



The Impact of Rural Sector Support Project to Farming Cooperatives on Gender Equality among Farmers: A Case Study of Corinyaburiba Rice Farming Cooperative in Bugesera District Rwanda.

A Research Project Submitted to Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences in Partial Fulfilment of Requirements for the Degree of Master of Management of Development, Rural Development and Gender

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DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to God almighty Psalms 118:8, to my dear husband Kabanda Damascent and my children Noble Hirwa and Emmanuella Ineza.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1	RSSP	Rural Sector Support Project
2	EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
3	NISR	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda
4	CBOs	Community Based Organisations
5	GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
6	PAD	Project Appraisal Document
7	PIM	Project Implementation Manual
8	MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal resources
9	RCA	Rwanda Cooperatives Agency
10	NGP	National Gender Policy
11	MoA	Ministry of Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

Using results generated through a qualitative approach, the study aimed at assessing the impact of Rural Sector Support Project/RSSP to Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative on gender equality among female and male farmers and make recommendations on areas of interventions so to ensure that the project's support to the cooperative better promote gender equality. Gender equality was assessed in four aspects namely; female and male participation, female and male access and control over resources, decision making and division of labour among female and male members of the cooperative. This was done in Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative in Bugesera district, Ruhuha sector in Eastern province of Rwanda.

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Regarding primary data, interviews, focus group discussions, key informants and observation data collection methods were used with the help of a checklist and a topic list to stimulate the discussions. Secondary data was obtained from review of literature; relevant gender books, journals, conference proceedings, project documents and some publications from the internet were carried out to support the findings from the study area. The study's sample size was 8 respondents. This was done in a way that both men and women were equally presented that is 50% female 50% male members of the cooperative.

The investigation revealed that RSSP has contributed to gender equality among farmers. Through rehabilitating of the marshland, it has enabled more women and men to acquire well irrigated land and others who were formerly landless to acquire land to cultivate food and remain with surplus for the market. Yet land is power decision making power has been impacted on for women and men.

Due to trainings and study tours, RSSP has made cooperative members aware of the advantages of working in a cooperative, enlightened female and male members on participation and commitment; ensuring equal rights and equal participation, created awareness on the benefits of equal access and control over resources by women and men, equipped members with improved farm machines such as the rice threshers and winnowing machines. Such machines were said to have led to positive changes regarding division of labour since men started taking up tasks that were formerly female's tasks. Thus reducing on the time/hours and workload that women had to previously bear and it also created time for them to engage in other productive work. Through the project's role of ensuring that at least 30% of the management positions are reserved for women, women like men have gained bargaining/decision making power both in the cooperative and in the society. All the above have enhanced gender equality among rural female and male farmers impacting on them both at cooperative and household level.

However, much as RSSP has impacted on the cooperative regarding gender equality, certain factors such as cultural issues were highlighted to still deter gender equality. Cultural norms and beliefs that undermine a woman are still prevailing among some rural women and men. For some women to attend meetings, trainings or participate in any development processes they still have to seek permission from their husbands who may grant or deny them permission, others still recognise that 'men are superior than women', to others 'contend that 'when women lead they mislead' among others.

It is in this regard that such issues of cultural norms and misperceptions about women' in participation, access and control over resources, decision making and division of labour should be taken seriously by raising awareness on advantages of female and male participation for sustainable development as well as highlighting the dangers of such misconceptions on their development.

Key Words: Cooperatives, gender equality, cooperative members (female and male).

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction and Background of the Study

The success and sustainability of any development programme is determined by a range of factors, among them the participation and contribution of both the implementer and the beneficiaries. These should be partners who jointly plan and make decisions. It is in this regard that different development partners in their programmes and projects especially in developing world have increasingly acknowledged Gender inequality as a serious problem that deserve immediate attention. As one of the major strategies to address this problem, national and international organizations such as; the United Nations, World Bank, International Labor Organizations (ILO), the International Cooperative Alliance and the European Union advance cooperative enterprises as a means to achieve gender equality (Majurin, 2010).

ILO (2002) defines cooperatives as voluntary business associations formed by people of limited means through contribution of share capital that forms the basis of either sharing out profits that may accrue from business or the other use to which such profits may be put as determined by members. According to ILO's recommendation No. 193 (2002), "special consideration should be given to increasing women's participation in the cooperative movement at all levels, particularly at management and leadership levels" and that national policies should "promote gender equality in cooperatives and in their work".

Wanyama, et al., (2008) gives the advantages of Cooperatives as having the potential to; 1), identify economic opportunities for the poor, especially women, 2), empowering the disadvantaged women and men, 3), to defend their interests; and providing security to the poor by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks. It is due to risks such as low purchasing power, lack of productive assets and cultural barriers that many countries in Africa have taken initiatives to increase the participation, representation and equal benefit of rural women in income generating projects and programmes, principally through agricultural cooperatives (World Bank, 2009).

Scaling down the global gender equality discourses propagated by International organisations such as ILO, African governments including Rwanda, have increasingly adopted cooperatives as a strategy to achieve gender equality and studies such as this thesis are important.

1.2 Cooperatives in Rwanda

Like other countries in the region, cooperatives enterprises are not a new concept in Rwanda. Cooperatives in Rwanda can be traced since the enactment of the Co-operative Ordinance in 1949 that operated until the current law No. 31/1988 which was enacted on 12th October 1988 (RCA official website 2011). Yet Wanyama et al (2008), in their study on cooperatives in Africa; Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya among others contends that cooperatives in Africa can be traced since early 1990's. This is not the case for Rwanda because its traditional self-help groups/forms such as Ubudehe, Umubyizi and Umuganda have survived since 1949 to the present day. And these groups or forms conform to the principles of today's cooperatives. It is in this regard that in 2007 these were converted into legal cooperatives under the Rwandan cooperative law as provided in the Rwanda Cooperatives Agency's official gazette of the republic of Rwanda (2007). As highlighted in the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) gender should be a cross-cutting issue in every programme and project and through this gender equality has been and will continue to be promoted. This can also be seen in Rwanda's vision 2020 which also position cooperatives as a suitable strategy to enhance gender equality especially among rural

women farmers who constitute 86% of people who work in agriculture (Agriculture gender strategy, 2010). This has been operationalized through the Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP) which is one of the popular programmes funded by World Bank under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) to activate the usage of Agricultural cooperatives, ensuring equal participation between Farmers (men and women) so as to address gender inequalities among rural women and men. Such efforts to ensure that gender equality is achieved have been mediated by the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) with its mandate to ensure gender compliance in all projects and programmes, particularly in agricultural cooperatives to promote equal benefit of men and women for sustainable development.

1.3 Gender Equality in Rwanda

Gender equality in the developing world is increasingly being acknowledged and Rwanda has also adopted the phenomenon. In abide to implement gender equality, Rwanda like other countries is signatory to international and regional legal instruments that protect the rights of women including; CEDAW, the Beijing declaration and platform for Action among others. During the 23rd special session of the United National general assembly held in June 2000, Rwanda attended and she supported the commitments and decisions that were taken centered on promoting gender equality and empowerment of women (Republic of Rwanda, 2009).

Also Rwanda is committed to the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), of which goal 3 is on gender equality and women empowerment (Republic of Rwanda, 2007). It is also worth noting that principles of gender equality are enshrined in the Rwandan Constitution of 2003, which not only grants equality to marginalized groups of women and men but also empowers the state and other actors to provide resources to promote gender equality. Promotion of gender equality is also seen in the constitutional framework that provides for quotas (at least 30%) seats reserved for women in decision making structures at all levels.

Consequently, tremendous achievements line with the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women have been registered, though challenges still exist like elsewhere in the world and in the region in particular such as; limited participation, limited access and control over resources, cultural norms and values that emphasize male dominance (Republic of Rwanda, 2009). It is due to the above that the government of Rwanda in close collaboration with development partners established GMO to monitor and hold actors accountable for the compliance of gender in all their activities and programmes respectively. To execute the progress towards gender equality and facilitate the implementation of international and national programs such as; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the national gender policy, the provisions of the Rwanda constitution of 2003, the EDPRS and Rwanda Vision 2020 and the agriculture gender strategy among others to ensure the respect of gender principles (National Gender Policy, 2010). It is in this regard that GMO embarked on priotising sectors; the agriculture sector being priority number one because it employees the biggest percentage of women (86%). And the efforts to achieve the set target of achieving the MDGs by 2015 are hinged on the performance of the agriculture sector both from a social and economic perspective (Agriculture gender strategy, 2010). The strategy highlighted those issues of gender inequality where still rampant among rural women and men compared to other sectors in Rwanda mostly due to cultural norms and values (Ibid). Thus the intervention of development partners such as the Rural Sector Support Project in the agriculture sector targeting rural women and men was seen as a requisite to enhance gender equality.

1.4 Rural Sector Support Project

The Rural Sector Support Project was established in October 2001 to increase agricultural land use for production in marshland and hillside areas to cater for the vulnerable groups, especially rural women, the landless and the ethnic minorities or other displaced persons who may not be protected through Rwandan land compensation legislation (MoA, 2009). The project embarked on supporting of rural women and men involved in agricultural cooperatives on rehabilitated marshlands especially utilizing them for rice farming for both food and commercial purposes, particular attention was paid to addressing gender inequalities among rural women and men farmers. The project focused on addressing gender inequalities such as limited participation, limited access to and control over resources (such as land), low decision making/ bargaining power and unfair division of labour all which underpin the persistence of gender inequalities (National Gender Policy, 2010). RSSP's objective of revitalizing the rural economy and improving the quality of life of the rural poor has been realised through the transfer of technical and financial resources for sustainable rural development. The project in its phase 1 focused on building capacity for sustainable development ranging from intensification of marshlands and hillsides agriculture, gender equality and development trainings, resource management and cooperative organisation and management, awareness raising through study tours, sensitization on family planning among others.

1.5 Rice Farming in Rwanda

Productivity of rice farming in Rwanda is increasingly being given a high priority. The government is seeking to increase productivity from flood prone valley bottoms that are conducive for rice growing. It has been argued that rice is capable of giving very high yields, over 7MT Ha per growth cycle, which is far above the yield from any other crop that can be planted in marshlands (Jagwe et al, 2003). They also mention that the consumption of rice in Rwanda is on the rise due to increasing urbanization and increasing acceptance by the population. Hence an indication that there is potential for growth of the domestic market for rice especially with the advantageous attributes to rice as global modernization changes are setting in.

Consequently the government of Rwanda has a target to produce sufficient rice to meet national demand and then export by 2010 (Republic of Rwanda, 2010). In an effort to cater for the deficit because the country imports rice mainly from Tanzania, India, Pakistan, Vietnam and China (Loevinsohn et al, 1993).

It is in regard that the prospectuses for increasing rice production in Rwanda have attracted great attention from governments and donors. As a result the government of Rwanda secured funding from multilateral and bilateral agencies to finance various projects and cooperatives in the rice sub-sector to revitalize rice production to meet the high local demand in Rwanda, to position the crop as a food crop and as a major competitive export commodity in the region. Mainly through the establishment of Rural Sector Support Project under the ministry of agriculture funded by World Bank, that has embarked on the rehabilitation of marshlands, distribute to Farmers organized in cooperatives and provide them with financial, technical support for production of Rice, ensuring the participation of women and men farmers in farmers cooperatives hence enhancing gender equality among rural women and men farmers (MoA, 2009).

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Since the establishment of Rural Sector Support Project in 2001 aimed at, among others addressing gender inequalities through involvement of women in farming cooperatives so as to increase their participation, increase their access and control over resources, increase their decision making power and promote fair gender division of labour to enhance gender equality. It is now 10 years of implementation, but little has been known about its impacts on gender equality among farmers to determine if the intended objective has been attained or not.

The current study therefore aimed at assessing the impact of RSSP support to Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative on gender equality among female and male cooperative members/farmers. In assessing the impact of RSSP's support to the cooperative on female and male members, the following question and its sub-questions developed on four aspects were addressed; "To what extent has RSSP support contributed towards gender equality in Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative among female and male members/farmers?"

1.6.1 Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to assess the impact of RSSP support to Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative on gender equality among (female and male) farmers and make recommendations on areas of interventions for the cooperative to promote gender equality.

1.6.2 Main Research Question

"To what extent have RSSP contributed towards gender equality in Corinyaburiba Rice farming cooperative?"

1.0.1 Sub-Research Questions

1. What are the constraints and potentials for members of the rice farming cooperative in participation?
2. What are the constraints and potentials for members of the rice farming cooperative on control and access over resources?
3. What are the constraints and potentials for members of the rice farming cooperative on decision making?
4. What are the constraints and potentials for members of the rice farming cooperative on division of labour?

1.7 Justification of the Study

The outcome of this study will feed into RSSP 3 that is being proposed to start next year and Gender monitoring office will use it to gauge the level at which its interventions in monitoring gender compliance in the agriculture sector in particular RSSP project have contributed towards gender equality among farmers that they support and an action plan for identified recommendations will be made to address constraints/challenges identified. The findings will also be used for future implementation of other relevant projects.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept Cooperatives

In their study, Wanyama et al, (2008), argue that Cooperatives are enterprises that have the advantages of identifying economic opportunities for the poor; empowering the disadvantaged to defend their interests and providing security to the poor by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks. On the other hand ILO (2002) defines cooperatives as voluntary business associations formed by people of limited means through contribution of share capital that forms the basis of either sharing out profits that may accrue from business or the other use to which such profits may be put as determined by members.

Cooperatives involve effective collective organization for they have proven to have value for enhancing gender equality especially through empowerment of poor women who depend on agricultural rural livelihoods (Majurin, 2010). Participation in group organisation has clear benefits for poor women in terms of increased assets, income, and gains in control over decision making processes that affect their lives.

2.1.1 Historical Background and the Emergency of Cooperatives

Gender inequality in the developing world is increasingly being acknowledged. As one of the major strategies to address this problem, national and international organizations such as; the United Nation, World Bank, International Labour Organizations (ILO), the International Cooperative Alliance and the European Union advance cooperative enterprises as a means to achieve gender equality (Majurin, 2010).

ILO (2002) defines cooperatives as voluntary business associations formed by people of limited means through contribution of share capital that forms the basis of either sharing out profits that may accrue from business or the other use to which such profits may be put as determined by members. According to ILO's recommendation No. 193 (2002), "special consideration should be given to increasing women's participation in the cooperative movement at all levels, particularly at management and leadership levels" and that national policies should "promote gender equality in cooperatives and in their work".

Wanyama, et al., (2008) gives the advantages of Cooperatives as having the potential to; 1), identify economic opportunities for the poor especially women, 2), empowering the disadvantaged women and men, 3), to defend their interests; and providing security to the poor by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks. It is due to risks such as low purchasing power, lack of productive assets and cultural barriers that many countries in Africa have taken initiatives to increase the participation, representation and equal benefit of rural women in income generating projects and programmes, principally through cooperatives (World Bank, 2009).

Scaling down the global gender equality discourses propagated by International organisations such as ILO, World Bank, African governments including Rwanda, have increasingly adopted cooperatives as a strategy to achieve gender equality.

2.1.2 Cooperatives in Rwanda

Cooperatives in Rwanda can be traced since the enactment of the cooperative Ordinance in 1949 which was enacted in October 1988. This provided for establishment of traditional self-help groups/forms such as Ubudehe, Umubyizi and Umuganda which have survived to the present day (RCA official website, 2010). These groups or forms conform to the principles of today's cooperatives, but with these cooperatives equal participation and benefit among women and men has been emphasised. This is evident in the current law number 50/2007 of 18/09/2007 providing for the establishment, organisation and functioning of cooperative organisations in Rwanda (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a). Cooperatives may mean associations of natural or legal persons operating together in activities aiming at promoting their members in accordance with principles of mutual responsibility and self- help, democracy, equity and equal rights to assets between women and men (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a). The official gazette also provides for values that cooperatives are compatible such as; membership of cooperatives which should ensure voluntary and openness (value 1), democratic participation one member one vote (value 2), and participation of each member in the cooperative's economic growth (Value 3) among them. Cooperatives have been designed to respond to the needs of their members (women and men) such as being entitled to equal participation and share in the capital establishment to achieve gender equality among rural women and men (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a).

In Rwanda farming Cooperatives are also known to be formalised groups expected to cultivate collectively and are favoured by the government in granting parcels often at the expense of independent farmers (Runyinya, 1987: in Loevinsohn et al 1993; pg. 2).

In abide to achieve gender equality in cooperatives organisations the government of Rwanda in its Vision 2020, the National gender policy and the EDPRS have positioned agricultural/farming cooperatives as one of the suitable strategies to enhance gender equality especially among rural women who are the majority (Republic of Rwanda, 2007b). Emphasis on gender equality in farming cooperatives is justified by the fact that agriculture is the backbone of Rwanda's economy with 90% of the population involved in farming and 86% of them are women (National gender policy, 2010). Thus rural women dominate the agriculture sector at 86% (Agriculture gender strategy, 2010).

To activate the usage of farming cooperatives the Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP) which is one of the popular programmes funded by World Bank through the Ministry of agriculture was established. Thus specific importance was/is accorded to female and male participation and equal benefit in the cooperatives implemented by Rural Sector Support Project (World Bank, 2008).

Basing on the above definitions and ideas cooperatives have the potential of empowering the disadvantaged and people with limited means. People with limited means and disadvantaged; for this study will mean men and women who experience limited participation, limited access and control over resources, low decision making power, unfair division of labour among others of which women are the most affected and these deter gender equality and the reverse may contribute to gender equality (Majurin, 2010).

2.2 The concept Gender Equality

Gender equality can be defined as a process through which women and men have the same opportunities in life, including the ability to participate in public sphere (Reeves and Baden, 2000). Gender equality can also be a condition that 'all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behavior, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally (Oedl-Wieser, 2010). She further suggests that gender equality between women and men can be attained by lowering the barriers to the equal participation of women and men in all areas of society, revaluating and improving the social recognition of "typically female" assets (difference aspect of equality) and eliminating binary approaches embedded in categories of "typically female" and "typically male"(diversity aspect of equality).

It is argued that gender equality is a prerequisite to addressing gender imbalances and poverty-alleviation at the grassroots (Porter & Sweetman, 2005). They further argue that gender equality does not only benefit women but their families as well for gender equality as a means of poverty alleviation focuses on the idea that there is a direct correlation between girls' education and female empowerment.

Although different scholars define gender equality differently as seen above, this study partly adopts Oedl-Wieser (2010)'s argument that suggests that gender equality between women and men can be attained by lowering the barriers to the equal participation of women and men in all areas of society. But then this study will not only focus on the aspect of female and male participation but also access and control over resources, decision making and division of labour among female and male members of the cooperative will be considered to assess gender equality.

Therefore, the researcher decided that these four aspects are crucial for literature review and they will be focused on.

2.2.1 Female and Male Participation in the Cooperative

In order to achieve sustainable gender equality it requires the participation of both women and men at all levels and in all spheres of life especially in cooperatives. Participation of women especially in groups is often seen as an important channel for attacking root causes of rural women's issues such as gender inequalities like; lack of entitlement to key economic resources drudgery and weak bargaining power within the household, domestic violence, and sexual oppression (World Bank, 2009).

Despite the importance of women's participation in cooperatives and women's groups, women's participation in cooperatives is limited due to persisting gender inequalities that are numerous and complex ranging from basic structural and socio-cultural issues (Majurin, 2010). She further argues that beyond the control of the cooperatives, movements such as inequalities in access to resources, limited education and training, unequal division of labour and use of time between women and men as well as stereotyped conceptions on the roles of women and men, legal constraints halting from cooperative laws/rules and regulations as it is more frequently the case related to legislation (property, land and inheritance rights) or cooperative by-laws. All consequently underpin the persistence of gender inequalities among farmers especially female farmers mostly affected.

It is in this regard that a focus on the levels of participation in the field discussing whether such persisting gender inequalities that inhibit women's participation in cooperatives still

exist or not is presented as seen in four levels of participation by Pretty (1994) in Leeuwis, 2004:250, where four levels of participation are distinguished as below:

- i) Receiving information: participants are informed about what a project will do after it has been decided by others,
- ii) Passive information giving; participants/beneficiaries respond to questions and issues that interventionists deem relevant for making decisions about projects.
- iii) Consultation; participants are partners in the project and jointly decide about issues with project staff,
- iv) Self-mobilisation: participants initiate, work and decide on projects independently, with interventionists in a supportive role only.

For this study, the researcher focused on the third level of participation which is consultation; where participants are partners in the project and jointly decide about issues with project staff, Self-mobilisation: participants initiate, work and decide on projects independently, with interventionists in a supportive role only. This is because the project under study highlights that a participatory approach is to be implemented in all processes and activities.

Thus a search for to whether both women and men are consulted for any process to be carried out or they just impose on them. The study also explored whether female and male members in the cooperative initiate work and decide on projects to be carried out by the cooperative. With particular attention paid to women. This means a consideration on whether women actively participate in RSSP supported activities or not.

2.2.2 Access to and Control over Resources.

When considering the way in which resources are allocated between women and men there is a gender bias in terms of ownership of resources such as land, houses, water and access to extension services, (Momsen, 2010). (Due to the gendered allocation of resources); it is important to look at the difference between access to resources and control over them (March, et al., 1999). They also define access as the opportunity to make use of a resource, and control; as the power to decide how a resource is used and who has access to it.

In Rwanda, culturally land is controlled by men, and men crops (cash crops) are allocated more land. Women have to struggle to meet family food and income needs from their little food crops that they harvest (Agriculture gender strategy, 2010).

Yet the case is that once women like men have access and control over important resources like land and other valuable assets, it would be an opportunity to contribute additional income to their family gain. This would create an opportunity to participate in decision making over different matters at different levels, since it increases their bargaining power. So once equal access and control over important resources is facilitated by the project at cooperative level among women and men members, it can contribute to gender equality even at household level (World Bank 2008). Therefore once the project support to the cooperative focuses on equal access and control over resources among women and men gender equality can be enhanced. And the reverse is true that limited access and control over resources can endorse gender inequality.

2.2.3 Decision Making in Cooperatives

Decision making is an outcome of all the above variables that is if there is full participation by both men and women, decisions will be taken by both, access and control over resources will be uniform as well. It has also been argued that women's participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account (Republic of Rwanda, 2009). The action further suggests that without active participation of women and incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision making the goal equality and development cannot be achieved. Therefore a look to whether decisions are taken by women and men, who makes decisions on what; to produce, where to produce it, how to do it and where and who to sell the produce, decisions on how to share the profits earned; who takes what share and if a cooperative has a savings account who is signatory to the cheque and who keeps the cheque book will be analysed. It has been Indicated that not only do women's earnings increase their decision making power in their business but they are also more likely to discuss family matters and share decision making with their husbands, make joint decisions concerning allocation of household money but also get involved in decisions regarding their children's education, use of contraception and participation in community and social events (Elavia, (1994); in Rosintan, and Cloud., (1999).

So the researcher looked to who (among female and male farmers) influences the decisions in the cooperative. Whether it has had an impact on their households where members live. This enabled gaining an understanding on whether (female and male) members make decisions and whether they are playing an active role in leadership positions of the cooperative. To check whether RSSP's support to the cooperative has contributed to gender equality among female and male farmers or continued to enforce gender inequalities.

2.2.4 Division of Labour among Women and Men

In most cooperatives and projects the way labour is divided among members originates from members social/family background. Gender division of labour may mean the socially determined ideas and practices which define what roles and activities are deemed appropriate for women and men (Reeves and Baden 2000). She further argues that the typically designated roles of female are almost invariably less valued than those designated as male. This study presents an assessment of whether the trend is manifested in cooperatives that is to say; whether women and men continue with the socially constructed roles even outside the household. This was checked in roles like leadership/chairpersonship, who does what in the cooperative and in other resources of the cooperative like who does what during the cultivation of rice in the fields. For the case is that women are often involved in very tiresome roles, work that has no technology or put in-charge of less valuable resources like food crops and small animals while men are responsible for activities that use some kind of technology, cash crops and larger livestock, (World Bank, 2009).

Also the trend in cooperatives is often that men are in-charge of marketing produce while women are in-charge of processing (winnowing, washing, packing and others which enforces gender inequalities (World Bank, 2009).

That is why this study seeks to discuss the situation in cooperatives given RSSP's support on division of labour. For the argument is that unfair gender division of labour is one of the main causes of women's oppression, especially in current society for it may create or aggravate burdens for women (Ellis, 2000).

2.3 Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP)

The Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP) was established in 2001 aimed at increasing agricultural production in marshland and hillside areas to cater for the vulnerable groups especially women, people below the poverty line, the landless, the elderly, children, indigenous groups and the ethnic minorities or other displaced persons who may not be protected through Rwandan land compensation legislation, and particular attention was paid to addressing gender inequalities among farmers (MoA, 2009). RSSP in its component 1 Marshland rehabilitation and development was embarked on to increase especially the production rice has been given high priority by the Government of Rwanda, especially in the valley bottom marshlands, where it presents a unique opportunity (potential yield over 7 tonnes/Ha) for each of two crops per year (RSSP Official website, 2010). After the marshland extension works rehabilitated marshland for rice production were distributed to female and male farmers who were organized in cooperatives since 2003, (RSSP official website, 2010). This was done to ensure that women and men venture into rice farming which was previously dominated by men so as to address issues of limited participation, limited access and control over income, limited decision making power, unfair division of labour all of which underpin the persistence of gender inequalities as provided for by the policy (National gender policy, 2010).

2.3.1 RSSP`s Support to Cooperatives

Cooperatives selected by RSSP receive an adequate level of appropriate type of support such as rehabilitation of marshlands, capacity building for farmers' in the cooperative aimed at revitalizing the rural economy and improving the quality of life of rural poor through the transfer of technical and financial resources for sustainable rural development (Imanyara, K. and Rubaduka E. 2007). In all its operations emphasis is put on equal benefit of men and women members at all levels of the cooperative to enhance equal participation, equal access and control over resources, equal decision making power, fair division of labour, among female and male members among others hence contribute to gender equality (World Bank, 2008).

As indicated in the RSSP component 2, the importance of strengthening farmers organisations and cooperatives through trainings and advisory services providing both financial and technical resources are highlighted. These services range from technological, infrastructure, support services and institutional capacity that facilitate faster growth in rural areas (Republic of Rwanda, 2008).

2.3.2 Cooperative Participation

In ensuring that rational organisational structures and functions are well stipulated RSSP through its training and advisory services designed to improve general functioning of the cooperative through technical assistance and material support

RSSP also facilitates the registration; action planning of the cooperative and formulates a participatory process that builds capacity within the cooperative for better planning and easy implementation of their activities. With its participatory approach it ensures engagement with the entire membership of each cooperative member and strengthens member commitment for both women and men to increase effective participation (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). This culminated from RSSP1's approach of ensuring active participation of women in project-

financed activities which has been maintained in other proceeding phases of the project (RSSP impact assessment, 2008). As visualised in the membership of most farmer organisations and cooperatives in Rwanda which entails approximately equal representation of men and women, by targeting farmers cooperatives which is RSSP`s primary beneficiary group then the project automatically reached large numbers of women and men.(for example approximately 40% of lead farmers supported by RSSP are women (Ibid). it also indicates that the fact that women are still underrepresented in the management structures of farmers organisations and cooperatives cannot be underestimated.

2.3.3 Access and Control over Resources,

All cooperative members are equipped to ensure equal access to trainings, technical assistance and advisory services for smooth running of their activities in this case crop intensification (rice), improved farming methods to achieve higher rice yields, this is achieved by the permanent agronomist paid by RSSP for each respective cooperative and with the help of RSSP service providers with different expertise that are hired to perform different tasks on its behalf such as; trainings in the cooperative law, training in crop intensification, pests integrated management, gender equality trainings, family planning, business management and resources management to avoid conflict of interest between members especially in times of sharing and setting of prices for their produce (Imanyara, K. and Rubaduka E. 2007). Important to mention is that in all these trainings and services offered RSSP ensures that there is equal access between female and male members of the cooperative. This is seen through the application of the government policy of 30% positions reserved for women in every activity carried out. It is in this regard that, cooperative leaders who do not ensure that 30% or even more women are nominated for trainings may end up losing the opportunity of the training or else they ask the cooperatives leaders to revise the lists to include women and men (RSSP gender and community officer noted)

2.3.4 Decision Making

RSSP plays a role in organisational structuring by ensuring one person one vote principle of cooperatives` democracy and 30% decision making positions/seats reserved for women. In addition the criterion for a leader is that he/she should represent interests of the cooperative members. If business decisions of a cooperative are excessively influenced by an individual leader or a small group of leaders, the notion that the elected leadership should represent the interests of all cooperative members could be undermined (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). As if that is not enough Rwanda`s cooperative law provides for the general assembly(all members of the cooperative female and male) to be the core decision making body an idea that RSSP also adheres and encourages cooperatives it supports to follow. Also RSSP in collaboration with Rwanda Cooperatives Agency acts as an observer and overseer of the management of the cooperative to avoid any discrimination and exploitation of members of any sort so that women and men freely enjoy the benefits of the cooperative (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). However RSSP has taken measures to ensure gender balance structures.

2.3.5 Division of Labour

According to the project documents/literature reviewed RSSP`s support as far as division of labour is concerned is that the project in collaboration with the mechanisation programme under the ministry of agriculture embarked on mobilising cooperative members and farmers in general to secure advanced agricultural technologies such as the rice winnowing and threshing machines among others to facilitate their activities. For it has been found out that once the advance of these technologies men got attracted to use them even on roles traditionally known as women`s roles such as winnowing and threshing (RSSP impact Assessment, 2008).

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Site Profile

Bugesera is one of the seven districts constituting the Eastern province of Rwanda. It is situated to the southwest of the province, between 3005 of longitude and 2009 of latitude south and covers a surface of 1337 km². The district's total population is estimated at 270,000 (NISR, 2006). The average population density of the district is 205 persons/km². Calculations based on census 2006, disaggregated by sex show that 142,134 are female and 131,979 are male (JICA, 2007).

Its relief is constituted of a succession of low plateaus with old mountains, hills and dry valleys and by swampy places. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy with more than 90% of the population of the district living on agricultural activities. Agriculture in Bugesera is mostly for subsistence. On average only 18% of the households in the district produce for the market (JICA 2007).

The main traditional crops cultivated in the district are maize, beans, sorghum, sweet potatoes, cassava, bananas and peanut. Besides the traditional crops, other crops cultivated are; Rice, irish potato, taro, green peas, and vegetables (e.g cabbage, tomato, eggplants), and pineapple (Bugesera district official website, 2010).

The population of Bugesera largely suffers from the poor accessibility to land and approximately 30% of the households are landless. Another 40% owning less than half-hectare experience severe prolonged drought seasons that hinder agricultural productivity (Minagri, 2007). Besides the above it was one of the worst hit districts during genocide because most of its population were Tutsis with approximately 60,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus killed in Bugesera and the majority of the trees were cut down in a bid to destroy the economy. This has negatively impacted income generation of the people thus both men and women are vulnerable to poverty; particularly women, female-headed households and genocide survivors (Bugesera district official website, 2010).

Corinyaburiba cooperative was selected because it is one of the first cooperatives that were supported by RSSP and it is in the district that holds the biggest percentage of landless, poor women and men and female headed households in Ruhuha sector.

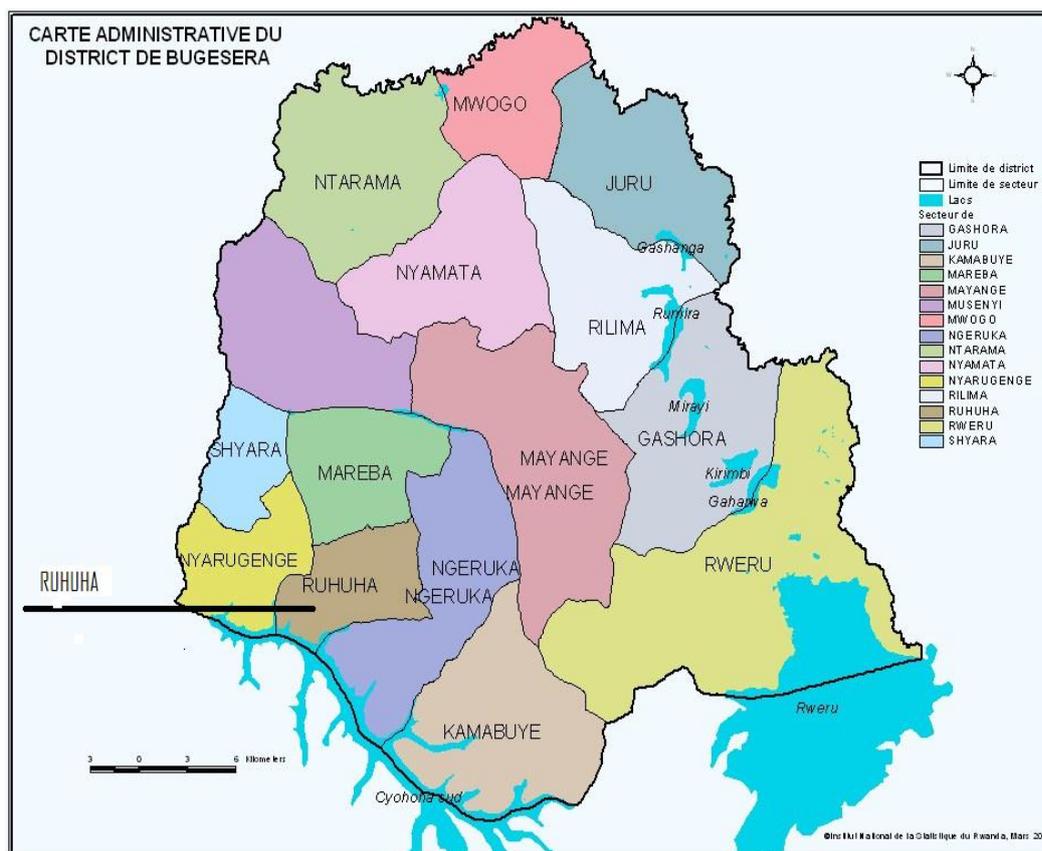


Figure 1: Map of Bugesera District

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Because it required an in depth, intensive approach that sought a subjective understanding of social reality rather than statistical descriptions or generalizable predictions.

Literature was reviewed from scientific books, journal articles, project documents and through internet searching. The researcher reviewed literature for three reasons; in order to justify the necessity of her proposed study (lack of knowledge on the impact of RSSP's support to cooperatives on gender equality among female and male farmers) which was justified hence the study, it was also adopted to gain an insight on the findings from various literature sources on similar projects which have taken place in the region and in other countries and to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

The strategy undertaken for this study was a case study. The strategy was chosen for its potential for providing in-depth information on the impacts of RSSP project to the cooperative on gender equality as addressed in four aspects. The method constituted a checklist.

Primary data was collected from four sources. (8) individual interviews out of which (4) were women and (4) men, (3) Focus group discussions one for women, another for men and a mixed group for female and male cooperative members. From (3) key informants comprised of (2) RSSP field officers (female and male) and (1) local leader in charge of social affairs (male) and from direct and participant observations. The selection aimed at acquiring opinions of both project beneficiaries and project implementers on the impact of RSSP

support to cooperatives on gender equality among female and male farmers in Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative.

After the researcher had introduced herself to RSSP, she received a positive response and she was given a telephone number of the president of the cooperative to arrange interviews. Given the already existing good working relationship between Corinyaburiba cooperative and RSSP; the researcher was facilitated to get the set sample of respondents. However, when it came to literature review of project documents, access to some documents was denied because they were for official use only. Nonetheless, the researcher established relationships with M&E staff and useful documents were accessed.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Data Sources and Collection Methods

Data was collected from field visits to the cooperative rice field where interviews were held. Both direct and participant observations were done during interviews and focus group observing whether members were happy or sad to share the impact of the project and their encounters in the cooperative and to observe who dominated the discussion. On the rice fields observations were to see who was doing what, what type of farm equipments women and men used were made also developed on (4) four aspects namely; participation, access and control over resources, decision making and division of labour respectively.

3.3.2 Sampling Techniques

Sampling in this study was based on membership of the cooperative under study. To avoid the researcher's bias in the study, members of the cooperative female and male of Corinyaburiba were purposely selected.

During purposive sampling, emphasis was put on female and male in the management of the cooperative, female and male members who have been members of Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative for a long time (since inception) were accessed for interviewing. The snow ball method was also used, the researcher asked an interviewee to refer her to other members with the help of the president of the cooperative.

3.3.3 Individual Interviews

In depth interviews with (8) cooperative members women and men were conducted. A checklist was used to stimulate the discussions on the potentials and constraints for participation of women and men in the cooperative, potentials and constraints for access and control over cooperative and household resources on female and male members, potentials and constraints for decision making and the potentials and constraints for division of labour in the cooperative.

Because in depth interviews are more detailed and require more time and concentration, respondents were interviewed according to their convenience. 4 respondents were found in their plots of rice fields, 1 respondent at the trading center, 1 at Corinyaburiba cooperative office and 2 others at their homes given appropriate time of their choice.

3.3.4 Focus Group Discussion

Also focus group discussions were held. For this study (3) focus group discussions were held. One comprised of only females, another of only males and the third group for both female and male members of the cooperative in groups of (6) each. The criterion for selecting members was based on their duration of membership not less than five (5) years of active participation. The reason why two focus group discussions female and male were held separately was to enable women and men talk freely to provide concrete and valid information on the topic under study. The focus group where women and men were mixed enabled the researcher to check the level of interaction between women and men. A topic-list was used to stimulate the group to talk about her topic in a narrative manner.

3.3.5 Key Informants

RSSP project officers were selected as key informants. Since they played a crucial role in the implementation of the project's support to Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative, they were purposively selected to gain more knowledge on the impacts of RSSP cooperatives on gender equality among farmers. The key informants included; one (1) RSSP gender, community development and cooperatives officer, (1) RSSP agronomist in-charge of Corinyaburiba rice farming and (1) local leader officer in charge of social affairs. This was done to gain a broad understanding of RSSP's support to the cooperative and its impact on gender equality with the guide of a topic list.

3.3.6 Direct and Participant Observation

Direct and participant observations were made to compliment the views from interviews and focus group discussions with a help of a checklist.

During interviews, the status of happiness derived from the cooperative in regard to the four aspects were observed, looking keenly at what mood was attached whether sadness/grief, normal, happy/joyful and the willingness to share outcomes of the project support in the cooperative on women and men whether they were comfortable to share, neutral or uncomfortable.

While conducting focus group discussions, observations were made on; who among women and men answered more questions, which sex dominates the discussions and whether women and men were willing to share their experiences while mixed.

In attending one cooperative meeting and the farmer field school the researcher observed, the level of participation noting who among women and men frequently asked questions, the sitting arrangement: who sat in front, in the corner or behind, who were dominating the meeting and the training, who chaired the meeting and whose decisions were considered.

Observations on the rice fields while they were working on their plots, the researcher considered which roles women and men did, whether they were doing the same work or different according to sex and how women and men interacted, whether friendly or not.

Finally cooperative office, the office was visited a number of times and issues relating to who manages the office, how many men and women sat in the office, who was in-charge of finances were observed supported by informal conversations to clarify what was observed for accuracy.

All relevant observations were recorded in a note book. During interviews and focus group discussions observation notes were recorded by a helper hired by the researcher to take

observation notes with the help of a checklist and after each session cross checking of observation notes recorded by the helper was done by the researcher when her mind was still fresh to ensure that all use full information was recorded.

3.3.7 Revisiting to Validate Findings

With transcribed notes, the researcher revisited the respondents /research participants for validation and approval of her notes so as to ensure the accuracy of data collected through unstructured interviews. And then a validation meeting with gender monitoring experts in charge of ensuring gender compliance of all sectors with priority given to the Agriculture sector was held to liaise or check whether their objective has been achieved or not and together recommendations were made in line with findings obtained.

3.4 Presentation of Data and Analysis

Data collected from the field was summarised and edited while preserving the original details and meaning as accurately as possible. Data were summarised and presented in tables, while others in descriptive words. Similar responses and differences were noted.

The four levels discussed by pretty (2004) were adopted to analyse the participation aspect, the Harvard tool by Moser, the access and control profile was used for access and control aspect, and the activity profile was used for division of labour aspect. The results were compared with review of literature and new research findings were discussed.

It should also be noted that for responses from men and those from women were separated as this can be seen in the quotations disaggregated by sex (female or male responses).

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction and Background Information of Respondents

To achieve the views on the four aspects of which gender equality was gauged namely participation, access and control over resources, decision making and division of labour were considered. So this chapter is organised on these four aspects highlighting their potentials and constraints on women and men in the cooperative.

4.2 Cooperative Membership and RSSP Support

Most of the respondents revealed that the rural sector support rehabilitated the marshland and distributed small plots equivalent to 5 ARE (25 square metres) to inhabitants who previously had some activities being held at the marshland in associations. The associations later changed into cooperatives so as to be supported by RSSP funded and spearheaded by the World Bank under the Ministry of Agriculture.

After distributing to inhabitants, the remaining plots were also distributed with priority given to women without land to cultivate on (the landless). This strategy was opted by RSSP to facilitate women to benefit as well because most members were found to be men. Then RSSP proceeded with its rationale of supporting the cooperative ranging from legal establishment, to forming a clear structure, and to equip the cooperative members with the skills and capacity to manage it. Emphasis was put on ensuring active membership and development of all members of the cooperative (female and Male). In order to ensure commitment, every member had to pay a membership fee of 40,000 Rwandese francs (shares) to the cooperative in instalments after harvesting and selling of rice to facilitate every member to be able to pay easily.

The total number of Corinyaburiba cooperative members are 491. 223 women and 268 men.

With the membership of the cooperative, a member has right over all resources (assets like houses, water, land and profits/money). All the resources/assets that the cooperative owns were purchased with the shares that members pay as membership fee. Most of the respondents noted that if you are a member, you are entitled to apply for a loan to any micro-credit finance institution even without collateral. Because cooperative assets act as collateral for the member interested. Other benefits of being a member mostly mentioned were access to trainings such as improved farming methods, crop intensification for improved and high yields, study tours, gender trainings, family planning services among others offered by RSSP and other service providers.

Female and male members boasted of social cohesion and networking. A female member noted that *“from a life of isolation to working together and being with people/cooperative members”*. 70% of women interviewed during focus group discussions and in the individual interviews mentioned that they are proud of the fact that they have food (rice) and that they even exchange it for other goods that they do not produce. It was also stated with joy that *“now we have food to feed our children/family members”* (women focus group discussion indicated). They claimed that having food makes their lives easy and that they have no doubt that this has promoted gender equality. Because women are mostly in-charge of food for the household. A female and a male member indicated that *“women now do not have to struggle to get food because they cultivate and yield a lot for consumption and surplus for the market”*.

4.2 Gender Equality

4.2.1 Participation

4.2.1.1 Participation of Women and Men in the Cooperative

Participation in Corinyaburiba was reported to be open to all members and that no different criterion set for women and men's participation. Instead every member is free to participate *"all women and men are equal"*, president of the cooperative stated".

80% of the respondents also mentioned that, for every activity to be performed female and male participants are partners in the project and jointly decide about issues in the cooperative and that nobody forces anybody to participate.

Despite the activeness and freedom of participation among female and male members, it was indicated that older women are still not very confident due to cultural beliefs and perceptions that men are 'superior' and women are 'inferior'. So older women keep quiet and let men do the bigger part. This was also observed in the cooperative meeting, Indeed younger women and men of different age range participated equally but older women were seated attentively listening to what others were suggesting.

Table 1: Participation of Women and Men in the Cooperative

Cooperative	Women and men	Remarks and Observations
Participation	<p>Both women and men members of the cooperative are consulted before any activity is done. Both cooperative members women and men are participants and partners in the project, they jointly decide about issues with the project staff.</p> <p>Although women and men participate equally, bring issues during meetings and discussions concerning the cooperative processes, women's Participation in meetings/discussions and trainings was reported to be limited due to cultural issues associated with some women having to seek permission to attend meetings and trainings, other held by reproductive roles and older women who decide to keep quiet and let men talk do the bigger part.</p>	<p>There are no specific considerations on the needs of women and men. Women suffer from vaginal infections as a result of cultivating in mud without specific protecting clothing)</p> <p>Tendencies of disrespect for female members for example 'when a woman leads she misleads', this creates a negative attitude.</p>
Attitude between female and male members	The cooperative and the project are women friendly. Women are portrayed in a positive image	Cultural issues of male superiority and female inferiority are still prevailing to a small extent

Despite the factors that limit women’s participation mentioned in the table above, it was highlighted that with the support of the project women and men have now come up to participate equally in the cooperative meetings and trainings. From the mixed focus group discussion (3 female and three male) highlighted that *“things have to a big extent changed, there is no woman and there is no man. All are the same and all are free. There are no longer men that can stop their wives from participating in developmental projects like in this cooperative...”* However, RSSP full time agronomist of the cooperative and the female group leader highlighted that ‘there are women who still have to seek permission from their husbands in order to participate in meetings and trainings, yet men just inform their wives when they are leaving or when they have already left’. Such procedures of seeking for permission from their husbands to attend meetings and trainings make some women to become reluctant and end up not attending meetings and trainings, especially when they are held far from their homes. This was attributed to the fact that women are held by reproductive roles such as the triple roles looking after children, cooking and other household chores which men do not want to be engaged in.

Regarding time and distance of the meetings and trainings, respondents reported time and distance to when and where meetings are held were convenient. However almost all key informants seemed to perceive time and distance to places of meetings and trainings as not convenient for women. All key informants further argued that trainings and meetings are held far from the residences of the cooperative members hence not favourable for women. This was also obtained during the researcher’s informal discussions held during the farmer field school. She asked why women were very few and they indicated that it is because of the distance being far yet women do not ride bicycles and the majority of the women in the cooperative are mothers (birth giving age range and are married). Yet they have to carry their children along with them. On seeking clarity on the issue from RSSP trainer/agronomy she noted that when *“we call for trainees most of the members that turn up are men because the majority are group leaders who are charged with selecting members for the training and besides they do not have to go through procedures of seeking permission from their wives like women do”*. A female trainee also noted that the problem is not distance neither is it lack of means of transport to the training, as she revealed that every trainee is given transport allowance to facilitate him/her to attend the training. But she said that *“the problem is once male members learn that there is some allowance they strive to attend at the expense of their female counterparts”*.

Table 2: Female and Male Members of Corinyaburiba Rice Farming Cooperative Participated in RSSP Trainings

Type of Training	No. of women	No. of Men	Total Number
Membership	240	281	521
Agriculture intensification	14	16	30
Cooperative organisation and book keeping	14	14	28
Total lead farmers	14	16	30
Gender equality training	10	10	20
Marshland infrastructure Maintenance	16	10	26
Study tour	10	16	26
Farmer field school/farmers participation	198	225	423

Source: MINAGRI/RSSP 2 Training Information Monitoring and Evaluation Department

Table 4 reveals that more men received training than women. Men are dominating in technical trainings and those that have allowances for example in the farmer field school, transport allowance is given to participants/trainees hence men try their level best to be part of it. This was also reasonably true during informal interviews carried out during observations where the same was argued.

4.2.1.2 RSSP Support in Participation

All female and male members of the cooperative were happy to mention RSSP's support in regard to participation. They mentioned that before the support of the project they involved in rice farming but it was characterised with poor yields hence the project supported in rehabilitation of the marshland. RSSP sensitised them about the advantages of participating in the cooperative activities through conducting trainings and encouraged them to strengthen their cooperative and facilitated them to be legally registered. The project also supported the cooperative to put in place structures, management of cooperative and sensitised them about the law that govern the cooperative, raising awareness among female and male cooperative members, about their responsibilities and commitment of a cooperative member for the realisation of cooperative benefits.

70% of the respondents and all key informants noted that participation in the cooperative is generally equally balanced between female and male members due to RSSP's support of examining lists submitted for training from cooperative leaders. Also with happiness most women highlighted that *'once a list is submitted to RSSP for training it has to be reviewed to ensure that women and men are included'*. Indeed the RSSP officer in-charge of community development and cooperatives emphasised that *"we examine the lists and if lists are found to have few women as the case has often been, they are returned to the cooperative management to be revised to have at least 40% women included on the list"*, (male). He further highlighted that this tactic has enabled women to participate and to be considered on trainings lists.

In coherence with the RSSP field officer's response, respondents revealed that to enhance equal participation among female and male cooperative members RSSP's target is that 60% of trainees must be women for every training conducted to address issues of male dominance in trainings and enhance equality.

Even though three women and three men respondents from individual interviews mentioned that *"everybody, women and men, are now alert there is nobody lagging behind even women are proving to the masses that they are capable"*. All key informants/RSSP field officers and social affairs local leader highlighted that participation and involvement of women is still slow to the extent that they always get 30% or 40% unlike men who are ever ready to take up available opportunities (RSSP community development, cooperative and gender officer noted in a disappointed tone of voice (male).

4.2.2 Access and Control over Resources

4.2.2.1 Access and Control over Resources in the Cooperative

Cooperative resources considered under this section are houses, land, water, trainings and profits from the cooperative (from sale of rice) respectively.

Regarding access and control over cooperative resources among women and men respondents noted that all cooperative resources are collectively owned. As per the Rwanda cooperative law, female and male members should have a right over the cooperative resources. Profits/money accrued from the cooperative shares are equally shared among female and male members. Due to the fact that they all paid equal shares.

Regarding the assets of the cooperative, the cooperative owns a house, 2 big pieces of land, water for irrigation and the shares from members. The house is rented and all members have access and control over it. During the general assembly, both female and male members decide on rent fees depending on the general rates in the area where the house is located. If a tenant proves not to pay they all come together and decide to terminate his/her tenancy. This must be agreed upon by the general assembly.

Although women have access over water and are entitled to have control over it as members of the cooperative, the findings revealed that women hardly have control over it. Because irrigation is done in the night yet women fear to walk in the night, some with their children on their back in addition to fear of being raped and unnecessary fights that characterise the activity. Hence they do not have control apart from when they hire men to irrigate their plots.

Land ownership in the cooperative: Female and male members have small irrigated plots in the marshland equivalent to 5 ARE (25 square metres) registered in their names. But the land belongs to the government and the registered member leases it from the district and fees are paid yearly.

The trend is that after harvesting, rice is divided into two portions. One portion goes to the household as food for the family and the other portion is taken to the cooperative store where everybody takes the rice and they tender for the best buyer. The researcher asked who takes rice for sale at the cooperative store and 70% respondents mentioned that it is always the men, since they have bicycles to transport it to the cooperative office. And also 30% respondents highlighted that some women members who do not have husbands or grown up male sons or relatives, they hire men who have bicycles to transport their rice to the cooperative store.

So after delivery a marketing committee solicits for the best tender and after sell of the rice each member is paid an equivalent of his/her kilo's delivered to the cooperative and money is deposited on his/her account. The researcher informed that every member has an account, on that account the person registered in the cooperative has to register his partner who is also signatory. If he/she is single his/her child becomes a second beneficiary. So withdraw of money has to be agreed upon by both partners/beneficiaries to ensure equal benefit.

It was however noted that regardless of whether profits were reported to be equally shared in the cooperative, the case was slightly different when the researcher probed whether the same trend was prevailing in their households. The results revealed that there were few cases of limited control over profits from the cooperative at household level among female members. The gender committee chairlady highlighted that there are women who, after getting their share, have to give it to their husbands to manage/control it on demand from their husbands. Or men who after getting their share from the cooperative misuse on money for the purchase of alcohol. She however noted that with the gender committee so far (5) five cases were reported to have occurred and these were rectified. And she concluded that

“due to that things are now moving on very well”. Also the president of the cooperative in his interview emphasised that in cases where a man was registered in the cooperative and they happen to find out that he was misusing the household income from the cooperative, they warn him and if he did not change the committee had a right to replace him with his wife.

However the researcher found difficult in some contradicting information that was provided, yet all information provided was taken to be true. All cooperative members mentioned equal access and control over resources among women and men at cooperative level and at household level, but key informants noted that at household level men still dominate control and that all valuable assets gained as a result of the cooperative like houses, land and other equipment’s are registered in men’s names. While women own stuffs like plates, hoes, and other small household equipment’s.

The agronomist who has worked with them for the last (4) years noted ‘that after selling rice there are men who still just buy only one ‘Kitenge’, a traditional women wear, just to cover or stop her from reporting to the committee and the husband uses money for other stuffs, not household needs’. But it was said that given the Rwanda customary law, irrespective of whether an asset is in the name of a husband or wife, in case of divorce sharing is done equally as stated by the officer in charge of social affairs. The table below illustrates who among women and men has access and control over what resource.

Table 3: Access and Control over Cooperative Resources among Cooperative Members

Cooperative Resources and profits	Women	Men	Remarks
Land	A/C	A/C	Equal all pay taxes/tenancy fees
Water	A	A/C	Women hardly have control over water for irrigation in the rice fields
Cooperative houses	A/C	A/C	Equal access and control(interested use as collateral, and share equally rent fees collected)
Profits/sales from harvest	A/C	A/C	At cooperative level it is equal access and control

Source: adapted from the Harvard tool by Caroline Moser (March et al, 2008).

A/C: access and control

A: only access

Table 3 reveals that there is generally equal access and control over cooperative resources by both female and male members, but limited control over water for women. Yet water is an important resource. Given the type of crop(rice) cultivated this may result into low yields or little benefit from the cooperative since women have to hire male labour on the little that they earn from the cooperative unlike their men.

Table 4: Access and Control over Household Resources

Resources and benefits	Women	Men
Profits from the cooperative	A/c	A/C
% of Rice for household consumption	A/C	A/c
% of Rice for sale	A/c	A/C
House as a result of sales of rice from the cooperative	A	A/C
Utensils	A/C	A

Adapted from the Harvard tool by Caroline Moser (March et al, 2008).

C: big control
c: limited control
A: Access

All in all women and men highlighted enormous impacts ranging from food (rice) and profits accrued from the sale of surplus rice, equal treatment among female and male members, improved standards of living and their status in society, constructed houses in the estate, with cement, iron roof, bought bicycles, sending children to school (both girls and boys), able to pay medical insurance and many more. Also 80% of the women and men interviewed shared their testimony with joy that ‘they have access to credit facilities and that this has positively impacted on their lives. Because interested members are free to present their business plans in which they were trained at and they easily get money and start another business which promotes diversification of income generation activities. Besides, the respondents testified that they were better off given the fact that they harvest twice a year unlike others who are not in rice farming cooperative on marshlands.

4.2.2.2 RSSP Support in Access and Control over Resources

RSSP conducts trainings on resource management and gender equality, business plan development and equips all female and male members with the confidence and skill to seek accountability from leaders on all resources owned by the cooperative. It has also empowered women with the confidence and made them aware of their role in resource management “*an issue that has made men to acknowledge that indeed women are better managers of resources*”, a male member said.

The president of the cooperative indicated that, issues of limited access and control over resources among female and male and all its side effects like gender based violence are no longer prevailing in our cooperative. He revealed that RSSP was doing a good Job as far as gender equality in the cooperative and at household level is concerned.

Even when it comes to the notice of RSSP that a certain member of the cooperative is misusing the profits from the cooperative or leader is exploitative or embezzling funds they sensitise him in collaboration with Rwanda Cooperatives Agency’s disciplinary committee or he/she is expelled and another member is registered. It was reported that women are given priority in such cases because they contribute to their household wellbeing. To emphasis equal access and control over cooperative benefits among women and men, wife and husband, RSSP initiated a gender committee and trained them to ensure efficient and effective use of resources (assets/money) and other benefits from the cooperative for all household members.

4.2.3 Decision Making

4.2.3.1 Decision Making in the Cooperative

In Corinyaburiba cooperative, the major decision making body is the general assembly. During the general assembly women and men are free to make decisions concerning the cooperative. Although the study indicated that the general assembly is the major decision making body and not the management committee as the trend was before the RSSP support, the management committee of the cooperative was specified as a mechanism that coordinates the processes of the cooperative. Yet when the researcher checked on the representation of women and men on the committee and who among women and men held which positions, it was found out that influential positions of the management committee were occupied by male. The management is made up of 7 members (3) female and four male. When it came to positions held, the president is a male, the vice is a female, the secretary is male and out of 3 advisors 1 is female and of the 3 supervisors one is female.

Regarding criteria for election of management committee leaders: Results reveal that there is no criterion for women and for men to become leaders. The criteria's are uniform for women and men. According to interviews and focus group discussions held by the researcher, for one to become a leader he or she must be a member and should be voted on merit not because she/he is female or male.

The management committee is elected by the general assembly with the observation of RSSP and RCA for democratic voting. They also ensure that at least 30% seats are reserved for women as per the Rwandan government's policy. On every committee women and men are elected. Women and men who can represent the cooperative in donor meetings and other places are nominated by the cooperative members and others interested in being leaders (women and men), give their manifesto and the general assembly votes by lining behind the candidates of their interest on merit. The candidate enumerated with more people becomes a leader. Two men in the focus group burred that *"thanks to RSSP and RCA now gender discrimination is no longer existing, but merit and equal representation of male and female members at all levels in the cooperative"*.

It was clarified that the management committee does not take decisions without the consent of the cooperative members. Instead they just guide the processes, and the general assembly takes all the decisions concerning the cooperative, such as for how much their house is to be rented, electing leaders among others.

However despite the project's endeavour to supervise elections and apply the 30% reserved seats in the management and in other committees, women group leaders are very few. That is to say that in Corinyaburiba cooperative out of (12) group leaders there is only one female. Yet these get first-hand information and take up opportunities available. Note that a group leader has (70) cooperative members under his/her supervision. These are charged with nominating members for trainings, study tours and other activities.

Table 5: Decision Making among Women and Men in the Cooperative

Cooperative	Women and Men	Remarks and Observations
Decision Making/ Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women and men are represented in the cooperative structure/management positions. - They all make decisions regarding the cooperative processes and activities, - Women and men take part in conflict management (disciplinary committee made up of 1 woman and 2 men) - The general assembly made up of all cooperative members (female and male) is the core decision making body of the cooperative - All women and men have adequate information regarding gender equality in the cooperative and all its processes and plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Men are still dominating the management position; the president is male, vice is female, advisory committee out of 3 only one is female - RSSP`s efforts for equal representation 30% positions are strictly reserved for women

The table above reveals that women and men make decisions especially in the general assembly but the management committee but men are still dominating and they hold essential positions like the president is a male.

4.2.3.2 RSSP`s Support Regarding Decision Making

RSSP`s offers trainings on gender balance and equal representation of women and men in the management. It has also raised awareness on the importance of gender equality and made efforts to create self-esteem among women and men through exposure to trainings and study tours. Hence this was checked with the respondents and 80% of the them mentioned that, 'Now issues of shyness and lack of self- esteem are no more both women and men are no longer lagging behind they are confident and alert heading towards developing themselves'.

The project also acts as an observer for the cooperative during elections and it ensures that 30% of the seats are reserved for women as provided by the government policy.

The RSSP community, cooperatives and gender officer noted that *"their target is that at least 50% of management committee members are women."*

However the project encounters challenges of some cooperative women and men members, who still have the mentality that 'when a woman leads she misleads', to the extent that fellow women do not want to vote for women to be leaders. This was attributed to factors such as cultural norms and beliefs that present men as key decision makers and leaders hence undermining women`s leadership and decision making power. Some claimed that the reason why women`s participation in decision making was still low, was because leadership is time demanding. Yet women are often busy. For instance it was observed that after digging on their rice plots they go to collect firewood, fetch water and other reproductive roles such as, nurturing children, cooking, washing, and many other household chores. Others claimed that the majority of the women in the cooperative lack competence to read and write as another inhibiting factor. But after revisiting with field data the participants in the study concluded that it was all centred on cultural norms, beliefs and values.

4.2.4 Division of Labour

4.2.4.1 Division of Labour in the Cooperative

Almost all responses from individual interviews said that to a large extent there was no labour division among women and men on most of the tasks at cooperative level /on cooperative rice fields. For they mentioned that both women and men performed similar tasks such as preparing the land, transplanting, weeding fertiliser application and harvesting. Also respondents from the male focus group discussion and the women focus group discussion indicated that men and women perform similar tasks apart from a few tasks such as rice threshing and winnowing/sorting that is done by women and transporting of rice to the cooperative store and to the household on bicycles and irrigating that is done mostly by men but also some women were reported to do this task.

Disaggregating responses by sex, 50% of the women that participated in the study perceived that division of labour still exists though to a small extent. They highlighted that activities like threshing and winnowing were done by women especially if they were using the traditional winnowers. But with the new winnowing machines introduced by RSP/MINAGRI, men as well as women are involved in winnowing and threshing. A 45 year old woman clarified *“that although these machines have been introduced and seem to bring in changing of tasks this has just started. A man could not winnow or thresh it was forbidden. We also did not see our fathers winnow nor thresh, it was our mothers task”*. In addition others said the even then these machines are still few to serve all members hence the traditional winnowers used by women are still in use.

Regarding irrigation: Mostly men are charged with irrigating of rice plots. This was reported to be men’s work apart from only two single women who were mentioned to be doing it on their own. It was revealed that irrigation is mostly done in the night. Yet women are held by their reproductive roles like keeping very young children and pregnancy, women scared of being raped while on their way to the marshland (rice farming fields) in the night to irrigate their plots and fear of usual related fights for water. Thus this work is done by husbands and female headed/single women cooperative members are forced to hire able bodied men who can afford to go at night in weird hours to irrigate. While others who have older children (boys) are charged with such work.

Table 6: Gender Division of Labour in the Rice Fields (who was doing what?)

Activity	Female	Male	Remarks
Harvesting	✓	✓	Men and women
Transplanting	✓	✓	Men and women
Digging/Land preparation	✓	✓	Men and women
Threshing/winnowing	✓	X	Men only do this work when there is an improved technology not the traditional ones that women use
Irrigation/water use on the marshland	✓ /-	✓	Mostly men
Transporting	✓	✓	Mostly men seen transporting rice to the cooperative store on bicycles while a few women carry on their heads

Source: Activity profile adopted from (March et al, 2008)

✓ Does regularly

- ✓ /- means does rarely
- X Never does

The table above shows that most tasks are performed by both women and men. Apart from a few tasks that are either partly performed by women or men.

Responses from respondents matched with the researcher's observation on the rice fields as all men and women were basically doing the same work apart from winnowing/threshing done by women, irrigation and transporting that was reported to be men's roles.

4.2.4.2 RSSP's Support in Division of Labour

The project's support as far as division of labour is concerned, has been the introduction of advanced farm equipment's such as winnowing and threshing machines. The project field officer noted that they found out that with the introduction of machines gender division of labour tends to change. Men and women tend to do similar jobs/ tasks as men can do those that are formerly men's and men do those that were formerly women's tasks. Besides the project encourages wife and husband to work together for high yields. And this has started showing results, now men winnow and thresh with the machines provided to the cooperative (RSSP project officers reported).

4.3 Contribution of other Stakeholders

The Local Government: The findings revealed that the local government played a role in repealing of discriminatory laws and enforcing them under their policy reviews and law enforcement strategies. It was mentioned that the review of discriminatory laws such as the customary law, the inheritance law, the 30% quota of reserved seats for women at all levels of management/decision making. All geared towards promoting equal representation at all levels of decision making and other services targeting rural women and men such as awareness raising on issues of equal access and control over resources, encouraging equal participation in all developmental programmes.

The Rwanda Cooperatives Agency: Given its role of overseeing the cooperative by holding leaders accountable, carrying out financial audits, sensitising them on the formation, cooperative law, and issues regarding membership and commitment, equal participation among female and male members, equal access and control over resources accruing from the cooperative has been promoted.

However RSSP encounters some constraints such as misconceptions and resistance towards gender equality among women and men in rural areas. Some men feel it has reduced their powers, while women feel they should do all a man does even the 'bad things' as referred to by the respondent such as drinking alcohol/sitting in the bar and drink alcohol until she is drunk because gender equality is being promoted. Hence this has caused more conflicts resulting into gender based violence in households (between wives and husbands).

Key informants noted that despite RSSP emphasis and target for women to benefit like men, women's participation and involvement is still low due to cultural issues of male superiority and female inferiority. Consequently, RSSP has to go through lists of nominees to push for female nomination to enable them access trainings and other benefits as well. The challenge is that they target for 60% female participation in their activities but they get 30% or maximum 40% female participation.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Impact of RSSP Support to Female and Male Participation

Field data from the study shows that women and men equally participate in the cooperative. And that for every activity to be implemented consultations between women and men members of the cooperative and the project staff are carried out. As illustrated in table 1, women and men are participants and partners in the project and they jointly decide about which projects to carry out with the project staff. Indeed cooperative members were formerly involved in rice farming but it was characterised with poor yields due to the fact that the marshland was not yet rehabilitated so the project support came in to support by rehabilitating the marshland and increase the production. The argument is in line with the fourth dimension of participation /consultation by Pretty (1994) in Leeuwis, 2004:250).

The fact that both women and men have the opportunity to participate and bring new ideas and have them acted upon or addressed, is in coherence with the argument that participation in cooperatives empowers the disadvantaged to defend their interests and provide security to the poor by allowing them to convert individual risks into collective risks such as landlessness, lack of collateral security among others (Wanyama et al, 2008). Indeed participation in cooperative should be designed to respond to the needs of its members (women and men) such as being entitled to equal participation and share in the capital establishment to achieve gender equality among rural women and men (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a).

One may suggest that men and women are part and parcel of the participants, are key players and partners of the cooperative. In this case RSSP decides together with the cooperative members (women and men). So women and men members are partners and key players and neither female nor male's role can be ignored.

However the participation of women was reported at a limited level mainly due to cultural norms and values such as some women having to seek for permission from their husbands to participate in meetings and trainings. Also due to the fact that women were held by their women's triple roles (reproductive, productive, and social/community work) as discussed by Momsen (2004). Indeed these are still prevailing to inhibit women's participation. Nonetheless with RSSP's gender equality training conducted for cooperative members, promising results for change of such norms, beliefs and tasks were expressed in the field results.

The change was also attributed to the different government policies, such as the national gender policy of Rwanda which highlights that projects should integrate gender principles to ensure that both women and men participate in developmental programmes and projects equally considering their different needs and interests (National Gender Policy, 2008).

RSSP was credited for having enhanced participation among female and male members of the cooperative. As highlighted in its project implementation manual, the cooperative strategy will ensure the promotion of equal participation among women and men for sustainable development (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). Indeed it has enhanced female and male participation through examining lists submitted for training to the project to include women. And it has attained at least 40% of women's participation in trainings.

5.2 Impact of Access and Control over Cooperative Resources on Women and Men

Female and male members of the cooperative have equal access and control over resources as illustrated in table 3. Resources of the cooperative revealed were buildings, land, water, trainings, profits from sale of rice and shares of the cooperative. In the cooperative women and men have plots of irrigated land equivalent to 5 ARE (25 square meters) registered in their names with access and control over it, to the extent that they can rent it out if they want. The above result is grounded on the Rwanda cooperative law that highlights that there should be equal access and control over the cooperative assets by all its members (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a).

In support of the above findings and arguments Majurin (2008) also argues that, while associations enable access to financial capital, agricultural cooperatives have proven to help farmers (female and male) to get access and control over physical capital like land, houses, water and household supplies like food among others.

So one may then suggest that, access and control over resources and benefits from supported agricultural cooperatives such as this under study have ultimately helped female and male members to improve their status, as a result of promoted women and men's access and control over resources which was not the case before the cooperative movement.

As shown in table 3, female and male members of the cooperative share profits equally as mentioned by almost all respondents. The evidence would appear to suggest that, cooperative members share their profits without any discrimination on grounds of sex. This is said to contribute towards respect and added value on men and especially women's status as the case was not the same before. Studies show that women's earnings increase their decision making power and that they consistently devote much of their income to investments in the family's human capital; to expenditures on more nutritious food, more education, better health care, and more effective ways of limiting their own fertility (Elavia et al., 1991,1994 in Rosintan et al, 1999).

Since results revealed that wife and husband sit together and plan for their household as trained and encouraged by RSSP, with the view that the benefits of the cooperative should be for the good of the household for development and wellbeing (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). This is supported by the Rwandan constitution (2003), under its customary law that provides for equal rights over household property among wife and husband. Nonetheless findings on the other hand revealed that there are still cases where some men and very few women members still deny their partners (especially wives) of their rights to control over household resources as illustrated in table 4 above. Hence a gender committee was established by RSSP to warn and sensitise such spouses or replace such men with wives. With the argument that women are good at managing household resources. This finding is supported by Reeves and Baden (2000), in their argument that women spend a higher percentage of their generally smaller incomes on family consumption and children's welfare.

Regarding access to trainings Momsen (2004) argues that most women, especially in third world countries, often are burdened with so many responsibilities that they usually have no time to receive extension services even when they are available. This is visible in this study since RSSP's support is central to capacity building/extension services. The findings highlighted that limited access of women to trainings and related meetings can not only be attributed to the triple roles/burden of work that women bear, but on cultural issues that hamper women's full participation. This is in-line with the argument that women in sub-Saharan Africa do a combination of productive and reproductive activities making them spend very long hours working which limits them from accessing the available extension services (Ibid).

Although RSSP promotes equal access and control over resources among women and men, this has been partially achieved and the project attributes it to social-cultural set up of the community that is still male dominated. Based on the field results the researcher agrees with the project on resources related to profits, houses and land, but disagrees with the project when it comes to trainings. Limited access to trainings by women was mostly attributed to time and distance to where trainings and meetings were conducted.

The evidence seemed to suggest that RSSP did not consider time and distance where and when such services were offered. One may contend that women`s burdens were hardly considered. As shown in table 2, more men than women accessed trainings, thus development activities ended up in the hands of men on the assumption that men and women would benefit equally from all the activities.

5.3 Decision making among Female and Male Members of the Cooperative

According to the findings described in table 5, the cooperative under the RSSP support has given room for women and men to participate in decision making and in all development processes that take place in the cooperative and other spheres that affect them freely and equally with men.

Because the trend is that the major decision making body of the cooperative is the general assembly (all male and female cooperative members). The strategy of 30% seats reserved for women in the decision making of the cooperative has resulted into their involvement in decision making both at cooperative and household level. Unlike the previous where decisions were made by only men.

It is in this regard that one may suggest that, the project has enhanced the status of women hence decision making in the cooperative is known to be jointly made by wife and husband.

For the argument is that once women can make decisions equally as their partners (husbands) on issues concerning their family, they make their practical gender needs (such as health care, access to food, access to safe water and sanitation) and strategic gender needs (needs that seek to change women`s status and position in the society) to challenge male dominance by ensuring equal participation in decision making, equal ownership and control over resources) part of the planning processes (Reeves and Baden, 2000). The former also contend that, when women are empowered to make decisions; they decide to send their daughters to school, use family planning and buy assets like land and houses.

RSSP documents and field officers interviewed indicated that due to trainings on gender balance and efforts to create equal representation of women and men in the management had been achieved. They boasted that at least 30% of the management positions were reserved for women. However, results revealed that some key committees especially the group leaders committee with in the cooperative; women were under represented. Out of 12 group leaders 1 is female.

5.4 Gender Division of Labour in Rice Farming in the Cooperative

There are different tasks or activities assigned to men and women according to sex and the argument is that gender division of labour changes over time and that it changes with external circumstance (March et al 1999). This argument is partly not consistent with the findings that declared that there were no specific tasks for women and for men. But the trend that men and women executed similar tasks signified that changes had started to manifest and with time pronounced changes would be registered. This was based on the idea that changes leading to men and women performing similar tasks was due to the advancement of technology brought by RSSP such as rice threshers and winnowing machines that attracted men into tasks that were previously performed by women.

Although to a small extent (30%) of findings revealed that despite certain changes gender division of labour existed in the cooperative as illustrated in table 6. It was mentioned that winnowing was done by women with the traditional winnower. But with the advanced winnowing machine and the rice thresher men now can thresh and winnow together with women.

Despite of the changes happening as a result of working with the cooperative, where men and women are reported to be performing similar tasks, the observation revealed that women's burdens are still prevailing due to gender division of labour. Women were observed digging with their children on their back unlike men. The researcher realised that after digging women went home with their children on their backs and Jericans of water on their heads for reproductive and household chores. Women and men were observed digging together with the same equipment's (the hand hoe and the leveller), hence validating Ellis (2000)'s argument that unfair gender division of labour may create or aggravate burdens for women hence underpinning gender inequality. Thus one may tend to argue that if gender division of labour changes in productive work then it should change for reproductive roles as well.

RSSP supports farmers by purchasing improved farm machines at a subsidised rate. Farm equipment's such as winnowing and threshing machines. The project field officer noted that they found out that with the introduction of machines, gender division of labour tends to change (March et al 1999). Also the World bank (2009), highlights that men and women tend to do similar jobs/ tasks as men can do, those that are formerly men's and men do those that were formerly women's roles due to advancement of farm technologies. Besides the project encourages wife and husband to work together for high yields. And this has started showing results, now men winnow and thresh with the machines provided to the cooperative (RSSP project officers reported).

The evidence may suggest that, the project has impacted on division of labour due to machines but the machines are still too few to serve all the members hence some still use the traditional ones. Also the researcher realised that a lot needed to be done regarding reproductive work that is solely done by women, who were seen digging and carrying their babies on their back at the same time.

5.5 Impacts of other Stakeholders on Participation, Access and Control over Resources, Decision Making and Division of Labour

It was noted that like RSSP most of the other stakeholders engage in capacity building/offering trainings, sensitising cooperative members on gender equality, customary laws, gender equality and development, better farming methods for improved and high yields, marketing and awareness raising on family planning.

The Local Government: Given their policy review and law enforcement strategies gender equality has been enhanced by local authorities. This is seen in the review of discriminatory laws such as the customary law, the inheritance law, the 30% quota of reserved seats for women to promote equal representation at all levels of decision making and other services targeting rural women and men such as awareness raising on issues of equal access and control over resources, encouraging equal participation in all developmental programmes and in decision making of all processes that concern them (Republic of Rwanda, 2009). This is based on the argument that women have proven to be potential actors of development (Kagaba and Randell, 2010).

The Rwanda Cooperatives Agency being in-charge of all cooperatives in Rwanda, they work hand in hand with RSSP project on issues concerning formal operations of the cooperative. According to the official gazette of the Republic of Rwanda (2007), they play a key role of sensitising cooperatives about cooperative formation legal establishment and sensitising

members about the cooperative law, membership and commitment, equal participation among female and male members, equal access and control over resources accruing from the cooperative as provided for in the cooperative law. In light of the research findings RCA is charged of overseeing cooperative operations to avoid any sort of discrimination or injustices on grounds of sex. To ensure equality the agency does financial audits and inspection of whether there is equal benefit among female and male members of the cooperative. The evidence would then suggest that, their role is crucial in inhibiting discrimination, embezzlement and misuse of resources.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Regarding the gender equality aspects set for this study which are female and male; participation, access and control over resources, decision making and division of labour. RSSP has contributed to gender equality as seen below;

Participation: With the support of RSSP project, women and men of Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative participate in the cooperative activities equally and freely without any discrimination on grounds of sex. Because female and male members are treated the same, they are free to bring new ideas and they are acted upon. Women and men are consulted and are key players and partners of the project whose role cannot be ignored.

However, participation of women is still low due to cultural norms and values that still prevail to inhibit women's participation. Because women have to go through practices such as seeking permission from their husbands to participate in meetings and trainings. Women are also held by the triple roles (reproductive roles, productive and social/community work) which take most of their time. That inhibit them from participating in trainings and meetings that the RSSP project offers.

Access and Control over Cooperative Resources: Women and men have equal access and control over cooperative resources. Apart from water which women have access but limited control. Also some few cases of limited access and control over household resources among partners exist. But the project established a gender committee to rectify such vices to ensure that women and men equally benefit from the cooperative.

Also women's access to trainings has been enhanced through RSSP's strategy of revising lists of people to be trained where scrutiny is done to ensure that women also are included on the list. Although scrutiny of lists for trainings is done, trainings offered are still dominated by male members.

Decision Making: The cooperative under RSSP support has given room for women and men to participate in decision making of all developmental processes that take place in the cooperative freely and equally. Decisions in the cooperative are made by women and men during the general assembly (all cooperative members women and men) which is the major decision making body of the cooperative. The management committee, women and men are represented with 30% seats/positions reserved for women. Hence women like men have been empowered to exercise decision making power even in other spheres of life like in making of household and public decisions.

Division of Labour: In the cooperative there were no specific tasks for women and for men. Women and men do the same tasks. For a few tasks that were reported to be performed by a specific sex, they were reported to be changing, mainly because of the advance of technology such as the rice threshers and winnowing machines among others and gender awareness trainings offered by the project. Such changes have resulted into fair labour division among women and men. Hence promoting gender equality since women were relieved of some burdens and got time to do other productive tasks to generate income and create some free time for them as well.

From the stakeholders' views, the project could not achieve its success in isolation of other key stakeholders such as the local government/local leaders and the Rwanda cooperative Agency.

Local Government/Local Leaders: These also played a role of sensitising the women and men of Corinyaburiba on laws that defend their interests and also promote the 30% leadership positions reserved for women in all management positions.

The Rwanda Cooperatives agency: This is in charge of the cooperatives' formal operations and sensitising members about the law governing cooperatives, and other service providers that RSSP hires to carryout trainings for its beneficiaries.

However, despite of the achievements registered by RSSP towards promoting gender equality among rural female and male farmers through support to the cooperative, challenges were identified: These are cultural factors; that deem men as leaders, this is even visible in the cooperative where most group leaders are male. Yet they are the ones who are often selected for training of trainers, men do not have to go through processes of seeking permission from their wives to attend trainings like some women having to. In addition to trainings that are conducted in far distant places which limit women`s participation given their triple roles.

The researcher concluded that, the project had brought positive impacts among female and male members of the cooperative as far as gender equality was concerned. The researcher shared some of her experiences from the field like the situation where out of 12 group leaders only 1 group leader was female, this was sort of an eye opener and a revelation of reasons why they had always struggled to have female trainees to the extent of adopting scrutinising of lists submitted by the cooperative to the project for training.

The researcher came to a conclusion that all the documents that the project had there was not a single document on the impact of RSSP to cooperatives on gender equality apart from small statements that were found in some documents. Hence the study was appreciated and the project coordinator requested for a copy so that they may use the recommendations for effective implementation of the project in the next projects.

6.2 Recommendations /Proposed Areas of Intervention as obtained from the Study

6.2.1 Rural Sector Support Project

Although the project claims to implement their support to the cooperative in a participatory approach in all its activities and processes, women's participation as revealed by the findings was low due to cultural beliefs, norms and values, that undermine women such as seeking permission to attend meetings, older women not participating among others. Therefore the project in close collaboration with the cooperative gender committee ought to consider carrying out training on confidence building and self- esteem among women and sensitise men about the dangers of gender inequality on development. Consequently cultural issues that inhibit women's participation like seeking permission to attend meetings and low participation among older women will be minimised. Thus women will be part of consultations regarding the cooperative and the project. And as such women's interests and needs will be part of the planning and implementing processes of the project.

Decision making: The project ought to put continuous observation and surveillance in the process of electing cooperative management committee members, especially group leaders to ensure that at least 40% seats are reserved for women to occupy group leadership with in the cooperative. This will also enable women benefit from all the benefits group leaders have such as training of trainers, study tours among others.

Access and Control over Resources: For the project to solve the issue of limited control over water by female cooperative members, the project should consider putting more women on the water users' association committee and put strict rules and regulations on the efficient and effective use of water. In this processes the project may consider having female members of the cooperative irrigate their plots in early evenings and schedule men in the night to facilitate women to attend to their reproductive roles and avoid issues of rape due to walking in the night to go to their plots to irrigate.

To a few cases of limited access and control over household resources among women, the project should continue to work hand in hand with the gender committee to rectify such vices.

Access to trainings: The project should work in close collaboration with its service providers to ensure that trainings are conducted close to residences of cooperative members and at times convenient and appropriate for women as this study revealed that distance and time when and where trainings are conducted were not convenient for women given their triple roles. This will facilitate women to access trainings easily like their male colleagues.

Division of labour: The project should consider subsidising of rice winnowing and threshing machines for the cooperative. So as to benefit all members, since these were said to have facilitated fair division of labour among husband and wife(or women and men) as men also started winnowing which was previously a female's task.

6.2.2 Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)

GMO's services in the agriculture sector RSSP in particular, should continue to provide technical skills such as gender mainstreaming skills in the project, periodical training on the participatory gender Audit tool to guide the project field officers to ensure that their appropriate services are affordable and accessible for women and men for equal benefit. This will enable the project field officers hold trainings and other extension services in times and venues appropriate for women as well, taking into consideration their reproductive roles.

GMO should concentrate on the agricultural sector giving priority to RSSP project activities especially the cooperative support strategy that is a suitable approach to ensure that women like men benefit from agricultural extension services and get involved in cash crop farming like rice other than their traditional subsistence crop farming.

Given GMO's role to compile and publish the national gender status report. Where it is charged with identifying key gender good practices and areas that need intervention with practical skills for all sectors on how to address them should give priority to RSSP if they want to achieve their vision which is to ensure that both women and men enjoy equitably and participate fully in development processes for sustainable development. This is workable since most women 85% of the people working in agriculture in Rwanda are women.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Checklist for Cooperative Members

Sex:

Age:

Membership and Duration in the cooperative (background information)

- How long have you been in this cooperative?
- Please describe how you were recruited in this cooperative; what was the criteria for membership?
- How did RSSP facilitate the membership?
- Have you realised any benefits since your membership in this cooperative? What advantages do you have for being a member of this cooperative that you did not have before becoming a member?
- What are challenges of being a member in this cooperative? Do u face any challenges in being a member of this cooperative? If yes which ones

1. Participation in cooperative (women and men)

1. Is there a criteria for participation in any activity in the cooperative? If yes are they different for female and male members and why?
2. What role has RSSP played to encourage the participation of Female and male members of the cooperatives?
3. When there is an issue to be addressed, are female and male members consulted for participation?
4. What are the procedures for discussing issues pertaining the cooperative? Consider; Time, venue, distance, season, and other specific matters.
5. Do male and female members have equal contribution towards improvement of the cooperative?
6. Do women and men bring new /initiate new ideas? In what areas do women mostly initiate?
7. If women initiate some ideas are they acted upon?
8. What are the challenges encountered while participating in the cooperative, by female and male members?

2. Access and control over resources

1. How are assets of the cooperative managed? Regarding management of
 - finances, farming equipment's, land, water, buildings, profits and bank account.
2. How are profits shared in this cooperative?
3. Who decides on how much profit to be shared?
4. Do men and women benefit equally from the cooperative?
5. What is your own opinion regarding the fairness treatment of both male and female in the cooperative?
6. Given your understanding of cooperatives have you benefited from it? If yes may you give examples of how you have benefited from this cooperatives and its impact on your life in general be it social, economic, political spheres of life?
7. What benefits have you gained as a result of this cooperative
8. What are the hindrances to your benefit?

3. Decision making

1. What is the criterion to become a leader of the cooperative?
2. How are leaders elected?
3. How are decisions in this cooperative undertaken ?
4. What level of management are decisions taken in the cooperative? (Examples of decisions taken and by whom?)

5. How are women and men involved at this management level of decision making?(are there any specific seats reserved for men and women? If yes which ones are they?)
6. What challenges are there, for female and for male members in making decisions?

4. Division of labour

1. Do female and male members of the cooperative have different tasks in the cooperative? If yes, how are tasks divided among female and male members?
2. Which tasks are for women and which tasks are for men and why?
3. What are the procedures /criteria of dividing tasks?

General outcomes of RSSP cooperatives

- What are the specific achievements attained through RSSP cooperative
- What are the challenges identified
- What areas RSSP can improve its services

ANNEX 2: Topic List for Focus Group Discussion (Female and Male Cooperative Members)

Opinion of the contribution of RSSP rice cooperative on female and male concerning;

1. Participation
 - Membership(recruitment)
 - Consultation
 - Their experiences concerning participation in the cooperative
2. Decision making in the cooperative
 - women in decision making in the cooperative and its impact on their household
 - Recommendations
 - Challenges
 - Experiences concerning decision making in the cooperative
3. Access and control over cooperative resources
 - Finances, Assets, management, control over produce
 - Sharing of profits
 - Experiences concerning access and control over resources in the cooperative
4. **Division of labour**
 - Experiences concerning role and task division in this cooperative
 - What RSSP has done regarding gender division of labour
 - General outcomes of RSSP cooperatives
 - Specific achievements attained
 - Challenges identified
 - Areas RSSP can improve its services

Annex 3: Topic List Key Informants (RSSP Field Officers and Local Leader)

Before the coming of RSSP did this cooperative existed?

1. The rationale of the project to the beneficiaries
2. The achievement of the goal, purpose and activities based on indicators
3. The realised contributions of the cooperative on women and men in regard to:
 - Participation of women and men
 - Access and control over resources
 - Equal decision making
 - Fair division of labour
4. The strategy that RSSP put in place that supports smooth implementation of the cooperative support
5. Views on stakeholders participation
 - Government (policy making)
 - Local government Authorities
 - World Bank
6. Challenges faced by the project
7. Areas RSSP should improve
8. Other remarks

Annex 4: Observation Checklist

Observations will be done in three elements;

1. Observation done hand in hand with individual and focus group interviews of men and women members of RSSP rice farming cooperative of Corinyaburiba (with the help of an assistant to take notes),
2. Visiting rice fields of the cooperative
3. Visiting the cooperative office

Individual interviews

Status of happiness derived from the cooperative observed through interviews in regard to participation, access and control over resources, decision making and in regard to division of labour. These will be observed on what mood is attached:

- Sadness/grief
 - Normal or
 - Happy/joyful
- Willingness to share outcomes of RSSP cooperative
- Comfortable to share
 - Not comfortable
 - Neutral

Focus group discussion men and women cooperative members mixed.

- Of women and men who answers more questions
- Who are the most dominating in the discussions
- Expressions (are women and men willing to share their experiences while mixed?)

Cooperative meeting(Once)

- Participation (Level of participation; men and women who frequently asks questions Sitting arrangements who sits in front, in the corner, who are the most dominating)
- Decision making (Who is chairing the meeting, Whose decisions are considered

Cooperative office (will visit three times to observe)

- Participation; Who manages the office, How many women and how many men sit in the cooperative office.
- Access and control over resources: Who is in-charge of finances; who keeps the cheque book.
- Are profits shared equally
- Decision making; Who is/are signatories to the cooperative cheque, during profit sharing who determines how much to share.
- Division of labour: Who does what?

Rice fields

- Roles of women and men (In the field who does what, what women do and what men do)
- Whether women and men use the same farm equipment's (who uses what technology?) back it with questions like i can see you using this and this do you also use other, do women and men use them? Probe.
- The interaction between men and women (How do they interact?)
- Attitude to work(this will be supported by informal conversations on the field)
-

Annex 5: Letter of Informed Consent

Re: Research on the impact of Rural sector support to farming cooperatives on gender equality among farmers; a case study of Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative Bugesera District, Rwanda.

Dear respondents

My name is Mrs. Mary Alice Bamusiime, a prospective student from Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. I am carrying out a study on the impact of RSSP support to farming cooperatives on gender equality a case study of Corinyaburiba rice farming cooperative. Data collected from this case study will be used for fulfilment of my masters academic thesis requirement. The Outcomes of this study will be used by Rural Sector Support Project, Gender Monitoring Office, policy makers, academicians and donors. I count on you for your courteous response to these questions for it will have a big impact on the result of this study.

I assure you that all personal information which may be obtained from you will be kept confidential.

Lastly dear respondent your participation in this study is voluntary, participant(s) may decide to stop the interview or keep quiet when you wish; but I assure you it will not be too long.