



What drives capacity to innovate? Insights from women and men small-scale farmers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America

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Focus and approach

- **Focus:** Individuals' capacity to pursue and try out, take up, adapt or adopt new things in agriculture and rural livelihoods.
- **Key research questions:**
 - What are key characteristics of rural innovators?
 - How are their experiences similar for women and men – and how are they are different?
- **Review of lit:** Influence of gender, and personality traits, in relation to agricultural innovation
- **Analysis:** Combination of variable-oriented and case analysis
- **Organization of analysis:** Adaptation of E. Rogers' (2003(1962)) categories of individual variables related to innovativeness
 - a) Personality traits and agency
 - b) Social relations and networks
 - c) Socio-economic characteristics



Methods

- Semi-structured individual *innovation trajectory interviews* with 336 women and men innovators
- Drawn from 84 GENNOVATE community case-studies in 19 countries
- Opens with *Ladder of Power and Freedom*
- Standardized open-ended interview protocol in all study communities allows for comparative analysis
- Data from other instruments support contextually informed analysis of individual innovators' experiences



Gender Norms, Agency, and Innovation in Agriculture
and Natural Resource Management
The GENNOVATE Methodology



Path: Power
Ladder: Freedom
Gender: Focus



LADDER OF POWER AND FREEDOM

Qualitative data collection tool to understand local
perceptions of agency and decision making!

Introduction

The Ladder of Power and Freedom (LPF) is a qualitative data collection tool designed to understand local perceptions of agency and decision making. It is a standardized, open-ended interview protocol that can be used in a variety of contexts and settings. The LPF is based on the concept of the 'ladder of power' and the 'ladder of freedom' and is designed to explore the experiences of individuals and communities in relation to these concepts. The LPF is a qualitative data collection tool that can be used to understand local perceptions of agency and decision making. It is a standardized, open-ended interview protocol that can be used in a variety of contexts and settings. The LPF is based on the concept of the 'ladder of power' and the 'ladder of freedom' and is designed to explore the experiences of individuals and communities in relation to these concepts.

Purpose of method

The purpose of the Ladder of Power and Freedom (LPF) is to understand local perceptions of agency and decision making. The LPF is a qualitative data collection tool that can be used to understand local perceptions of agency and decision making. It is a standardized, open-ended interview protocol that can be used in a variety of contexts and settings. The LPF is based on the concept of the 'ladder of power' and the 'ladder of freedom' and is designed to explore the experiences of individuals and communities in relation to these concepts. The LPF is a qualitative data collection tool that can be used to understand local perceptions of agency and decision making. It is a standardized, open-ended interview protocol that can be used in a variety of contexts and settings. The LPF is based on the concept of the 'ladder of power' and the 'ladder of freedom' and is designed to explore the experiences of individuals and communities in relation to these concepts.

Findings: Personality traits

- Own personality traits most freq. mentioned re: most important factor for capacity to innovate
- Common personality traits: curious, determined, aspirational, willing to take on uncertainty
- Very little difference in the way M & W speak about this
- Ratings on the Ladder of Power and Freedom higher than those of other groups in the case studies

Frequency of factors cited as most important for ability to innovation
(% share, 336 men and women individual innovators)

	Men (n=168)	Women (n=168)
Personality traits	41%	36%
Extension services and other external partners	39%	26%
Agricultural/financial resources and inputs	29%	26%
Local networks	15%	11%
Family support	13%	26%

Ladder of Power and Freedom results

Table 2: Comparison of agency on the Ladder of Power and Freedom between innovators and middle-class focus groups (average ladder step)

	Men			Women		
	10 yrs. ago	Now	Difference	10 yrs. ago	Now	Difference
Middle-class FGDs (n=84 w/men and 84 w/women)	2.84	3.54	0.70	1.96	3.02	1.08
Innovators (n=168 men and 168 women)	3.13	4.11	0.98	2.38	3.74	1.36

Table 3: Comparison of current agency level on the Ladder of Power and Freedom between married and unmarried innovators (average ladder step)

	Men innovators (n=168)	Women innovators (n=168)
Married/Common-law	4.12	3.60
Widow/Divorce/Single	4.00	4.00

Now I'm on step 3 because I can make my own decision on particular issues that need my participation such as on everyday life. But the major decisions are still his, and he is responsible and controls major issues.

(Married woman farmer, 45, Wariso, Ethiopia)

During that time most of the decisions were being made by my husband. Every little decision I used to make was undermined by the husband. Today I can make full decisions. I can say I will plant one acre or two acres. Planning in the absence of the husband is better.

(Separated woman farmer, 43, Mgorowi, Tanzania, moved from step 2 to 5)

Findings: Social relations and networks

- Innovation tend to challenge local views of how things *should* be done or by *whom*.
 - ➔ Many innovators move skillfully between resistance and conformity
 - Eg: creating room for maneuver by deliberately and explicitly playing into certain gender norms, thus maintaining an impression of conformity
- Economic gain important for gaining buy in, and for W in particular, for respects from spouse and increased participation in HH decisions
- Spousal support particularly important for women (emotional and financial support, helps deal with criticism and pressure to conform, - and reduces risk of tension in HH)



Social relations and networks cont'd

- Gender differences in access to advisory services as well as in the type and quality of the interactions with external partners
- M better positioned to access and cultivate relations with extension personnel and other external entities
- Despite the less intense and sustained interaction with extension agents, W strongly appreciate access to new knowledge and learning

	First source of info		Who if anyone encouraged you?		Possible source of add. info or support?	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
Extension / external partners	58	42	53	26	65	49
Local networks	22	24	18	16	10	12
Family members	6	18	7	32	0	5
No one/ self-motivation	2	5	8	11	5	11
Mixed	10	10	13	15	19	21
NA	2	1	0	1	1	1

Findings: Resources

- Very diverse data set re: study participants' land ownership, education, and access to financial resources.
- Some people innovate because they are poor and have little to lose
- Resources, e.g. land, \$\$ or education are not a prerequisite for capacity to innovate, rather
- Important enabling aspect
- Widows and single women often more resource constrained than married people, however, sometimes their motivation and increased ability to exercise agency can compensate for financial and physical resource constraints.

Bilha: 27-year-old chickpea farmer and mother of two from Saina, Ethiopia



Photo: ICRISAT

- Farmers in Saina grow wheat, teff, beans and chickpeas and women are expected to help their husbands and take care of hh tasks. To begin with Bilha and her husband had no land of their own.
- Bilha attributes her innovation capacity to her strong initiative, support from her husband, and access to extension training.

“After I started my own business, I earned income and could participate in major decisions in our life. At the same time, I got the chance to participate in trainings and meetings that increased my knowledge and skill on farming. My husband recognized my contribution to our improvement over time.”

Samuel: 45-year-old married farmer and father of three from Morogorowi, Tanzania



Photo: Florence Sipalla/CIMMYT

- Farmers in Morogorowi cultivate maize and rice, raise livestock and some grow vegetables for sale.
- With money from making and selling bricks, Samuel managed to build a house and rent land and apply improved maize varieties and crop management.
- Samuel works closely with local extension agents and has recently expanded into livestock activities.

“What has helped me most is being closer to the agricultural extension agents who continue helping me. In case of any problem, I turn to them for help.”

Conclusions

- Key characteristics of rural innovators include personality traits related to curiosity, intentionality self confidence, willingness to take on uncertainty and relatively high levels of agency.
- Access to resources is not a prerequisite but rather an important enabling aspect.
- Men are generally better positioned to access resources and take advantage of innovation opportunities than women, and women innovators more often than men face criticisms for challenging local gender norms, especially if married
- Spousal support particularly important for (married) women innovators
- While often more resource constrained than married people, single women or widows sometimes experience more freedom and power in certain regards than married women
- The more tolerant and non-restrictive the normative context, the greater possibility that both women and men can build and activate their capacity to innovate.
- Focusing primarily on better educated, relatively well-off, male farmers not only risks reinforcing existing inequality, but also leaves important potential untapped.

Opportunities

- Target areas where the normative context re: gender is (becoming) encouraging for both women and men to innovate
- Use gender-transformative approaches to support women and men to develop shared visions for their lives, and to work together to overcome gender barriers to innovation
- Rethink gender awareness creation with communities and R&D partners, including community leaders, as a central axle in strategies for agricultural development and poverty reduction
- Identify ways to support resource-constrained potential innovators (M&W), e.g. through building and leveraging social relations, subsidy arrangements, and rental or collaborative arrangements
- Support single women and widows as role models and vehicles to open space for more women



GENNOVATE

ENABLING GENDER EQUALITY
IN AGRICULTURAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION

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