



Evaluation of Gender within the Livelihoods Programme on Nias Island, Indonesia

Executive Summary

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Evaluators: Annette Salkeld

Executive Summary

Since the tragedies of the December 2004 tsunami and March 2005 earthquake, numerous international agencies have arrived on Nias Island to implement emergency response, rehabilitation and reconstruction programs. While there has been significant progress in rebuilding the island, to date there has been little focus on ensuring gender equitable access to humanitarian or development programming.

The Oxfam livelihood program was established in December 2005. The first phase established community based livelihood groups then expanded to support cocoa and rubber producers in rural and coastal areas. It is due to be completed at the end of 2007.

This report was commissioned by Oxfam Nias in March-April 2007 to assess gender issues as they relate to livelihoods on Nias, with the aim of recommending ways that Oxfam can further support women in targeted rural and urban communities. The primary source of information was a series of focus group discussions with groups of women and groups of men in villages where the Oxfam livelihood programs currently operate, focusing on issues including the gendered division of labour, asset ownership and decision making processes within households and the community.

While women and men in Nias share a range of livelihood responsibilities, there are clear patterns of gendered division of labour in regards to many domestic, agricultural and other income generating activities.

A central finding, contrary to commonly held views, is that both men and women are involved in all aspects of rubber production. Rubber is one of the largest cash crops in Nias undertaken primarily by small-holder farmers. Women have the lead role in tapping, collecting and processing rubber. While men are involved, they are more likely in some areas to undertake off-farm livelihood activities such as fishing or paid employment. This leaves the bulk of the rubber farming and management to women. It is a similar case for cocoa production, where women are actively involved in maintaining cocoa plots, harvesting and processing. Where men do not have off-farm work they are more involved in these sectors.

However in both sectors, Oxfam's support to farmers has primarily been targeted at men, who have benefited from training and inputs.

Women have the responsibility for looking after all aspects of pig production, a vital economic and social resource for Christian communities on Nias. They grow the fodder, feed the pigs and look after their general health. However it is the men who sell the pigs or pig products.

The two sectors that are male dominated are fishing and paid employment. Men undertake all aspects of catching and selling fresh fish, although women are involved through drying, salting and selling any excess. The women in this study did not have access to paid employment.

Domestic labour in and around the home is overwhelmingly the role of women, and is done in addition to the many other working roles they are responsible for. While they are helped by their children, their working days may be up to 5 hours longer than men, who have little involvement in domestic work.

Men have ownership and control over most household assets. Land is the major productive assets of most households, being the source of most household food and cash income. Sons inherit land through the patriarchal family line, with women having no inheritance entitlements. Women have a major role in managing the land, although men maintain control over decisions regarding its use, whether the land is considered a shared asset or not.

Cash income is a major household assets produced by both men and women. Money that men earn is considered to pay for the daily needs of the household, while the women's income is saved to use in times of shortage. Overwhelmingly cash is looked after by women. Women will purchase household needs, although will need to discuss any purchases with their husbands prior to spending anything. Men and women in some communities suggested that women would be hit by their husbands if they spent any money without permission. Men often keep part of the money they earn, particularly for cigarettes and alcohol.

The only productive assets that women have control and ownership over are the equipment for sewing and cake making. This was said to be the case both because women had purchased these items themselves, and that the men had no involvement in utilising this equipment.

Women in the Transitional Living Centres (TLC's) face many of the same issues as women in rural areas. However, there are some differences given that most families are landless with very few productive assets. In particular, most men have external employment or are fishermen. Because there is a lack of productive land or other income generating opportunities, some women do have some free time, allowing them to work on small scale income earning activities during the day. If men were not engaged in work in the afternoons, some said they passed the time 'smoking, sleeping and walking around'.

Many community decisions are made at community meetings, including those facilitated by agencies such as Oxfam. However, these forums are overwhelmingly dominated by men. If women do have the time to attend, they are given little space to participate, with their input potentially vetoed by the men. The experience of Oxfam staff confirms this, with some finding it difficult to engage women in these forums. In addition, communities in Nias have had little experience with consultative processes, particularly consultation with women. Some men have challenged the need to speak separately to women at all.

One of the issues discussed with community members was whether they had suggestions on how households and particularly women might improve their livelihood activities. Few people could see alternative livelihood outside of the current types of activities undertaken in their area, which reflects the limited livelihood experience or access to information for many people in these communities. This was most evident in the remote rural areas.

However there were some suggestions of areas women thought they could improve. These included increasing skills in traditional areas of such making cakes and sewing, increase their knowledge of pig and other livestock health and rearing, increase their skills in growing vegetables, improve knowledge on cocoa and rubber diseases and management, support to set up small shops or other businesses, or access credit to do so, and for men to access improved fishing equipment or increase their farming skills. While some women did not feel they had the time to learn new skills, most women and men were eager to take on new skills or receive inputs that would help their livelihood prospects.

There have been efforts to support the livelihoods needs of women into the first phase of Oxfam's livelihoods program, which is demonstrated by the number of female participants in the program. However there have also been many challenges to implementing gender equitable programs on Nias such as entrenched gender discrimination, staff capacity and support issues and the sheer size of scale up in the Aceh Nias program, which has led to gaps, some of them serious.

Some areas where the role and needs of women have not been addressed include the program assessment process, community consultation processes, targeting of livelihood groups, targeting of the rubber and cocoa sector, which have very few women beneficiaries and the capacity building of community facilitators.

While one aim of this report was to recommend ways to further support women within Oxfam's livelihoods program in Nias, there are limitations of how the program can be amended to appropriately target women at this late stage. However there are some opportunities; Oxfam should ensure that the remaining livelihood programming addresses the needs of women where possible by -

- Consulting Women
- Targeting women, not just men, for community training
- Ensuring Livelihood Groups better address options for women
- Ensure that women are supported in pig rearing activities
- Ensure women are involved in the planned vegetable, cocoa and rubber demonstration plots
- Community facilitators trained in gender awareness
- Dedicate time for mentoring staff in the field
- Promote the sharing of information on gender issues within other actors Nias
- Holding BRR accountable to its Aceh-Nias gender strategy.

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