



The Factors Influencing Men to Joining Farmers' Groups: The Case of Tchenzema Ward Mgeta Division, Mvomero District, Morogoro Region, Tanzania

Daniel Nyoki^{1,2*} and Emmanuel G. Rwambali¹

¹Department of Agricultural Extension and Community Development, College of Agriculture, Sokoine University of Agriculture, P.O.Box 3002, Chuo Kikuu, Morogoro, Tanzania.

²School of Life Science and Bio-Engineering, The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, P.O.Box 447, Arusha, Tanzania.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Authors DN and EGR designed the study. Author DN managed the literature searches, performed the statistical analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author EGR edited the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study on the factors influencing men to joining farmers' groups was carried out at Morogoro Region, Tanzania in 2008. The objectives of the study were to identify reasons influencing or hindering men from joining farmers' groups; and to determine factors that would motivate men to join farmers' groups. The sample was drawn from the list of male group members of various farmers groups and male non-group members in Tchenzema Ward. A stratified sample was then drawn from the two lists. A sample of 40 respondents was picked using a simple random sampling

*Corresponding author: Email: dnyoki@yahoo.com;

procedure in each group. Thus, 20 respondents were male group members and 20 non group members. The main findings indicated that all respondents were aware of the existence of farmers' groups. The observed factors hindering men from joining farmers groups includes: lack of immediate benefits (80%); alcoholism (55%); engagement in other economic activities (52.5%); poor leadership (80%); lack of awareness of group benefits (27.5); avoidance of group entry fee (50%); and some men regarded group work as wastage of time (72.5%). Factors that would motivate and raise participation of men in the farmers groups included: awareness creation about importance of farmers groups; provision of credits to group members; strong and good leadership and provision of rewards for better performing group. It was thus concluded that issues of immediate benefits and good leadership would encourage more men to join the groups. Therefore it was recommended that awareness creation should be based on very clear objectives and preferably done by developmental institutions or agencies.

Keywords: Agricultural extension; farmers' groups; group composition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early approaches to agricultural extension work emphasized the use of individual contact farmers rather than farmers groups. The idea was that new agricultural techniques would flow from innovators to the rest of the farming community through the "trickle-down effect". The expectations being that, farmers with poor farming techniques would learn from progressive farmers and therefore improve their method of production. However, this assumption was found to be inappropriate, particularly in third world countries, where the contact farmers approach seemed to fail to improve the majority of peasant farmers [1-3].

Further observations observed that contact farmers approach could not be universally applied to all farmers because of various factors such as differences in education levels, access to communication media, religion, economic status, land tenure, geographical conditions, the nature of innovation itself, as well as other social characteristics [4,5]. In a country like Tanzania where such differences are pronounced farmers groups seem to be a more suitable extension approach than the individual approach.

In order to bring about agricultural development, there needs to be strong linkages among farmers, extension agents and other development agencies. The group approach provides an excellent opportunity to bring together extension staff, farmers and other key players [6]. Participating in the farmers' groups, extension agents collaborate with farming system and community researchers in the development and assessment of technologies. Therefore, when technologies are ready for dissemination, the extension agent already understands all the

advantages and limitations of such technologies and he/she can properly present recommendations to a new set of farmers [7,8].

The rationale of proposing farmers group as a method of extension is that more farmers are reached at less cost, there is a more effective learning environment when people with similar interests are involved in the group, there is more acceptance of agricultural techniques by farmers when decisions are taken in a group context as well as commitment to decisions taken jointly [9,10]. In Tanzania, where peasants perform numerous activities, the use of farmers' groups becomes a matter of necessity. In order to improve the efficiency of village extension officers (VEOs) contact, the Tanzania National Agricultural Extension Programme, Phase II (NAEP) encouraged the use of farmers groups [11]. This was meant for higher coverage by meeting more farmers and being able to spend more time for demonstration and discussion.

In Mgeta Division, the Uluguru Mountains Agricultural Development Project (UMADEP) facilitates the formation of farmers groups and networking. Groups are formed based on locality and type of enterprise (e.g. fruits and vegetable growers, dairy goat keepers, road maintenance etc). These groups are used as first avenues to disseminate technological packages. Bratton [12] and Burkey [13] defined group members as a composition of both men and women who come together to pursue common interest related to individual or group improvement in the spheres of economic, political and/or social development.

The group approach to extension services has proved to be more successful as many farmers/people both men and women can be served at lower cost [14]. Furthermore, there is a

lot of faith in farmers groups such that various governmental and non-governmental organizations use this approach for their extension programs [15]. Unfortunately, based on situation analysis that was done by the authors, most of the farmers' groups in Mgeta have less membership from men. Most men were not willing to join farmers groups. It was the interest of this study to determine the factors affecting men's participation in farmers' groups by looking at reasons hindering men from joining farmers' groups, and to determine factors that would motivate men to join farmer groups.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

A Cross-sectional study research design was used in this study. In this type of research study, data are collected from either the entire population or a subset of the population to help answer research questions of interest. It is called cross-sectional because the information about X and Y that is gathered represents what is going on at only one point in time. The design according to Babbie, [16] Bailey, [17] and Rwegoshora, [18] is useful for descriptive purposes as well as for determination of relationships between and among variables.

2.2 Research Procedures

The study population constituted male farmers who are group members and non group members of Tchenzema ward. The sampling frame was developed by listing male group members of various farmers groups and male non-group members in Tchenzema Ward. Two lists of members and non-members were prepared in collaboration with Village Executive Officers (VEOs), and Ward Executive Officer (WEO). A stratified sample was then drawn from the two lists. A sample of 40 respondents was picked using a simple random sampling procedure in each group. Thus, 20 respondents were male group members and 20 non group members.

Structured questionnaires were administered to all respondents. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers and subjected to pre-testing. The questionnaire contained both closed and open ended questions. The questionnaire was formulated in English and then translated into Swahili to allow easy

communication and understanding. Quantitative data were collected by the use of structured questionnaire, while qualitative data was collected through discussion with key informants such as local leaders. Similarly secondary data was collected from various relevant offices in Tchenzema ward, Mvomero District and The (MVIWATA) national network of farmers' groups in Tanzania library.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Land Size (Acre)

Most of the respondents (62.5%) owned less than 5 acres of land and only 37.5% had above 5 acres (Table 1). A preliminary situation analysis made by Nyoki 2008, revealed that most farmers used hired farms in the nearby villages such of Tchenzema, Nyandira, Kibuko, Mwarazi and Bumu. They divide these farms into small portion where they grow tomatoes, potatoes, beans, cabbages, redish, squash, and maize. Land fragmentation is very common in most parts of Tanzania [19]. Small holder farmers cultivate an average of five acres about five to ten kilometers away from their household [20]. The cultivated land of most household is too small for household needs [21]. The tools used for agricultural operations are traditional hand hoe. Because of the geographical situation and terrain of the study area where most of the farms are situated on steep slopes and the majority of the farmers transport their crops from farms to their houses by head because the routes are not passable by cars, neither by bicycle or even by wheelbarrows. The same findings were reported by Masawe [20] who studied the farming systems and agricultural production among small farmers in the Uluguru Mountain area, Morogoro Region, Tanzania.

3.2 Ownership of Land

About 60% of the land is owned by both men and women, while 22.5% is owned by women and 17.5% is owned by men (Table 1). The implication of this distribution is that both men and women have access to land. However, women have large access to land compared to men and this is because of matrilineal system of the Luguru tribe where by women usually inherit land from their parent and men are believed to get land from their -in-laws or through buying. The system to some extent has

made men disadvantaged in terms of land ownership.

3.3 Awareness of Farmers Groups

All respondents interviewed were aware of the farmers' groups including the 50% of the respondents who were non members of the farmers' groups.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of respondent by land size and land ownership (n=40)

Size of farm	Frequency	Percent
Below 1 acre	6	15.0
1-5 acre	19	47.5
Above 5	15	37.5
Total	40	100.0
Ownership of land	Frequency	Percent
Men	7	17.5
Women	9	22.5
Both of them	24	60.0
Total	40	100.0

3.4 The Number of Group(s) to which Respondents Belongs

Half of the respondents did not belonging to any group (non members) since they were deliberately selected to present their views. However, among the group members (n=20) 60% belonged to one group and the rest 40% belonged to two groups (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage distribution of respondents according to number of groups they belong to, Reasons for women to participation and perceived benefits of joining farmers' groups

No. of groups to which respondents belong (n=20)	Frequency	Percent
One group	12	60.0
Two group	8	40.0
Total	20	100.0
Reasons for women to participate more in groups (n=40)	Frequency	Percent
Leaders advocacy that female should be in the forefront	11	27.5
Females are responsible in handling and are affected by most of the domestic problems.	17	42.5
Are responsible for most of the domestic chores.	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0
Perceived benefits of joining farmers' groups (n=40)	Frequency	Percent
Income earnings and School fees	7	17.5
Easy transportation.	4	10.0
Solving problems in group.	7	17.5
Credits	9	22.5
Sharing male goat	3	7.5
No benefits	10	25.0
Total	40	100.0

3.5 Opinion on Female Participation

Based on the key informants as well as the respondents there are several reasons which make women to join farmers groups. Some of these include the fact that they are responsible for handling and are affected by most of the domestic problems (42.5%); they are responsible for most of the domestic chores (30%) and that they respond to the leaders appeal to join groups (Table 2).

3.6 Group Benefits

Besides the benefits gained by farmers for being members of the farmers groups, without segregation there were some respondents (25%) who said they could not see any benefits of joining farmers' groups. However, most of the respondent (75%) agreed that there are several benefits of joining farmers' groups. These benefits includes: credit provided by the financial institutions such as Credit and Savings Cooperative Societies (SACCOS) (22.5%), the ability of solving problems in groups (17.5%) since they earned income from selling their goats, horticultural crops, agrochemicals and botanical pesticides. As individuals they also obtain money to cover different domestic expenses such as school fees for their children, and foodstuffs. There is also a group that is involved in road maintenance (tushikamane) hence transportation is facilitated as a result (10%) (Table 2).

3.7 Cost Sharing and Generation of Benefits Process

Working through small groups, farmers can reduce the cost of accessing inputs, production technologies, information and markets by sharing these costs amongst all members of the group [22,23]. This means lower individual costs. i). Lower input costs: by bulk purchasing inputs through groups, farmers obtain bulk sale discounts from suppliers and can share transport costs. ii). Lower information costs: through groups, farmers can link up with government extension services by sharing costs in accessing these services (e.g. travel costs to the nearest extension agency, etc.). iii). Lower cost of financial services: through groups, farmers can open group savings and/or credit accounts offered by financial institutions at reduced individual expense of accessing these services. iv). Reduced marketing and selling costs: through groups, marketing farmers can share storage, processing, transport and selling costs. Lower costs per farmer means higher profits. These farmers use transport, store and sell their crops as groups so that they can reduce unnecessary cost and fetch high prices. v). Sharing of available resources: the available resources such as male goat for breeding, land, and experiences are shared by the farmers who are group members. Similar to our findings, several researchers [24-29] have pointed out that farmer can collectively solve most of their problems when they are in groups than individual farmers can do.

3.8 Factor Hindering Men from Joining Farmers Group

There are several reasons that have been observed to hinder men from joining farmers

groups. These reasons were expressed by both group members and non group members. These factors include: Lack of immediate benefits as most men (80%) prefer to see immediate benefits; Poor leadership is another barrier for men to join farmers' groups; The attitude that groups work leads to wastage of time (72.5%); Men are mostly not found at home, i.e. they are mostly away from their home and hence it is not easy for them to join farmers' groups (60%). Alcoholism is another factor hindering men from joining farmers' group as most men (55%) drink alcohol almost of the time and do not engage in the group activities; some men are engaged in other economic activities i.e. small businesses, dairy goat keeping and hence are not able to join farmers group. Group entry fees and subscription fees is another factor hindering men from joining farmers groups as well as ignorance of the benefits that group members get by being members of the farmers groups (Table 3). From the above points, it's clear that men are partially engaged on farm activities as a result they have less participation in farmers groups. Furthermore, individualism and traditionalism are among the factor hinders participation of men from joining farmers' groups.

3.9 Factors that Would Motivate Men to Join Farmers' Groups

Despite the fact that farmers groups are seen to be of paramount importance, male farmers at Mgeta rarely engage in farmers groups. However, it was learnt that certain factors would motivate men to join farmers' groups. These include: Education about importance of farmers groups; identification of possible benefits that group members could get; provision of credits to group and non-group members; strong and good leadership; rewards for better performing

Table 3. Percentage distribution of respondents by factors hindering men from joining farmers' groups (n=40)

Factor hindering men from joining farmers group are	Yes	No	Total	% yes	% no	% total
Lack of immediate benefits	32	8	40	80.0	20.0	100.0
Drinking of alcohol	22	18	40	55.0	45.0	100.0
Engagement to other economic activities	21	19	40	52.5	47.5	100.0
Poor leadership	32	8	40	80.0	20.0	100.0
Lack of awareness of group benefits	11	29	40	27.5	72.5	100.0
Avoidance of group entry fee	20	20	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
Group work leads to wastage of time	29	11	40	72.5	27.5	100.0
Men are not found at home	24	16	40	60.0	40.0	100.0

groups; and mobilization of men to join farmer groups. Similar to our findings, [30] have pointed out four inter-related factors affecting group sustainability. These includes: 'financial capital' accumulated through group-based microcredit activities; an effective governance mechanism called 'institutional capital' devised by the members themselves; good quality group leaders and facilitators called 'human capital'; and past relations of exchange, reciprocity, trust and respect called 'social capital' among members and between members and professional facilitators. While Islam et al. [30] regard these as factors affecting group sustainability, we could use them to motivate men to join farmers' group.

3.10 Linkage between Demographic Data and Membership to the Groups

From the demographic data of this study, we have seen that majority of farmers (62.5%) own small pieces of land measuring less than or equal to five acres. Similar to our findings, Gwambene and Liwenga [31] indicated that most farmers in southern highland of Tanzania own small size of land. We have also seen that about 60% of the land is owned by both men and women, while 22.5% is owned by women and 17.5% is owned by men. These demographic data have direct association with less participation of men in farmer groups. They think that because they have small pieces of land most of which is shared, they can be represented by women in the farmers' groups. Furthermore, since small proportion of men own land it is apparently they will have less participation in farmers' groups.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of reasons limited men from joining farmers groups such as lack of immediate benefits from group activities, poor leadership of the groups and perceived wastage of time especially when tangible and immediate benefits are not seen. In the same lines it was noted education about importance of farmers groups, provision of credits, revelation of benefits that group members get from farmers groups, strong and good leadership and provision of rewards for better performing groups would encourage men to join farmers groups. In the light of conclusion above, the following recommendations are made which should help policy makers, local and

regional planners as well as other development agencies to improve the situation of farmers' groups and ultimately improved production. i). Groups should be organized around clear objectives and activities which will produce tangible benefits. ii). External intervention should be made by development agencies in creating awareness of the importance of joining farmers groups. iii). Group leaders should be given training by development agencies such as MVIWATA and UMADEP on good governance and administrative principles so that they can lead their groups in a good manner. iv). Credit institutions such as SACCOS should be strengthened so that they can provide credits to both members and non-members.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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