women have sufficient human and

social resources to empower themselves. Many are unemployed and do not have the motivation and capacity to start their own family gardens, because of domestic violence, sexual abuse and problems with alcohol. Antie Rose therefore thinks that it would help the women to come together and discuss their common issues. Also it was suggested by another women farmer from Ithemba, Antie Marina, that SPP could arrange more training in agro-ecological techniques. This should attempt to inspire and encourage the women of the community to start their own home gardens.

All the women groups I interviewed expressed a need for more activities only for women. The activities requested were training in agro-ecological techniques, but also more workshops and meetings for women farmers to discuss common issues and share aspirations. They learned a lot from the previous workshops and conference from 2009 and 2011. The women farmers explained that they like to work with other women because they understand each other and make space for one another. For example if a group member cannot work due to issues in the household, the other women will understand because they as women experience the same struggles related to forced multiple responsibilities. The way these multiple responsibilities affect

the lives of women will be discussed later. Also the women mentioned that they like to work together because they are more resilient than the men. The women work hard the whole day, while the men easily give up. Though some of the women expressed that they need the men when the work gets too exhausting. Although additional activities only for women were requested, most of the women also find it useful to participate in activities with men involved. Franco Williams, development facilitator in the Hantam Karoo region of the Northern Cape Province says the following about his field experience with gender dynamics within farmer groups:

For me, when it is only the women, I think they express themselves much better. They feel much more comfortable than in mixed groups. But there is a difference between women because there are strong women who can express themselves in any group. But I think some women feel more comfortable when there are only women.

3.3.2 The diversity of women

As mentioned I have met other women like Antie Kula who manage to make a living of their small scale farming with very few material resources. Still the lack of material resources, such as land and finances, is one of the greatest obstacles for the women farmers to influence *strategic life choices*.

Thinking of gender identities as produced through cultural norms and values in society, the cultural practice of patriarchy has different impacts on the lives of women. Women have diverse identities and not all women have the necessary capacity

KEY FINDINGS

Obstacles for women farmers to influence *strategic life choices*:

- Lack of ownership of land
- Lack of human- and social resources

Activities for women exclusively is more likely to also engage the active participation of women who would otherwise feel vulnerable to express themselves openly in a forum including men.

acknowledge and learn from each other. Sikhula Sonke has implemented this view in their practice of empowering farmwomen:

We saw the need that you cannot just empower women and then the men will be left behind. If you leave out the husband, then he won't understand and next time when you will go to a workshop he will say no, because he will think that the wife come back and tell him what to do. So we do not want that kind of issue to arise. We want to include the men to the point that they are all equal.

Henry Fredericks acknowledges that SPP should focus more on including men in the process of facilitating women empowerment. He notes that it should not only be a singular intervention, but something SPP builds continuously into their conduct.

Analyzing this perspective of women empowerment, it is therefore important that SPP does not isolate women as a single target group. Men need to be included.

KEY FINDINGS

In order to deconstruct gender stereotypes NGOs must facilitate:

- Joint spaces and forums for discussion for both men and women
- Exclusive spaces for both men and women to encourage them to give expression to their own fears without feeling as vulnerable as they might in a mixed forum.

self is an organism with leadership, which means that women are forced into leadership within the family structure.

He accentuates that in a process of facilitating women empowerment, NGOs can make women aware that they can transfer their knowledge and experiences of being in a leading position in the household into an organizational context. Women are most often not aware that they can utilize these experiences to build and lead organisations, because society does not validate that as important. Without women being aware of their own power in the household, Julie points out that they will reproduce the patriarchal values and norms within the organization.

3.3.3 Include men in order to deconstruct gender stereotypes

The consultant Frank Julie also argues that it is good in a process of facilitating empowerment to make spaces only for women. Though he advises to continue facilitating activities with both men and women. He points out that in order to deconstruct gender stereotypes spaces only for men must also be created. The men must also understand what women empowerment entails. He stresses the importance of attributing cultural norms the problem of gender inequality. Men and women must not ascribe guilt to each other. They must

3.3.4 Reproduced gender inequality

Based on work/field experiences, Julie stresses that it is worthy of attention that NGOs not homogenize gender.

Feminists tend to think that there will be fewer conflicts in only women organisations because there is a commonality of what they want to do and where they are coming from. That is not true.

Julie further elaborates the statement pointing out that women sometimes are unable to share power among themselves, because they grow up with the idea of power being something they have to compete for. According to Julie the family in it-

Antie Marina from Ithemba experiences how these gender dynamics challenge the possibilities of women to learn from each other. She explains that when SPP is inviting women from the farmer community to activities, SPP contacts few women, whose task is to inform the other women. According to Antie Marina few women show up to the activity, because they do not want other women on the farm to tell them what to do. Therefore Antie Marina suggests that all the women need to be informed about upcoming activities from SPP. The issue of women competing for power leads me to my findings from my investigation of women power in the Food Sovereignty Campaign.

CASE STORY

Davine Witbooi



Davine Witbooi

KEY FINDINGS

- NGOs can help to make women aware and find confidence in transferring experiences of leading a household into leadership in an organizational context.
- Without the awareness and belief to recontextualize their own leadership skills from the household, women risk reproducing the patriarchal values and norms.

3.4 How are women farmers represented in the Food Sovereignty Campaign? Do women take a leading role ?

3.4.1 Davine Witbooi

Davine Witbooi was the first female convener of the Food Sovereignty Campaign in the period 2009-2010. For her it was not without struggle to be in that position.

When people look at me in a social movement they think "what a brave woman". But nobody knows my past. What I went through to become this leader. It was a struggle as a woman to go through all these things to become an activist. To stand up for the rights of other women.

Davine explains how she struggled more with women than with men in the Food Sovereignty Campaign. It was difficult for her to stay true to her own beliefs of how to be a leader, because some of the women questioned her leadership. According to Davine it is because the South African culture has socialized women into believing that that men are better leaders than women.

Davine says that women have become powerful in the campaign from the learning they gained from social gatherings and workshops about political education. This power of women is expressed through their participation in the campaign, but also through representation, where the majority of the task team consists of women.

I think women have become very strong in the campaign since 2007 until now.

Women see that they can do things on their own and realise that they do not depend on men in the campaign. They take the leading role.

Davine points out that although women speak out about their communities during workshops, they are less interested in running for election to be the convener of the Food Sovereignty Campaign. They are not ready to take responsibility connected to being in that position, because that would conflict with the responsibility they have of taking care of the household. Davine explains that this double dependency condition of being a farmer, but also a woman experiencing gender inequalities, has caused that many women had to leave the social movement. She says the following about her own experience with this issue:

For me that was also a big struggle. I have children I have to look after. I got responsibility to handle the issues inside the household and also go out and fight for other people. So most of the time women must make a choice; either the struggle of your family or the community.

Davine points out that most of the women in the social movement face domestic violence, which is a great obstacle for them

to put their attention to important matters such as food production. She thinks that it is a problem that the focus of the Food Sovereignty Campaign is only on the issues of the community. She identifies a need to create spaces in the campaign where women can discuss their own issues.

When women come together to talk about these issues they learn a lot. If I talk about my own struggle, they can see how to get out of their own struggle and what is the best way to follow. Where you can feel better in the end of the day and also see to the community. If there are more spaces for women to talk about these issues and documentaries about these things, then I see that it would help the communities and also other women from other countries.

Davine recommends:

It would be good if we could have workshops where we can teach women how to deal with the household and look after the children when at the same time fight the struggle of oppression of women. (..) It would help if every third month women could come together and not just waiting for big events.

Davine's opinion that women take a lead-

ing role in the Food Sovereignty Campaign corresponds generally with what the women farmers informed me. The majority expressed that they feel free to speak their mind, also in a presence of men. Though few women expressed that they feel uncomfortable with actively participating in activities because they think the men dominate the discussions.

KEY FINDINGS

- Women are not only in secretary positions in the Food Sovereignty Campaign. The majority of the task team is represented by women.
- Most women farmers acclaim a leading role through their participation in the campaign activities.
- Domestic issues prevent many women from feeling confident in living up to all the responsibilities related to being in a leading role.

3.4.2 Reflections upon the double dependency condition of women

The women trade union Sikhula Sonke has already created a forum for the farmwom-

en to discuss personal issues. The women of the union requested such a forum to be established because domestic violence is a great obstacle for them to do their work. For example Alfrieda Boesak, the Deputy General Secretary of Sikhula Sonke, points out that it is important to be aware of how the social background of women affects their capability to work, because most of the women keep being silent about the things that happen and they do not share their stories because they are afraid of the consequences.

In order to break the cycle of oppression you should not just look at worker's issues but also social issues, because you cannot separate social issues with workers issues. What Sikhula Sonke is doing is giving them the space to speak on their own behalf.

SPP is aware of the issue of women farmers being exposed to gender based violence. Ronald Wesso, the Information, Media and Advocacy Practitioner of SPP asserts that SPP could make more spaces to deal with these issues:

Those women are not only facing problems as women farmers. They experience life as women. So when they become the targets of sexist violence, it is not necessarily di-

rected to farming. Then they do not come to SPP, but I think that it is wrong. We should have a culture of solidarity. Maybe we cannot solve the problem of violence, but we will do whatever we can, even if our focus is farming. Because how can a woman farm, if she is beaten up everyday for example. So I think those are the areas, the kind of thinking and practice where we can take it forward what we are doing.

Julie stresses that NGOs tend to focus more on opportunity for development than establishing support structures that improves people's ability to take part in the development. From this statement he concludes that NGOs must have a gender sensitive budget.

Wesso states that SPP financially supports women farmers with transport and child-care in the planning of activities. Though he highlights that SPP could pay more attention to create these support structures.

KEY FINDINGS

Women farmers lack power because:

- They face a double dependency condition; firstly because they are farmers; and secondly as women experiencing gender inequalities, immersed in patriarchal family relations.
- Strategies for addressing issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse of women could include:
 - Create a forum in the Food Sovereignty Campaign for women to discuss their own issues. This could increase their power to engage in the community struggles.
- NGOs should have a gender sensitive budget.

3.5 SPP staff members experiencing social dynamics within the organization

The interviewed staff members of SPP all agree that social dynamics influence their daily work, performance and wellbeing within the organization. While some suggest that differences in performance are often caused by gender dynamics; others mainly attribute the organizational hierarchy and administrative structure within SPP as the cause of conflicting dynamics within the organization.

These aspects of social dynamics were described as both having positive and negative implications on the staff members and working culture within SPP. All of the staff members finds the work environment healthy and appreciates the trust and freedom to make independent decisions that they experience. However some respondents expressed a hope for a little more space to manage and plan their work activities and efforts with less frequent interference from the management. Some staff members explained how they experience that social dynamics constrain them in doing their work properly in the communities and one employee emphasized how the dynamics affect the private life.

The lack of *power within* described as an issue among women farmers is also expressed by some staff members of SPP as inability to act upon choices important to both their work and themselves because of social dynamics. Those staff members point out that they are aware of the existing dynamics, but they do not find themselves in a position to act upon that awareness because of the risk of conflict by confronting their colleagues. Other staff members state that they have no problem with confronting colleagues directly when disagreements related to social dynamics occur.

Staff members of Sikhula Sonke expressed a high degree of awareness of issues of power within their organization. They find it important to share experiences of social issues related to work and private life in order to do being able to work in the communities.

Personal issues amongst staff members have to be openly discussed. If not it is difficult to deal with issues in the communities. Because we cannot train other people if we do not implement it in our own organisation.

It was proposed by the management of SPP to discuss social dynamics within the organization more openly at the gathering around Organizational Learning.

SECTION C

CONCLUDING REMARKS

KEY FINDINGS

Those who wish to facilitate the empowerment of others must first work to empower themselves to do so. It is regarded as a potential for SPP to create new spaces for discussion and engage staff members in addressing issues related to social dynamics.



Antie Marina - iThemba Farmer Association

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it is concluded that SPP's understanding of empowerment as involving both internal and external factors to the individual reflects their practice in terms of facilitation. SPP facilitates the internal process of empowerment of women farmers involved in agro-ecological production and the Food Sovereignty Campaign. Through SPP's facilitation of activities, such as training in agro-ecological techniques, women workshops and popular education, SPP supports the women in believing in the importance of their work and that their lives have meaning. In this way SPP contributes to changes in the *immediate levels* of social change, reflected in the sense of selfhood and identity of women farmers, how they perceive their interests and their capacity to act. This individual empowerment process leads to social changes on a collective level when SPP organizes activities for women to exchange experiences from their daily life and challenge each other to follow new paths and break barriers. When women organize and get together, they can improve their situation beyond what would be possible through their individual efforts alone.

Women farmers are widely represented at leading positions in the Food Sovereignty

Campaign and most women actively participate during activities of the social movement.

If NGOs want to strengthen the power of women it is important to recognize that not all women have the *power within* to act upon *strategic life choices* and challenge patriarchal norms. All facilitation should aim to be inclusive towards women with different amount of *human- and social resources*. This should involve activities for women groups only. However considering gender inequality as constituted through power relations between men and women, it becomes important not to exclude men from the processes of facilitating empowerment.

This can be a strategy to deconstruct gender stereotypes.

One great obstacle for women to achieve *strategic life choices* is that they face a double dependency condition; firstly because they are farmers; and secondly as women experiencing gender inequalities. Many women are disempowered to make *strategic life choices* about the structure of the household, because they are forced to take responsibility of domestic matters and also subjected to sexual abuse and domestic violence. The absence of choice related to these issues constrains women to make choices around food production

and participate in activities of SPP and the Food Sovereignty Campaign.

When facilitating empowerment by expanding the ability of women to make *strategic life choices*, the research stresses the importance of establishing a forum for women that enables discussions about challenges and gains, allowing women to discover common ground through the realization that their problems are similar to those experienced by other women - and that they can learn from each other. Exchanging experiences on numerous issues and subjects is valuable in mitigating the isolation of women and denaturalizing the dominance of men over women. This could be a strategy to facilitate changes on the *deeper levels*, meaning the hidden structures that shape the distribution of resources and power in society.

Also it is concluded that empowering yourself to engage in a process of empowering others does not only concern women in the communities, but also staff members of SPP.

4.2 Recommendations

- *to strengthen the power of women farmers*

SPP need to review to which extend the recommendations from the women workshop in Lamberts Bay and the Rural Women's Conference in die Strand are prioritized within the team of development facilitators. Women farmers requested to more frequently meet with other women to learn from each other and share experiences, skills and knowledge related to farming.

When SPP plan activities only for women, they must be aware how social dynamics between women might influence how many of the invited women will show up.

Facilitate activities/forum that not only focus on women's issues related to farming, but also their social issues. This will help women to better pay attention to food production.

The discussion around this issue could also make women aware that they can transfer their knowledge and experiences of being in a leading position in the household into an organizational context.

In order to deconstruct gender stereotypes NGOs must facilitate: Joint space and fo-

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rooms for men and women. Exclusive spaces for men and women to encourage them to give expression to their own fears without feeling as vulnerable as they might in a mixed forum.

SPP involves people from the communities when the organization monitors whether the people implement what they learned from different activities. It is recommended from a SPP staff member that SPP could be more effective in joint participatory monitoring.

SPP staff members have many different ways of understanding women empowerment. Recommended from development facilitator that SPP should be clear about their scope for gender integration as an organisation – in order to clarify how to practically deal with gender issues.

It was proposed by the management of SPP to discuss social dynamics within the organization more openly at the gathering around Organizational Learning.

4.3 Guiding questions

- What is SPP's understanding of women empowerment?
- How does SPP help women farmers to influence choices critical for their well-being and quality of life?
- How does SPP address social issues of women farmers?
- Does SPP prioritize recommendations from previous women activities when planning activities?
- How often are the recommendations from women farmers reviewed?
- How does SPP facilitate activities that focus on deconstructing gender stereotypes?

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Naila Kabeer's Profession
www.ids.ac.uk/ids/person/naila-kabeer

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Clara Anahi Friis-Rasmussen 2012

