

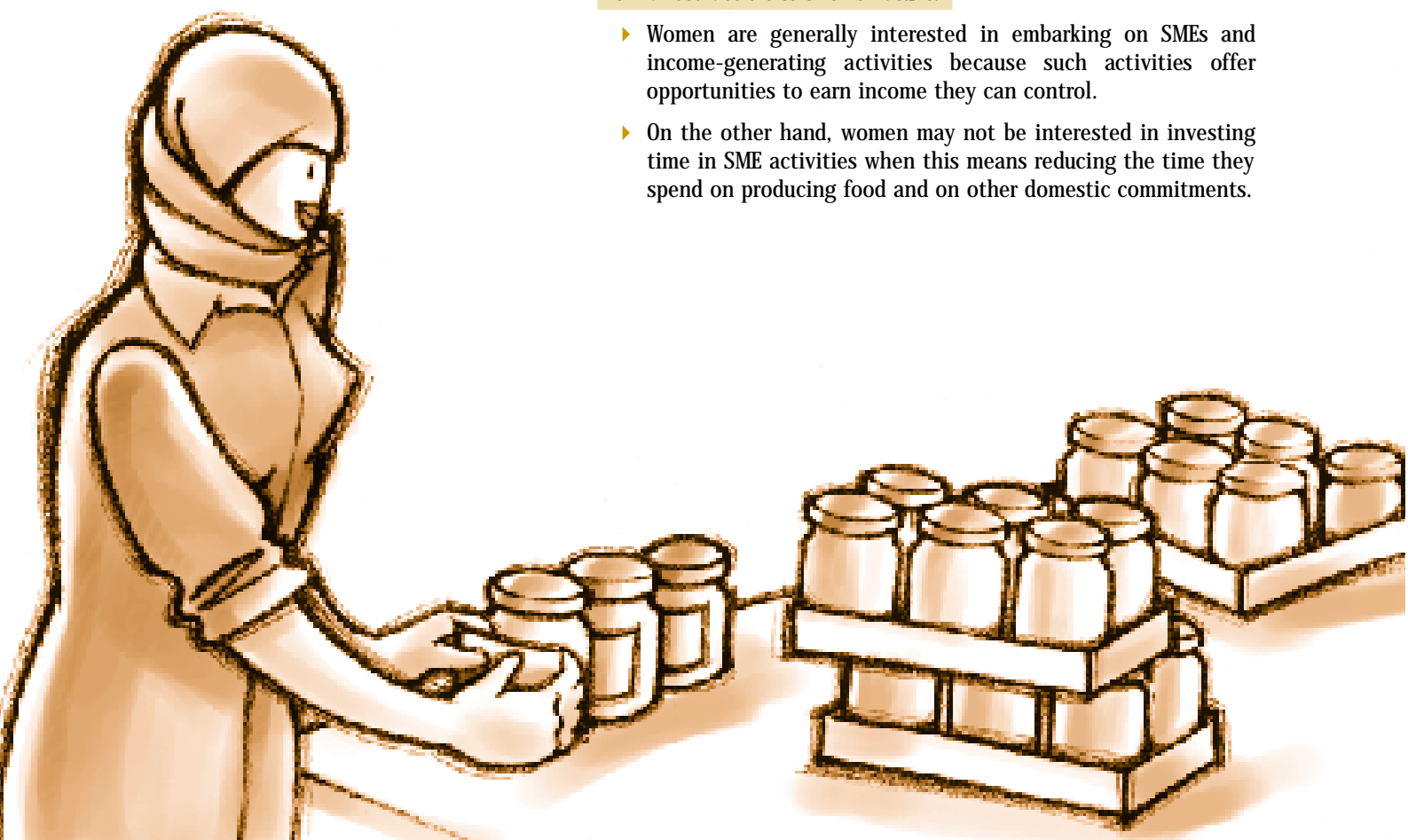
issues

Differences in men's and women's access to, and control of, assets and resources (inputs, income, labour, technology, services) within households affect their rural enterprise production and investment priorities.

- ▶ Household resources are not always pooled or jointly owned by men and women.
- ▶ Use of income differs inasmuch as women generally use their income to meet daily household needs (including purchase of food), whereas men tend to be responsible for longer-term investments and larger cost items.
- ▶ Increased income controlled by men from rural enterprise (SME) activities may not translate into improved household nutrition.
- ▶ Women generally control income generated by their own enterprise activities.
- ▶ It is common for new technologies to be taken over by men when they offer greater cash-earning opportunities and prestige. For this reason, women may prefer to continue using manual, rather than mechanical, methods.

Where SME activities are marginal as a livelihood source compared with other sources of income, households may not be immediately interested in investing extra time and resources in new or enhanced activities of this nature.

- ▶ Women are generally interested in embarking on SMEs and income-generating activities because such activities offer opportunities to earn income they can control.
- ▶ On the other hand, women may not be interested in investing time in SME activities when this means reducing the time they spend on producing food and on other domestic commitments.



implications

FOR PROJECT AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ▶ Men's and women's incomes and expenditure patterns should be analysed separately, bearing in mind that income controlled by women is likely to be of more immediate benefit to HFS and nutrition.
- ▶ Women are excellent targets for SME interventions aimed at enhancing alternative sources of livelihood, provided their specific constraints are taken into account and they retain control of the income generated.
- ▶ In planning support to SME activities, an assessment should be made, for different types of households, of:
 - ▶ how the enterprises function and where they figure in the household economy and coping strategies of enterprise members;
 - ▶ the relative importance of SME activities (micro, small, medium) as sources of income for women compared with men, in normal or emergency situations (such as food shortages);
 - ▶ whether households (men and women, respectively) are investing in SMEs; from what sources of income; for which types of product or activity; managed by whom; whether they are prepared to do so in the future; how and why;
 - ▶ if there is an effective demand for the credit and savings services to be offered;
 - ▶ whether smallholders have sufficient means or potential to cover short-term food security needs and thus a realistic repayment capacity; in the negative, loans should not be extended for production.

risks

- ▶ If poor households' risk-management strategies – and women's access to assets and benefits compared with that of men – are not taken into account, project/programme-induced changes may have a negative effect on household food security:
 - ▶ when a change in the balance between food production and income-generating activities makes poor households more vulnerable to market shocks;
 - ▶ when a change occurs in the traditional diversification of sources of income and food that are critical for households to avert overall risk and nutritional imbalance;
 - ▶ if less time is spent on food production and domestic tasks;
 - ▶ if new/enhanced income-earning opportunities are taken over by men (for example, benefits from the introduction of new technologies);
 - ▶ if women's control of assets and benefits decreases.



issues

The organization of production at the household level implies gender division of labour – which, in turn, means that men and women have: (a) different and complementary knowledge bases; and (b) different roles in consultation and decision-making.

- ▶ Patterns of gender division of labour are location-specific and change over time. With increasing migration and off-farm work by men, women's workload and involvement in activities that were once considered as exclusively 'male' also increase. It is common for women to perform men's tasks; the opposite rarely occurs.
- ▶ Women frequently have to take on managerial responsibilities for household rural enterprises. However, in countries where socio-cultural norms restrict the mobility of women, managerial responsibilities that include the marketing of products are usually delegated to men of the household.

Recognition of women's constraints, responsibilities and know-how compared with those of men will be significant in terms of defining project/programme activities, namely, training and information-dissemination; introduction of new technologies; credit and savings mechanisms; and marketing support.

Income-generating activities may be carried out by women when there is little demand for labour for on-farm activities.

Patterns of decision-making and consultation in the traditional household are complex and do not usually correspond to the socio-culturally-defined gender division of labour more adhered to by richer households.

- ▶ Many decisions (such as investment in SME activities) are in fact joint decisions reached within the household through a process of consultation, although they may not formally be recognized as such (i.e. not admitted by households and communities for socio-cultural reasons).
- ▶ In poorer households, women's involvement in household decision-making is significant.



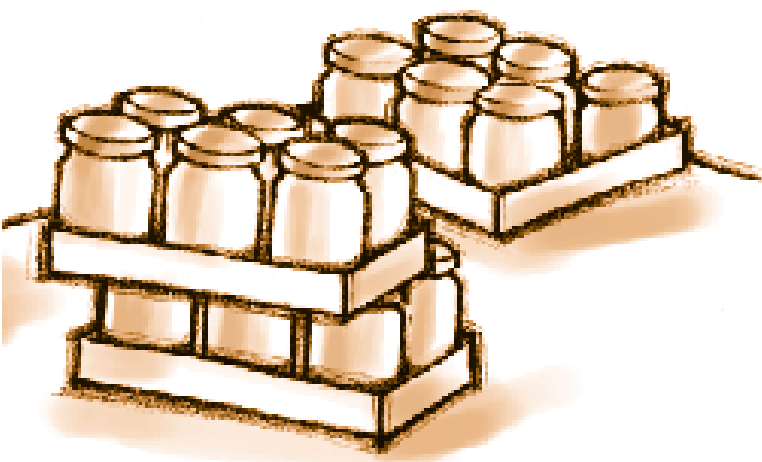
implications

FOR PROJECT AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ▶ Women's overall responsibilities affect poor households' capacity to adopt new activities if additional family labour is not available or they cannot afford hired labour.
- ▶ Seasonal variations in on-farm labour will have implications for the planning of off-farm activities.
- ▶ Time and labour-saving technology or support services for women's domestic activities may increase the productivity of household SMEs and have a positive impact on HFS.
- ▶ Information-dissemination and training need to be directed at individual women microentrepreneurs and not only to women members of group enterprises or the traditionally-recognized decider (who may be man).
- ▶ Illiteracy and inadequate business management skills, especially in women, are important constraints on improving the productivity of SMEs.
- ▶ Where socially and culturally possible, women need to have the right to full membership of multifunctional organizations such as cooperatives; otherwise, enterprises managed by women may tend to remain small.

risks

- ▶ If the time and labour spent on producing food production is diverted to SME activities, the risk to HFS may increase.
- ▶ Lack of understanding of women's constraints in terms of labour and mobility may lead to non-implementation of planned SME activities. Women may not be able to give up on-farm and domestic tasks unless additional family labour is available or hired labour can be afforded.
- ▶ Failure to direct information to the person responsible for a given activity during implementation may result in lack of interest and thus no success.
- ▶ The need to meet incremental labour requirements may not only affect women but also increase on-farm and domestic tasks for children, especially girls, often to the detriment of their schooling. (It has been proved that there is a significant correlation between the education of girls and the health and nutritional status of households and, indeed, of future generations.)



Note

The term "rural enterprise" is used here to indicate a broad range of activities, from the most marginal type of informal sector activities run by a single-owner manager to medium-size legally-entitled enterprises, and includes activities run by individuals, families, groups, cooperatives, etc.