

Place-based Development: A Comparative Study of Gender Empowerment and Community Collaboration in Small Farming Households in Punjab, Pakistan

Sajida Taj¹, Sandra Heaney-Mustafa², Barbara Chambers³, Robert Fitzgerald⁴,
^{1,2,3&4}Faculty of Education, Science, Technology & Maths, University of Canberra, Australia

Abstract

Since the independence of Pakistan, the agriculture and rural development have been part of the national development plans. The agricultural and rural development department has adopted several approaches and strategies, but most can be considered unsuccessful mainly because of the low level of community participation, the lack of focus on community needs and their failure to be gender inclusive. This research examines and seeks to understand the place-based agricultural value chain development that engages farming communities in rural Punjab. The research looks into the contribution of the participatory/multidisciplinary value chain development to gender inclusion, collaboration, and empowerment in the small farming households in rural Punjab. Based on the pragmatism paradigm, this uses mixed methods. A comparative pre and post analysis of place-based development approach and commodity focused approach is carried out using survey and focused group discussions data. In addition to comparing the different value chain development approaches, analysis of a control site was also added to compare the changes without any intervention. It was found that gender inclusion and participation enhanced the collective action in decisions making at inter and the intra-household level. The level of intra-household collaboration at the pilot place-based site was higher as compared to the commodity approach site and control site implying that the place-based community engagement leads to higher level of gender collaboration.

Key Words: *Place-based development, gender inclusion, collaboration, empowerment*

Introduction

Agriculture is an important sector both regarding contribution to GDP and absorption of labor in Pakistan. Since the independence of Pakistan, agricultural and rural development remains an important part of the planning and development of the country. Various approaches to improve agricultural productivity and rural livelihood were implemented over time. However, the agricultural productivity gap is far below the average international standards especially at small farms in Pakistan (Hussain & Bashir 2011). Small farming households are an integral part of agriculture in Pakistan, comprising 85 percent of the farming community. However, most of the public and private traditional agricultural extension methods and approaches are less engaging and not gender inclusive especially for small farming households (Davidson 2001; Shahbaz & Ali 2011). Women in Pakistan play multiple roles in household and agricultural production ranging from providing moral support to male family members through to assisting as unpaid family farm workers (Ahmad & Khan 2016). Their role is likely to increase in agriculture because of various socio-economic pressures in rural economy that force men to migrate to urban areas for income and employment. Besides, women's significant contribution in agriculture, their contribution has never been reflected in GDP (World Bank 2009) and also considered passive members of the family (Taj et al. 2007). Furthermore, women in rural areas of Pakistan face multi-faceted challenges in accessing education, health services, assets and productive resources. For example land, skills to engage in economic opportunities and other services such as agriculture and credit due to restricted mobility in rural areas (Ahmad & Khan 2016; Chambers et al. 2018). Most of the traditional agricultural extension services have less beneficial for women in developing countries including Pakistan (Farnworth & Colverson 2015). Therefore, they will be the focus of this study.

According to latest estimates, about 40 percent of the population of Pakistan lives in poverty, which is more in rural areas than urban areas (GoP 2017). Women are more likely to be trapped in poverty than men (OPHI 2017). Small land holding, poor resource base, limited access to knowledge and information sources are the major reasons for rural poverty that also hinder their participation in traditional public and private agricultural extension and value chain development (Sheck, Donovan & Stoian 2013). This widens the gender gap and marginalization of women especially in rural areas of Pakistan. Therefore, engaging women is crucial to address poverty and gender gap and could provide wider benefits to achieve gender empowerment, community collaboration and sustainable adoption outcomes (Spriggs et al. 2017; Riisgaard, Fibla & Ponte 2010).

The international donor agencies are also more emphasizing the importance of engaging women and smallholder in agriculture, and shifting their focus to make from traditional development approaches to participatory and place-based approaches to achieve the broad agenda of gender equality and sustainable development. Pugalis and Bentley (2014) argue that place-based approaches are vital to address the local and regional development programs and policies to achieve gender equality and sustainable development outcomes in the present unequal environment. It is also evident from research that community-driven development projects that actively involve communities in planning, decision making, and investment of resources are better contributors to gender equality and women empowerment in the developing world (World Bank 2011). Similarly, the research on place-based community development approaches and participatory methodologies has shown that by integrating services, alleviating access barriers, improving linkages, networks and referrals with long-term community commitment improve the level and quality of community participation (Centre for Community Child Health 2012). Furthermore, these approaches provide an opportunity to help marginalized and impoverished people especially women to access benefits of agriculture value chain development (World Bank 2011; Spriggs & Chambers 2010; Bartholomaeus 2013).

This paper aims to explore and compare the differentiated experiences of place-based and commodity focused approaches to agriculture value chain development in rural Pakistan, implemented under the second phase of Agricultural Sector Linkages Program (ASLP2). Australia–Pakistan Agricultural Sector Linkages Program (ASLP) funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), involved multi-disciplinary program involving mango, dairy and citrus commodity-based project (CBPs) teams and implemented in two phases. ASLP Phase 1 (ASLP1) that involved only the CBPs. While in second phase, SRP was introduced in the second phase of ASLP on the recommendation of the review of the ASLP1 to address the little integration of poor and marginal groups especially women in rural Pakistan. The major objective of SRP was to encourage the inclusion of men and women from small farming households in value chain development interventions in Pakistan by undertaking the necessary social research to underpin the four CBPs (Chambers et al., 2018). The SRP worked in collaboration with CBPs teams in a number of villages in three provinces of Pakistan including Punjab, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtoonkhawa (Spriggs & Chambers 2015). The Social Research Project (SRP), piloted a holistic place-based approach to include rural poor especially women in the mango, citrus and dairy value chain development in six pilot villages in rural Pakistan. However, this research is carried out in the Punjab Province that examines comparative effects and outcomes of place-based approach vis a vis traditional commodity focused approach on gender collaboration and empowerment in small farming households in rural Panjab.

Research well establishes in the developed world that such participatory and place-based approaches help poor and marginal groups especially women to participate in the formal development interventions (Tomaney 2010; Markey 2010). Place-based approaches allow engaging women and marginal groups, address their concerns, prioritize their needs which is vital for agricultural development in Pakistan (Clark 2008). According to Pugalis & Bentley (2014) place-based approach aims to develop locally-owned strategies that can tap the indigenous knowledge and economic potential and provide the basis for strategies that address the issues of sustainable development and human well-being. Furthermore, place-based

development emphasizes to identify and mobilize local capacities which is the ability of places to grow drawing on their own human and economic resources and innovative capacities. It is hypothesized that focused inclusion of poor and marginal groups brings significant benefits beyond the agricultural value chain development, leading to a greater chance of collaboration at household and community levels, especially empowering women in rural areas.

The SRP utilized the adult learning principles embedded in asset-based community development, focusing on the agricultural priorities and challenges of the small farming households especially women, which is based on the inside out development strategy rather than the traditional top-down and pre-planned agricultural development approach (Sirolli 1999). The participatory planning using visual ethnography and profiling community capacity were used to identified and prioritize community capacities and needs for the value chain development as well as skills improvement. In addition, the community service centre provided a neutral and safe place especially for women and youth. The close and repeated interaction at community service centre within community and diverse project teams help people especially women to collaborate better with other households as well as within the household. It is argued that engaging rural people, the small farming households through place-based approach help improve gender collaboration and empowerment (especially women in the place-based focal villages in Pakistan) compared to single commodity focused approach. The present paper is an effort to examine the impact of place-based, integrated and holistic approach to gender collaboration and empowerment in small farming households in rural Pakistan. This paper compares the effect of place-based and commodity focused approaches to value chain development on gender collaboration and empowerment in rural Punjab, Pakistan.

Method and Materials

This paper is a part of author's doctoral research on Community engagement and gender: a case study of place-based development in rural Pakistan. Data was collected using concurrent mixed methods, collecting quantitative data through household survey and qualitative data focused group discussions with men and women from two districts of Punjab. Each district represents different value chain development strategy/approach. One village from each district was selected purposively. The place-based approach value chain development approach was employed in Village one (V1) while, the Village two (V2) experienced single commodity focused value chain development approach. The participants represented the small farming households, who own less than 5 hectares of land, were engaged in one of value chain development approach. Data was collected using concurrent mixed method, thereby, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data at two points of time. The quantitative data was collected through household survey, interviewing 30 household heads and their spouses separately from each village. Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with men and women in each village to collect the qualitative data. This mode of data collection was carried out to examine their experience of involvement in place-based and commodity-focused approaches to agriculture value chain development. This provided an opportunity to examine the differentiated impact of successful integration and inclusion of gender and poor households in value chain development through objective as well as an inductive lens to assess specific gender empowerment at household and collaboration at community level. It is essential to note that the broader study also included a control village to compare the changes in overtime in gender empowerment and collaboration. However, for this paper, the discussion is focused on the former – households who have participated either in place-based value chain development or commodity focused value chain development approach. The quantitative data was supplemented with the qualitative data and provided a deeper understanding of the changes occur in both villages about gender empowerment and collaboration.

Results & Discussion

The findings of this research suggest that place-based value chain development approach played a key role in engaging small farming households, especially women compared to commodity focused approach. It is

evident from data that majority of women were not involved in any of the project activity at the time of baseline survey in V1. It is interesting to note that three-fourths of the participants reported their involvement in value chain development interventions at the post-project survey. Research evidence shows that highly engaged communities actively strive for possible collaboration to improve their adoption of agricultural innovations and maximize their profits (Devaux et al. 2009; Markelova & Meinzen-Dick 2009). As for the participants of this research, there is a general agreement on the part of both male and female respondents in V1 that their active participation in various VCD interventions, improved their collaboration within household. As well as, they were well motivated to connecting together for social and community level events. It was acknowledged that their repeated meaningful interaction with diverse teams and other households within village and with other villages, helped them to build a relationship of trust. Women in V1 also believed that their access to knowledge and skills learning experience resulted in improvement in their inter-household collaboration, others felt that establishing a neutral platform or place for small farmers had resulted in improvement in inter-household collaboration as well as inter villages collaboration, which are connected via community services centre in their village. They were ‘included’, ‘empowered’, ‘collaborative’, ‘had a sense of trust and ownership’, and had interest to adopt the improved practices for value chain development as well as transfer what is learnt to others. These factors were mentioned in FGDs in V1 and acknowledged that these were developed during their participation in place-based value chain development. The findings are aligned with the studies that have found empowering women and poor through place-based approach as a key factor that facilitates gender empowerment and collective action in rural context (Spriggs et.al 2018; Vinson 2009; Wear 2007; Wiseman 2006). Similarly, other place-based and participatory development studies indicate that participatory and holistic development is more powerful than the top-down, traditional development approaches to agriculture value chain development (Bynner 2015; Pamphilon & Mikhailovich 2016). The results indicated that both men and women had more or less similar responses related to their ease of collaboration with other households which is consistent with the findings of Spriggs et al. (2017) and Chambers et al. (2018).

The key factor that facilitated the inter-household collaboration of men and women in V1 compared to V2 was the implementation method and design of VCD approach. The implementation method is defined as the mechanism to transfer the recommended codes of practice for agricultural value chain to farming community by providing them the ability to learn and adopt according to their requirements (Niazi et al. 2005; Taj et al. 2009). Both men and women in this study believed that the participatory implementation strategies adopted by PBD approach improved their participation in family and farm decisions making and collaboration with other households. This perspective was supported by the respondents in this study as they commented on the use of suitable and meaningful value chain development approaches and methods, participatory planning and implementation of the action plans and organizing capacity building programmes, quality of resource persons, good interpersonal relations between various team representatives and community and use of group work that ultimately enhanced their inter-household collaboration.

However, the commodity-focused VCD implementation design was perceived less involving and beneficial especially for women in the study. These results could mean that from the perspectives of the small farmers especially women the VCD approach they reported about were not seen as particularly relevant and desired from them rather imposed on them. Similarly, though the commodity-related knowledge, information and skills were useful but had little practical applicability in the context of small farmer households. These confirm the findings of past studies that had investigated the weaknesses of existing agricultural extension and rural development approaches/system in Pakistan (Luqman et al. 2018; Shahbaz & Ata 2014). Similarly, finding from this study reveal that there was no participation of participants in planning and design process of the commodity value chain development and they were registered as participating households and thus they were not fully aware of the VCD interventions. As echoed by a female FGD participant: “There was no consideration of our interests and needs but only invited to attend meetings/lectures”. As a result of this top-down approach, though the smallholders in this study rated low participation/inclusion. Furthermore, there were minimal changes in gender collaboration at household and

community level. It is possible that meaningful inter-household collaboration would not occur if the relevance of the VCD interventions did not address their interests and priorities and also their preparedness to participate in learning events. Arguably, if men and women were consulted in the planning of VCD activities that benefit them, they can easily develop goals that they would hope to achieve in this process.

Findings from this study indicate that men frequently engaged in household and farm decisions in both research sites as previously, while women had limited participation in decisions related to family matters. The pre-project data shows so significant participation/gender collaboration in farm-related decision making that shows a dominant role of men in family and farm which supports the findings of Spriggs et al. (2017) study which found that men in rural Pakistan have higher authority in family and farm-related decision making compared to women. Research has shown that involving women in family and farm decisions making assists households to adopt better practices to improve their farm and family well-being (Khan et al. 2016; Samee et al. 2015). These suggest that limited involvement of women in household decision making lend them limited freedom and choices to decide what they want to do, limiting their agency. In that respect, the fact that female respondent in this study had less role in crafting household goals, it could be argued that those goals would shape and guide their day-to-day leadership in the family which would ultimately help improve women's relationship within household and community. Also, women had limited opportunities to build relationships with other that benefit them in their future life and career. Women are also more likely to be isolated to participate in the formal development and decision-making mechanisms at household and community levels, as well as lack representation at local and national forums. As a result, less likely to be able to voice their needs or lobby to access services, infrastructure and services that are specifically needed to help them secure their livelihoods and increase their income generating opportunities. Therefore, this research shows that place-based and focused interventions that address the underlying causes of gender inequality can bring about positive changes in gender relations resulting to gender empowerment and collaboration at household as well as community level.

Conclusions and Way Forward

Based on the experiences of respondents of this study, this paper has argued that, keeping in view the rural and agricultural context of Pakistan, the present traditional and top-down development approach not equipped to engage the small farmers especially women and struggles to meet the needs of women and marginal groups in rural Pakistan. As an alternative to existing approaches, the place-based approach provides an efficient way to address unequal and disadvantageous position of women. It was found that where small farming households especially women had limited opportunities to access agricultural knowledge, information and skills, the place-based approach is critical contributor to improve gender empowerment and collaboration compared to tradition commodity focused approach. Being respected, heard and valued were major determining factors that enabled women to participate in the diversified value chain as well as skills development opportunities within the village. However, in the rural context of Pakistan, empowering women and marginalized communities, addressing agricultural value chain development alone is not enough; interventions also need to address their felt needs and priorities. Such as access to essential services and providing income-generating skills that help women to engage in economic activity. In short, place-based, integrated and holistic approaches to agricultural development need to acknowledge and support women's productive and social reproductive roles and recognize them as farmers in their own right, and their unpaid work (including farm work and care work) needs to be valued. This would enable women to access knowledge and skills and be more able to make informed choices regarding their time, labour, income, leisure, and social roles at household, and community levels. It will also result in building local community capacity to take responsibility for their issues over time. Further research to develop a comprehensive program logic model of the framework for place-based approaches, showing how it leads to improved outcomes for women, poor and marginalized groups. Place-based approaches should be seen as just one feature of a broader framework; a combined approach (person, place and national) is required to more efficiently and effectively respond to wicked problems that affect broader communities

Reference List

- Ahmad, N & Khan, H (2016), *Measuring women's disempowerment in agriculture in Pakistan*, IFPRI Discussion Paper, 01512(February). Available at: <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15738coll2/id/130193>.
- Bartholomaeus, P. (2013), Place-based education and the Australian curriculum, *Literacy Learning: the Middle Years*, 21(2008), pp. 17–23.
- Centre for Community and Child Health (2012), *Place-based initiatives transforming communities. Proceedings from the place-based approaches roundtable*. Melbourne, Australia. The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. Retrieved from https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/CCCH_Place-based_initiatives_report.pdf
- Chambers, B Spriggs, J Heaney –Mustafa, S & Taj, S (2018), Women and marginalized group inclusion in Pakistan smallholder agriculture. In P. Thomas (Ed.), *Development Bulletin*, No. 79, pp. 88-92. Development Studies Network. The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.
- Clark, D. (2008) *Learning to make choices for the future*, The Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement. Available at: http://promiseofplace.org/assets/files/PBE_Manual_01_Intro.pdf.
- Davidson, AP Ahmad, & Ali T (2001), *Dilemmas of agricultural extension in Pakistan: food for thought*, Agricultural Research and Extension Network, Network Paper No. 116. Dawn.
- Devaux, A Horton, D Valeso, C Thiele, G Lopez, G Bernet, T Reinoso, I & Ordinola, M (2009), *Collective action for market chain innovation in the Andes*, *Food Policy*. Elsevier Ltd, 34(1), pp. 31–38. doi: 10.1016/j.foodpol.2008.10.007.
- Farnworth, C & Colverson, KE (2015), Building a gender-transformative extension and advisory facilitation system in Africa, *Journal of Agriculture and Food Security* 1(1), 20–39. <http://hdl.handle.net/10568/68323>
- Hussain, A & Bashir, A (2011), *Agricultural productivity and rural poverty in the rice-wheat and mixed-cropping zones of the Punjab, Pakistan*, *Journal of Life & Social Sciences* 9(2): 172–178. Retrieved from <http://www.pjlss.edu.pk/sites/default/files/172-178.pdf>
- Khan, IA Shahbaz, B Naz, M Umber, S & Amir, RM (2016), *Determinants of women's empowerment and poverty reduction: a case study of rural Faisalabad*, Punjab. *Pakistan Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 54(1), 217–225. <https://doi.org/10.21162/PAKJAS/17.4563>
- Luqman, M Shahbaz, B Ali, T & Iftikhar, M (2013), *Critical analysis of rural development initiatives in Pakistan: implications for sustainable development*. *Spanish Journal of Rural Development*, 4(2), 67–74. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5261/2013.GEN1.07>
- Markelova, H Meinzen-Dick, R Hellin, J & Dohrn, S (2009), *Collective action for smallholder market access*. *Food Policy*, 34(1), 1–7.
- Markey, S (2010), *Primer on place-based development*, (November), p. 7. Available at: <http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/primerplacebaseddevelopment-markey.pdf>.
- Niazi, MA Ali, A Taj, S Akmal, N & Farooq, U (2005), *Rapid assessment of institutional frameworks for acquiring knowledge and disseminating new practices within communities*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Social Sciences Division Research Studies.
- Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (2017), *Multidimensional poverty in Pakistan*. Islamabad, Pakistan. Available at: <http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Multidimensional-Poverty-in-Pakistan.pdf>.

- Pugalis, L & Bentley, G (2014a), *(Re)appraising place-based economic development strategies*, Local Economy, 29(4–5), pp. 273–282. doi: 10.1177/0269094214541357.
- Pugalis, L & Bentley, G (2014b), *Place-based development strategies: Possibilities, dilemmas and ongoing debates*, Local Economy, 29(4–5), pp. 561–572. doi: 10.1177/0269094214541617.
- Riisgaard, L Fibla, E & Ponte, S (2010), *Gender and value chain development: evaluation study*. Available at: [http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/GenderandValueChainDevelopmentfinalwww\[1\].pdf/181877215/GenderandValueChainDevelopmentfinalwww\[1\].pdf](http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/GenderandValueChainDevelopmentfinalwww[1].pdf/181877215/GenderandValueChainDevelopmentfinalwww[1].pdf).
- Rozel, C & Earl, K (2015), *Building a Gender-Transformative Extension and Advisory Facilitation System in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Journal of Gender, Agricultural and Food Security, 1(1), pp. 20–39.
- Samee, D Nosheen, F Khan, HN Khowaja, IA Paracha, PI Akhter, S Batool, Z & Khanum, Z (2015), *Women in agriculture in Pakistan*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Islamabad. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-012-0839-x>
- Shahbaz, B. and Ata, S. (2014) *Enabling agricultural policies for benefiting smallholders in dairy, citrus and mango industries of Pakistan – Project No . ADP / 2010 / 091*.
- Shahbaz, S & Ali T (2011), *Agricultural extension system in Punjab decentralised or dispersed?*, 3 October. Available at: <http://nation.com.pk/03-Oct-2011/agricultural-extension-system-in-punjab--decentralised-or-dispersed>.
- Sheck, R Donovan, J & Stoian, D (2013), *Assessing impacts of value chain development on poverty a case-study companion to the 5capitals tool*. Technical Series, Technical Report no. 396. Rural Enterprise Development Collection, Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) Bioversity International.
- Sirrolli, E (1999), *Ripples from the Zambezi*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Spriggs, J & Chambers, B (2010), *Social research to foster effective collaboration and strengthen pro-poor value chains*. Canberra, Australia: ACIAR, ASLP2 Project Proposal.
- Spriggs, J Chambers, B Heaney-Mustafa, S Roy, S Akmal, N Taj, S Khan, IA & Mangan T (2017), *Women's empowerment and economic collaboration in rural Pakistan*. Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security. Vol. 2(2), 52-68. <https://doi.org/10.19268/JGAFS.222017.4>
- Taj, S Akmal, N Sharif, M & Mehmood, A (2009), *Diffusion process of innovation learning system in the rice-wheat production system of the Punjab*. Pakistan Journal of Agriculture Research, 46(2).
- Tomaney, J (2010), *Place-based trends and approaches to regional development: Global Trends and Australian implications*, Australian Business Foundation.
- World Bank (2011), *Gender dimensions of community-driven development operations*. Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPREGTOPSOCDEV/Resources/12763RegionGenderWEB.pdf>.