Rural nonprofit organizations in Haiti: Gender, power and perceived benefits of membership

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BACKGROUND
Farmers groups are recognized globally as a platform to reach. They can allow technology transfer, provide credit and inputs to farmers and help farmers get access to markets (Bernard & Spielman, 2009; Sangole et al., 2014). In Haiti, many non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions see farmers’ associations as indispensable partners in implementing projects because of their proximity to rural communities (MARNDR, 2010). Given the roles women play in agriculture in Haiti, it is essential to understand the roles and power of women in Haitian farmers’ associations. My research explores the roles that women play in Haitian farmers’ organizations, the degree to which they assume leadership, and the benefits they accrue from membership.

OBJECTIVES
The research reported here examined (1) women’s and men’s perceptions of the degree to males and females have similar responsibilities, power, authority, and respect as members of mixed gender farmer associations in Haiti and (2) their perceptions of the benefits of membership for males and females in mixed gender farmer associations in Haiti.

METHODS
We conducted the research in a municipality near Port-au-Prince working with thirty farmer associations that collaborate with the AREA Project of the University of Florida, funded by the US Agency for International Development. We selected six associations with 20% to 40% female membership because this gender mix was the most common among the 30 associations in the AREA Project. In each association, we picked randomly two women and two men that are not part of the committee members for a total sample of 24 members among for the six associations. We used mixed methods to collect data, consisting of an index and open-response questions in a semi-structured interview. The index consisted of four (4) items that assessed the how the group decides which members of the association should receive a particular benefit or opportunity, acquire benefits for oneself, get help from other members or gain access to training.

RESULTS
We compared the perceptions of the participants with regard to males and females who DO OR DO NOT serve on governing bodies in the association (committees). We used the average of the index score for quantitative analysis and thematic coding for qualitative analysis (not reported here).

Similarities between all the associations
- Women are never perceived as more privileged than men
- Men are always perceived as equally or more privileged than women
- Committee members are more privileged than non members

Differences between the Associations

- Associations A3 and A5
  - Perceptions of men and women are always the same
  - All of the interviewees perceive that men and women have the same privilege,
  - Both inside and outside the committee
- Associations A1, A4 and A6
  - Perceptions of men and women are always different
  - Men perceive more privilege for men whereas women perceive no difference between men and women
  - Women perceive more privilege for men where men perceive no difference between men and women
- For Association A4
  - All Women perceived that men are more privileged while all men perceived that there is no difference between men and women
- For Association A2
  - Perception of men and women are the same about difference between men and women within the committee
  - Both men and women perceive that men are more privilege within the committee
  - Men always perceive that men are more privileged than women; men perceive men more privileged outside the committee
  - While women perceive there is no difference between men and women outside the committee.

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REFERENCES

CONCLUSIONS
Associations differ with regard to the degree to which their male and female members view gender equality in the association

The differences in perceptions for members and non-members of governing bodies are greater than perceived differences by gender.