

When collective action leads to overburdening of rural women

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Rural women in the Philippines venture into forming women’s organizations to increase income by engaging in livelihood projects. These groups of women maybe externally influenced to form themselves into associations or the women may decide on their own. When rural women decide to act together with the goal of acquiring additional income, they may do this without regard to the existing social roles in the community. Institutions assisting this group may not realize that they disempower the women in the process of collective action. This paper is an attempt to answer the question: When does collective action disempower rural women? Specific objectives are: 1. To illustrate how the grouping of women can result to overloading for rural women and 2. To recommend strategies to enhance the collective action process in empowering rural women.

The methodology used is participatory documentation of a village-based women’s group engaged in soap making from natural products available in the community. Major results include: Women in collective action are multitasked with the reproductive, productive and community roles; Women when not fully equipped/capable of performing her role in the collective action becomes vulnerable to economic risks; and Women in collective action cannot exist in isolation from the community structures and existing social relations. It is recommended that capacity enhancement for women on their roles in the collective action process be given importance; the community should be involved in the process specifically the men counterpart of the women; and facilitating institutions for women’s group should be gender sensitive in the process. This paper would have ultimate use in comparing the externally introduced and voluntary grouping of women and how this would impact gender-equitable change processes in the community.

Keywords: collective action, gender relations, participatory, empower, gender-sensitive, gender-equitable, women in development, institutions

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural women in the Philippines may be considered as having an advantage in the pursuit of women’s empowerment and gender equality. The Philippines was a pioneer in using the Gender and Development (GAD) strategy not only within the region but also in global terms (Corner, L.D 1996). The National Commission of the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) is a Commission of the Department of Labor and Employment established by Presidential Decree No.633 in January 7,1975. It aims to achieve the integration of women as full and equal partners with men in total development efforts.

The Philippine Plan for the Development of Women (1990-1995) and the 30-year Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD), 1995-2025 guided government agencies in responding to the GAD issues. The country is signatory to various international agreements adhering to gender equity namely the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 1989, GAD focal points were established in the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, to serve as the primary structures for the implementation of the Philippine Development Plan for Women and to serve as catalysts for gender-responsive planning and programming in their respective line ministries (SD Dimensions 1996). Gender mainstreaming thus became an essential official task/agenda of national and local

governments.

However, poverty that roots from complex factors of structural and institutional inequities remains to be the biggest obstacle in the empowerment of Filipino women. As in many countries in the Asian region, poverty has a woman's face in the Philippines (Nicolas, I.M. 2004). In the Philippines, 49.7% of the population consists of female, while 50.3% are males; the sex ratio of 101.4 remained the same from 1995-2000. About 50% of rural women are members of the labor force, making women a strong force of change in agriculture. However, 51.8% of the women in agriculture are working as unpaid family workers, 30.85 work for themselves, and 17.4% earn wages and salaries (Polestico 2004). The average wage of women in the rural areas is PhP 127.98 compared to the men's daily wage, which is PhP 142.22 or a 15% difference (BAS cited in Gabriela 2005).

Still, rural women continue to take an active role in the agricultural economy. They are involved in both cash crops and subsistence production and in small livestock raising. While men usually do the hard work like land clearing and preparation and those that would require operating heavy equipments or spraying chemicals, women do the planting weeding and harvesting. The division of labor between men and women in agriculture entails a higher pay for men compared to women. Women engage in income generating activities to augment family income due to low agricultural pay and unpaid reproductive/domestic labor. Most often, rural women in the community organize themselves to form cooperatives or women's organizations to do livelihood activities such as basket weaving, candle making, food processing and preserving and many others. Women become multitasked handling the reproductive, the productive and the community roles.

Nowadays, the role of rural women may have changed owing to the multiple roles they take. Women take part in collective action activities that are voluntary in nature or are introduced by external institutions with a poverty alleviation agenda. Collective action requires the voluntary involvement of a group of people, it requires a shared interest within the group and it involves some kind of common action which works in pursuit of that shared interest (Dick, R.M. et al. 2004). An example of this in the Philippines is the grassroots voluntary organizations of women called the Rural Improvement Clubs of the Philippines (RICs). The RICs are linked to one another through a barangay, municipal, provincial, regional and national leadership network that aims to develop the potential of rural women through its various development oriented community projects and activities. Today, the RICs have 9,000 member clubs with almost half a million women memberships who continuously empower its members to improve living in the rural communities (Salio, A. P. 2005).

While there have been many efforts directed to understanding gender issues, inequality and women's right, gender relations and dynamics in the household and in the community seldom get attention. Adding to this is the collective action dimension that engages the time and energy of rural women. Collective action activities or processes offer several advantages that may seem to help rural women gain economic benefits at the end. Participation of more women in poverty alleviation programs and activities utilizing collective decision-making and action that not necessarily translates to women empowerment and equality. It will require a gender lens to understand clearly what happens to gender relations when rural women decide to join the collective action or process to earn additional income to meet the needs of the family.

This paper is an attempt to look into instances when collective actions disempower rural women. Specifically it will illustrate how the grouping of women can result to overloading for rural women and recommend strategies to enhance the collective action process in empowering rural women.

This paper owing to the case study method employed will be highly contextual in analysis and implications.

2. GENDER CONTEXTUALIZING

The initial part of the analysis used participatory documentation of a village-based women's group and followed by a gender analysis. Participatory methods for collecting information generate qualitative data that has strength in establishing rapport and eliciting the information on norms, rules, values and insights of a person. This approach allows a researcher to capture the inner perspective of the subject that may otherwise be concealed in using other methods. Participatory tools used were individual interviews, observation, key informant interviews, focused group discussions, and visualization techniques like Venn diagram and resource flow diagram.

Gender analysis is then employed to provide the gender lens in the analysis of the village group. Gender analysis starts with three key questions: 1) who does what, with what resources? 2) Who has access to the resources, benefits and opportunities? and 3) Who controls the resources, benefits and opportunities? This is done to ensure that development projects and programs fully incorporate the roles, needs, and participation of women and men (Jiranpuk, C. 2005). One of the gender analysis models is the Harvard Analytical Framework that is employed during project implementation. Three diagnostic tools used to described and analyze gender relations in the community are the activity profile, the access and control profile and the influencing factors. The activity profile identifies all relevant productive and reproductive tasks of the community and addresses the question "Who does what?" In each case, men and women's work is shown. The access and control profile identifies resources and benefits associated with the roles delineated in the Activity Profile. The influencing factors identify the surrounding dynamics that affect the gender desegregation presented in the two preceding profiles. These can include factors of change (political, economic, cultural, educational, legal, international) or constraints or opportunities that especially impact women's equal participation and benefit.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PROFILE OF SAMIL, LUCBAN, QUEZON, PHILIPPINES

Lucban is among the 40 municipalities comprising Quezon Province and Samil is one of the villages in Lucban. In Quezon, about half (50.32%) of the total household population five years old and over had attended or completed elementary education; 28.29%, high school; 2.66 % with post secondary education; and 8.92 percent with higher education. Among those who reached college were predominantly females (NSO 2002).

Samil is dominantly an agricultural area with 87.7% of the total land area utilized for agricultural purposes. Major crops planted include coconut trees and palay (rice) that is a major source of income of the people. Common livestock raised are carabaos, horses, goats, pigs and chicken.

Samil is an agrarian reform community (ARC). Most of the farmers benefit from the program but data would show that majority of its beneficiaries are male farmers. Although, women are now entitled to own land, more male farmers benefit from the program. In 1996, for instance, 123 male farmers benefited from the program, with only 8 female farmers benefiting from the program.

The village has 140 households. Total population as of 2005 is 620 with 313 males and 307 females. There are no schools in the village, only a Day Care Center, established in 2003 with 16 pupils, 8 boys and 8 girls. Other school age children go to schools at the town proper, which is about 2-3 kilometers away from the village. Higher education institutions are also found in the town proper. The Day Care Center is also the Barangay (village) Hall and area for the soap-making project.

There are four Barangay Health Workers and one Rural Health Midwife in the village. Free medical consultation is provided once a week in the Barangay Center located in the town proper.

Several government agencies assist the village namely; the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Municipal Office for Agriculture and Cooperatives, Municipal Health Office, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA). DAR assists in the land distribution and settlement of agrarian conflicts with the help of the Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee (BARC). It provides trainings for the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs) and other support services like the road rehabilitation in Sitio Malapia. In 1996, farmer spouses were explicitly recognized as co-owners of the land acquired through agrarian reform as a result of the policy recommendations proposed by the women's organizations and advocates (Polectic 2004).

The Municipal Office for Agriculture and Cooperatives also provides seeds for vegetable production and pesticide for crop protection. They trained the women on organization skills and technical knowledge on food preservations. The Barangay Health Midwife and the Brangay Health Workers ensure the good health conditions of the community members. It offers immunizations, free consultations and medicines. It provides trainings for the Barangay Health Workers and conducts mother classes. DENR create awareness among the people on the need to preserve and conserve the forest reserves and Mt. Banahaw. PCA regulates the cutting of coconut trees and ensures replanting activities for every coconut tree that is cut down. Likewise, they provide coconut fertilizers to farmers.

The local village officials consist of the Village Chairman who is a woman, 7 Council Members, Secretary, Treasurer and the Youth representative/chairman. Of the officials, 6 are females while 5 are males.

4. THROUGH A GENDER LENS

THE CASE OF A WOMEN ORGANIZATION: SAMIL WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AUTO SAVINGS GROUP (SWID-ASG)

Brief Description of the Association

The SWID-ASG established in April 8,1994 with 12 founding members aims at engaging in a livelihood project. This is also the Rural Improvement Club (RIC) of Samil. The group maintains a 100 square meter farm lot planted with orchard and vegetables such as beans, cassava, tomatoes and petchay. Most of them are engaged in planting, weeding and marketing of the products. Farm activities are done by schedule on Saturdays.

In 1999, three members from the group attended a seminar on Soap Making sponsored by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). With the initiative of Mrs. Racelis, the village captain, they tried to apply what they have learned in soap making. They started the soap-making project with a capital of PhP350.00 from the PhP30.00 contribution of members. At present, the group has a project capital of PhP100, 000 with 71 members.

The SWID-ASG meets regularly to discuss developments of the projects, for the reporting of different committees, and surfacing of problems encountered. During Christmas season, they do caroling and proceeds are used to buy gifts for members.

Several agencies are assisting the organization and this includes the Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the San Luis Cooperative. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) awarded SWID-ASG as Outstanding People's Organization (2001-2003).

The Soap Making Project

Raw materials used in soap production like guava, salay, acapulco leaves, fruits of raddish, camias, bamboo shoot, cucumber, papaya and carrots are available in the community and managed by some of the women members. It is being processed into bath soap with 9 variances.

The main ingredients of the SWID soap are acoustic soda, exora oil, and perfume with different scents of pacholi, lemon, sampaguita and rose using the leaves or trunk. Simple materials needed in the operation include pail, stove, molder (wood tray), big basin, blender and cutter. In a day's operation, they are able to make 3 trays with 52 pieces of soap per tray at 130 grams / soap. The group produces 10 to 20 trays of soap per month.

The Samil Day Care Center serves as the temporary area for the soap-making project of the group. Working schedule of members is done by draw lots. In soap making, only 5 persons are needed for the mixing of ingredients, trimming, wrapping, and packing. A month drying time is needed before the soap is wrapped. Payment for workers is: PhP 0.75/cooking, 0.25/pc/slicing and 0.25/pc/wrapping. SWID-ASG members devote much of their time in farming activities and part time in making bath soap due to the higher income from farming.

Nine variances of bath soap produced and usage

Common Name	Family/Scientific Name	Usage
Papaya	<i>Carica papaya L.</i>	Skin whitening
Camias	<i>Averrhoa bilimbi L.</i>	Skin bleaching
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Skin moisturizing
Carrots	Daucus carota var sativa	Anti-aging
Radish	Raphanus sativus	Skin astringent
Bamboo shoot	<i>Psidium guajava L.</i>	Anti-aging
Guava		Anti-bacteria
Acapulco		Anti-bacteria
Salay		Hair renewal

Papaya soap ranks as the best selling variance next are radish, acapulco and salay variances. The soap products carry a brand name “**SWID**” and sold at PhP 20.00/pc. Soap is sold at different market outlets and to private individuals, institutions and agencies like DOLE, DAR and DOST. They also participate in mall trade exhibition to showcase their soap products. The group was awarded a financial grant of PhP 51,135 by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for the soap-making project and requires them to submit a financial statement at the end of each month. The project was registered to DOLE on March 12, 2002 with registry number 587.

Development of Savings and Credit Loan Assistance

Members are encouraged to raise their organization’s capital for collective use. Savings from soap making operation are recorded and accounted by the treasurer of the association. Savings of the organization are used as source of credit for members.

Each member could avail a minimum credit loan of PhP 2, 000 payable in 2 months. For every PhP1, 000 loans, a PhP85.00 peso mark up/interest is imposed to cover some expenditures. The interests paid by the members for every loan granted are deposited equally as savings and capital build up of the association.

Problems of SWID-ASG

- High cost of commercial inputs
- Availability of labor (most women are involved in the farming activities especially during rice planting and harvesting). Women earned more in farming activities than in soap making.
- Processing of soap is laborious since it is done manually
- Equipment for soap processing is improvised using simple, crude and made of poor quality materials (i.e. slicer, mixer, molder etc).

Plans of SWID-ASG

- Provide education assistance program for qualified and deserving children of least fortunate members
- Building for soap making project and other activities of the organization
- Mechanized processing equipment for soap production
- Increase soap production during peak season of raw materials availability
- Register the association with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

5. GENDER ANALYSIS

ACTIVITY PROFILE IN PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES BY GENDER

Male members of the community are engaged in heavy and difficult farming activities such as cleaning of paddy dikes, paddling, leveling, land preparation, seedbed preparation, harrowing and fertilizer application and less visible in marketing and sale of rice, vegetables, ornamentals and animals. It is in these light activities where women are heavily involved in as well as in ornamental and vegetable production. Women also share several productive activities with men such as in feeding animals, paddling, seedling production, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, and storing rice. Women play important roles in both cash crops and subsistence production, and in small livestock raising. The male children also help in the farm specifically in planting, fertilizer application, harrowing, harvesting and storing of rice. However, women do not participate in irrigating the field, plowing, planting, chemical application and in animal breeding (Table 1a).

Table 1a. Activity profile showing the productive activities by gender

Activity	Male		Female		Children	
	No. of Responses (424)	%	No. of Responses (115)	%	No. of Responses (6)	%
PRODUCTIVE					F-female	M-male
Cleaning of paddy dikes	19	4.48	3	2.60		
Paddling	18	4.24	4	3.47		
Final harrowing/leveling	18	4.24	2	1.73		
Land preparation	17	4.00	2	1.73		
Seedbed preparation	17	4.00	2	1.73	M - 1	17
Harrowing	17	4.00	2	1.73	M - 1	17
Fertilizer application	17	4.00	2	1.73	M - 1	17
Seed sowing	16	3.77	1	0.86		
Harvesting	16	3.77	6	5.21	M - 1	17
Transplanting	16	3.77	5	4.34		
Weeding	16	3.77	8	6.95		
Seasonal agricultural work	16	3.77	3	2.60		
Animal production	15	3.53	4	3.47		
Vegetable production	15	3.53	7	6.08		
Planting	14	3.30	-	-	M - 1	17
Insecticide/pesticide spraying	14	3.30	-	-		
Weedicide application	14	3.30	-	-		
Planting other crops aside from rice	14	3.30	7	6.08		
Seedling production	14	3.30	6	5.21		
Contract labor	14	3.30	2	1.73		
Plowing	13	3.07	-	-		
Feeding animals	13	3.07	4	3.47		
Storing rice	12	2.83	5	4.34	M - 1	17
Animal breeding	12	2.83	-	-		
Animal care	12	2.83	2	1.73		
Irrigation	11	2.59	-	-		
Ornamental production	10	2.35	6	5.21		
Marketing of rice	8	1.88	10	8.69		

Vegetable sale	7	1.65	11	9.56
Animal sale	5	1.17	2	1.73
Ornamental sale	4	0.94	9	7.82

ACTIVITY PROFILE IN REPRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES BY GENDER

The men and women share in all reproductive activities with men prominent in collecting firewood and followed by household work. Women as has been her expected role in the household does the household work and childcare. Female children help in household work, childcare and in collecting water (Table 1b).

Table 1b. Activity profile showing the reproductive activities by gender

Activity	Male		Female		Children	
	No. of Responses (34)	%	No. of Responses (34)	%	No. of Responses (4)	%
REPRODUCTIVE					F-female	M- male
Household work	10	29.41	15	44	F - 2	50
Collecting firewood	13	38.23	3	9		
Collecting water	6	17.64	5	15	F - 1	25
Child care	5	14.70	11	32	F - 1	25

ACTIVITY PROFILE IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES BY GENDER

Women were visible in all community activities especially in attending village meetings. Men had minimal participation in community activities. Female children also participate in attending village meetings and as membership in community organizations (Table 1c).

Table 1c. Activity profile showing the community work by gender

Activity	Male		Female		Children	
	No. of Responses (21)	%	No. of Responses (51)	%	No. of Responses (2)	%
COMMUNITY WORK					F-female	M- male
Village meetings	6	28.57	13	25.49	F - 1	50
Membership in community organizations	6	28.57	12	23.52	F - 1	50

Participation in local revolving fund	4	19	10	19.60
Community service	5	24	12	23.52
Other activities			4	8

GENDER PARTICIPATION IN THREE MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Men and women share responsibilities in the multiple tasks in productive, reproductive and community work but not on equal basis. The multiple responses of the male respondents reveal that their major role is in productive activities and very minimal role in the reproductive and community activities. For the women, their activities are very varied, with majority as productive activities followed by community work and reproductive activities. Studies have shown that in agrarian reform beneficiaries in the Philippines, 90% of the farmer spouses take farming as their main livelihood aside from being full time housekeepers and taking on other secondary income generating activities (Polectico 2004). Male children help in the productive activities, while the female children help in the reproductive and community activities (Table 2).

Table 2. Activity profile showing involvement in the three major activities by gender

Activity	Male	Female	Children	
	% Total of Responses (N = 479)	% Total of Responses (N = 200)	% Total of Responses (N = 12) Male	Female
Productive	89	58	50	
Reproductive	7	17		33
Community work	4	25		17

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS AND PERCENT OF TOTAL HOURS PER DAY SPENT BY GENDER PER ACTIVITY

Men spent most of their time in productive activities, while women spent most of their time for reproductive activities. Women allot more time for community work compared to men. Men spend more time for other activities such as recreation, grooming and spiritual obligation compared to women. Average number of hours for sleeping of men is 7 hours while women sleep a little bit lesser 6.8 hours (Table 3).

Table 3. Average number of hours and percent of total hours per day spent by gender per activity.

ACTIVITY	MALE		FEMALE	
	Average (hrs)	Percent (%)	Average (hrs)	Percent (%)
Reproductive	3.95	16	11.45	48
Productive	9.25	39	1.40	6
Community work	0.55	2	1.60	7
Other activities (e.g. recreation, hygiene/grooming, and spiritual obligation)	3.25	14	2.75	11

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND CONTROL OF THE BENEFITS BY GENDER

Access and control of both gender in agricultural resources included access to land, labor, credit, capital, raw materials, inputs, farm equipment/tools, information, technology, and extension services. Men has access and control of almost all the resources except for information since most of the time he stays in the farm and gets to interact less with sources of information. The women on the other hand, have access to all the factors mentioned except for labor. Women however do not have control over capital resource (Table 4a).

As for the benefits, men do not access nor control the benefits from extension program and training owing to his occupied schedule in the farm. Women have access and control over benefits from credit program, extension program, training and sources of additional income. Women have access to paid work but do not have control over the amount paid for equal work with men.

Table 4a. Access and control profile of resources and benefits by gender

		A-Access		C- Control	
RESOURCES	Male	Female	BENEFITS	Male	Female
Land	A/C	A/C	Paid work	A/C	A
Labor	A/C	-	Incentives/additional income	A/C	A/C
Credit	A/C	A/C	Extension program	-	A/C
Capital	A/C	A	Credit program	A/C	A/C
Raw materials	A/C	A/C	Training	-	A/C
Inputs	A/C	A/C			
Farm equipment/tools	A/C	A/C			
Information	-	A/C			
Technology	A/C	A/C			
Extension services	A/C	A/C			

INFLUENCING FACTORS TO EXPLAIN THE ACCESS AND CONTROL PROFILE BY GENDER

Several interrelated factors would explain why gender roles differ in terms of accessing and controlling agricultural resources and benefits. Women compared to men have access and control over almost all of the major factors in agriculture. This indicates that men do regard women with equal rights in the access and control over resources and benefits. Social dynamics within the community reveal that it is not gender bias. While stereotyping is still evident in that women should do the reproductive activities, women are given freedom to engage in community work such as livelihood projects to have additional income aside from farm work. Men share in the reproductive activities although time spent is very limited. Collective decision-making and collective work assures the farm family of finding solutions to their financial problems (Table 4b).

Women being perceived as weak and slow workers are paid lower for the same work done by men. For harvesting rice, female farmers are paid PhP 180 with free meal, while male farmers gets PhP 200 with free meal. If farm work is immediate, men are favored over women. With the higher pay in farm work compared to income from soap making, women choose to do farm work. This leads to lack of labor for the soap production when there are abundant raw materials available in the community. They could have taken advantage of this to increase production of soap and increase the organization's income for the benefit also of the women members. At the end, it is the women who still lose in this situation.

On the other hand, girls are given more opportunity to pursue education since boys are expected to help the father in the farm. Because of the low education of male children, after farm work, they work in factories or in construction companies in nearby vicinities. In the same view that female children obtain higher education and thus more favored for applying for employment abroad. Some of the women members are daughters of the members of the organization. As a collective group with more access to information, technology, extension program and training, women are empowered to make informed decisions. Moreso, that the village chairperson is a woman and more of the village officials are women. The wife of the Provincial Governor is very active in gender and development. Recently, upon the initiative of the Governor's wife, the women's' organization in the village including the chairperson of the SAMIL group joined a study tour to visit a processing plant for recycling juice packs into bags, placemats and other materials that can be sold for additional income. The SAMIL members also attended a seminar on women's rights, gender, population and development and livelihood project for women and youth.

Table 4b. Influencing factors explaining the access and control profile

Influencing factors	
Factors	Constraints/Opportunities
Social	Social relations in the community are not gender bias. Women maximize their time and distribute this accordingly to do the productive, reproductive and community activities to augment family income.
Economic	Women are hired for lighter agricultural jobs and given a lower pay since they are seen to be slow workers compared to men. Paid work was given more often to men. Labor availability for farm work includes women involved in soap making, causing the lack of labor for soap production or that operation has to be suspended. Females are favored for working abroad compared to males. However, males are favored in rural-urban movement to find work since the female children are seen to be more vulnerable. Men are usually employed as construction workers and factory workers.

Cultural	There is sharing in reproductive responsibilities. Decision-making goes through a process of discussion and compromising between husband and wife especially for major family matters. Collective work typical of the Filipino farm family is done (including children) is done to survive difficulties in life.
Political	The village chairperson is a woman and of the 11 village officials, 6 are women and 5 are men. The wife of the Provincial Governor/Head is very active in GAD but has no defined plans yet for the village.
Environmental	The planting schedule of rice in April coincides with the peak production/availability of raw materials (i.e. raddish and camias) used in soap making. Women members were oriented on waste management and how waste recycling can be a source of livelihood.
Education	Both girls and boys are provided education however, when finances are limited, the girls are encouraged to study, as boys need to stay home and help their father in the farm.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION ON GENDER RELATIONS

Voluntary local collective action manifests itself in the Samil Women in Development, Auto-Savings Group (SWID-ASG). Being an Agrarian Reform Beneficiary, the group is being assisted by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in terms of local capability building. Technical assistance is provided by DOST, while DOLE provides for capital of the organization. Local collective action seldom survives without the support of other organizations. Samil is a cohesive community with shared norms, beliefs and rules that binds them as an agricultural community. This is an enhancing factor for the formation of women groups. SWID-ASG is a formal collective group that is bounded by its own rules and regulations and duly registered by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

Indeed, the SWID-ASG provided women with an avenue to prove to themselves that they can be productive aside from doing unpaid household work. The income generating capacity of women increased when given opportunities and resources to engage in paid work. Collective action builds the confidence of women to link and network with concerned institutions. Moreso, through collective action, women improve their access to information, technology, credit, market and training. As a group, it increases their bargaining power to assert for its rights and be a pressure group in the community. It serves as a political force that can influence power relations in the community. SWID-ASG continues to build its capital, develop its human resource, acquire new assets, and increase its membership. It has a bright future ahead particularly now that the local governance continues to include gender and development (GAD) in its 5-year village development plan.

It may look like with collective action through the SWID – ASG that women were empowered and that participation of women in the development process brought about gender equality. A closer look using a gender lens indicates otherwise. Although the husbands are supportive of their involvement in community activities and are willing to share responsibilities in household work, the farmer’s spouses remain to be burdened. Additional workload of women increases the number of activities hence decreasing her time for her expected roles in childcare and domestic management. The opportunity cost of time is demanding when a women engages in collective action. With the intention to help in augmenting family income, women look for additional sources of income. This

is however possible only when they are not busy in agricultural work were they are paid much higher. Even if the SWID-ASG plans to increase soap production during peak availability of raw materials in the farm, this is not possible since the members are also hired as farm workers when it is cultivation time for rice in the community. Yet women still compete with the men workers who are paid much higher. At the end, women limits her time for her more important domestic responsibilities in order to have more time for less paying farm activities. Her full potential in income-generating activities through collective action is not realized due to the opportunity cost of time for farm work. Furthermore, the crude tools and poor quality equipment for soap production which is operated manually slows down soap operation and reduced income. This paves the way for women to remain in poverty. The poorer the household, the longer the hours worked by women (Corner 1996). The gender analysis showed that women had shorter sleeping hours and had limited time for recreation, grooming or spiritual obligations. More time is demanded from women with access to information, technology, extension services and training. Managing trade-offs in doing the triple roles are crucial to prevent this lose-lose situation of rural women.

Institutions assisting the women's group may not realize the impact of collective action on gender relations in the community. Activities by gender increases and time allotted for the three major activities are altered by gender. Changes lead to increase in women's workload and overburdening of rural women. Collective action deals with social dynamics and relations that cannot be isolated from the community. It will have to start with the gender dynamics in the household to better understand how collective action of women will affect existing gender relations. Institutions supporting women's group may as well consider how collective action can complement other existing social structures, and gender relations in the household and in the community. The participation of rural women in collective action and the support of men in the process should consider the equal sharing of responsibilities for the benefits and cost derived from collective action.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Rural women should be provided with technological needs that will reduce drudgery and time spent for soap production. Likewise, task requirements addressing women's concerns such as new soap variances that would use raw materials available after rice cultivation should be introduced to solve the problem of labor availability.
- Institutions planning to form groups of women for livelihood projects should be gender-sensitive and that gender concepts should be well explained to the group. This will facilitate better understanding of why groups are formed and the possible impacts of collective action on gender relations. Rural women in collective action should be made to understand the implications of collective action on gender relations and the equitable sharing of men and women of the cost and benefits from the development process. Thus, for gender relations to be more equitable in collective action, gender consciousness raising should be the immediate priority.
- Gender awareness and training should be conducted for both men and women in the community to ensure gender-equitable change processes in the community.
- Collective action can be a viable vehicle for the reduction of poverty and women empowerment as long as it considers the different roles, interests, needs, resource constraints, experience and knowledge of both men and women. It is not just participation of women in the development process that is important but rather the equal contribution to and

sharing of the benefits of development that should shape the development agenda for agriculture.

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