



Vanilla Bean Production

A Case Study in Gender Analysis





The case of vanilla in Uganda

- Government declares policy to promote cash crops
- Agricultural scientists suggest vanilla as cash crop
- Government gives incentives to farmers to plant vanilla
- Agricultural extension workers train farmers to plant vanilla
- Farmers given inputs - seed, fertiliser and credit



Steps taken and consequences

- Agricultural extension stations try out vanilla cropping
- Selected field trials are carried out
- Extension workers then train farmers
- Farmers plant vanilla
- After two years vanilla output is less than targeted
- After three years the output drops.



Why is vanilla output decreasing?

- Does it have to do with plant pathology?
- Are the farmers not following instructions?
- Is the extension service poor?
- Did the farmers get their inputs in time and in adequate quantity?



Who is consulted?

Agricultural Research Institutes

- They were asked to look into the quality of input
- Check plant pathology
- Undertake more field trials

Agricultural Extension Service

- Asked to improve extension services
- Provide timely inputs
- Mobilise farmer participation



What questions did they ask?

Agricultural Research Institutes

- Are the crops healthy?
- Is crop management optimal?
- Use of pesticides and other materials?

Agricultural extension services

- What does farmer do when there is trouble with crop?
- Is extension service adequate?



What happened?

- No problem was detected with crop management
- Extension services not optimal but adequate
- Farmers would like more inputs, especially loan subsidies
- Still the output decreased.



What happened next?

- The Women's Studies Department were doing a study of vanilla production
- The Government requested them to find out why vanilla output was decreasing
- The Women's Studies Department set up an extensive enquiry



What did they do?

Changed the research question

- What are the relations of production?
- Who owns the land?
- Who owns the crop?
- Who does planting?
- Who does rearing?
- Who does harvesting?
- Who does the marketing?



What did they do?

Changed the respondents

- Asked vanilla growers but disaggregated by gender
- Asked both women and men since they both work on the crop
- Looked at the gender division of labour in production - i.e. who was doing what, what obligations did men have and women have.



What else did they do?

Changed the way questions were asked

- Asked women and men separately because they have different roles and interests
- Did not use questionnaires because women are illiterate
- Used participatory research methods to provide conducive environment for free and frank discussion.



What did they find?

- Vanilla crop is very labour-intensive
- Men own the crop and do the initial planting.
- Women of the household provide the labour for the intensive cultivation. No other labour is hired.
- Women had to neglect their subsistence crops to manage.
- Men continued to cultivate their other market crops
- Women had to work harder and couldn't keep up
- Men do the marketing and control the cash



What was the end result?

- Women could not manage all the work - there just was not enough time
- They were losing their subsistence crops and not getting the benefits of cash crop production
- They were sabotaging the crop by nipping the bud at the point of germination