

NSAC International Beyond Borders

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Seeing Possibilities: PHMIL Internships, 2011

Participatory visual methodologies for integrating gender within post-harvest management, Jimma, Ethiopia

The Nova Scotia Agricultural College and McGill University, together with Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (JUCAVM), located in southwest Ethiopia are implementing a development project titled "Post-Harvest Management to Improve Livelihoods (PHMIL)" funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The six year project will support JUCAVM to become a leader in post-harvest management and technologies to improve the quality, value and availability of local agricultural products.

Addressing gender inequalities and HIV/AIDS is an integral component of the PHMIL project. As part of the project two McGill interns traveled to JUCAVM for 3 months to work on participatory visual methodologies for integrating gender within post-harvest management.

Gender and HIV are cross-cutting components of the PHMIL project. Indeed, gender is a critical, but often overlooked aspect of agricultural production, research and teaching. There is also a clear relationship between gender, poverty, and HIV transmission. But what does it actually mean to address gender and HIV

within post-harvest management? This past summer, PHMIL interns Katie MacEntee and Jen Thompson spent three months at the Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (JUCAVM) to explore this question.

Katie and Jen are both doctoral students from McGill University's Faculty of Education with interest in qualitative research using cameras and video to explore issues from a grassroots perspective. Supported by and working in collaboration with, the PHMIL team, Jen and Katie explored the use of participatory visual methodologies to integrate gender and HIV within the context of agricultural science research and teaching.

Participatory methodologies are based on the belief that people are experts about their own lives. This often means involving groups, such as women and youth, who are traditionally marginalized from other forms of decision-making and knowledge production, in aspects of study previously reserved for academics. The use of visual methods, like photography or filmmaking, helps different groups engage in the research. One of the underlying goals of this type of research is the creation of change through the implementation of meaningful and



Jen and Katie at the JUCAVM gates

realistic solutions to issues affecting research participants. Three of Jen and

Katie's internship projects described below, demonstrate how participatory visual methodologies - photovoice, digital storytelling, and documentary film - can be used to explore gender and HIV within the agricultural research and education context.

Photovoice involves participants taking and analyzing photographs to represent their lives. Katie and Jen facilitated photovoice workshops with a secondary English class in the rural town of Yebu, near Jimma. These workshops elicited students'



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Yebu students constructing posters with the photographs they took

understandings of how coffee production and their lives are gendered. Responding to the prompt,

“Growing up in the land of coffee as a girl/boy,” the youth worked in single sex, small groups to 1) take pictures of how they saw their lives as gendered, 2) discuss the photographs they took and make posters with them, and 3) present their work to the class.

These workshops provided an opportunity for the youth to visualize and reflect on gender issues from their perspective, rather than adults telling them how gender affects them. From the photographs, it is apparent that the youth have very specific understandings of how gender affects their lives. The boys’ groups identified how young men are often expected to climb high trees to hang beehives and collect honey. Through the boys’ photo presentation they explained if a boy complains or is unable to perform these dangerous and strenuous tasks

they are teased and bullied by the men in their community. These chores also take time away from the youths schoolwork, which they identified as one of their major priorities. Building on this photovoice work, PHMIL has a



Photograph taken by a boys’ group to show the specific challenges they face, as boys, related to beekeeping

better understanding of how introducing beehives that do not have to be hung high up in the trees might better aid rural boys’ educational success.

Digital storytelling is “a short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds”¹. In collaboration with the JUCAVM Gender Office, Jen and Katie ran a digital storytelling workshop for first year male and female agricultural students on the topic of HIV and AIDS on campus. During this one-day workshop, the students worked in small groups to produce short, 3-5 minute digital stories that talked about how HIV and AIDS can affect students’ lives on campus. All the digital stories describe possible negative consequences for young women engaging in sexual relationships - dropping out of school, unplanned pregnancies, botched abortions, HIV transmission, AIDS, and death. These stories resonate further when considered alongside the underrepresentation of young women within post secondary institutions in Ethiopia. Female students are more likely to leave university before obtaining a degree and they are more likely to experience harassment, homesickness, lack of assertiveness, lack of support from student services, financial problems, and lack of gender sensitivity from teachers². Workshop participants described young women entering university from rural areas as being acutely vulnerable to these issues. Coming from more traditional

¹ Centre for Digital Storytelling. www.storycentre.org

² Melese, Wudu, Fenta, Getahun (2009). Trend and Causes of Female Students Dropout From Teacher Education Institutions of Ethiopia: The Case of Jimma University. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*. Vol. 5(1) pp. 1-19.



First year agricultural students develop a storyboard for their digital story about HIV on JU campus

and patriarchal communities, they are described as less prepared to negotiate inappropriate or sexual advances. Notably absent in the stories, however, is any discussion of female students' resilience within an unsupportive university environment, and there is often no explanation of how male students might experience these relationships, pressures, and risks. The digital storytelling workshop identified the need for follow-up activities to further explore masculinity and the perspectives of male students in relation to HIV on campus.

There is potential for using the digital stories produced during this workshop in future orientation sessions for new students. As the stories are presented from students' perspectives, they lend a certain level of credibility to the messages. The stories can act as discussion pieces for incoming students to better prepare them for pressures they might experience at university, and to identify their capacity to address these issues on their own or with the help of university support services and community.

Documentary film: Collaborating with JUCAVM faculty lecturer Sirawdink Fikreyesus and Master's student Kemeru Jihad, Katie and Jen

co-produced a short documentary film about gender and enset, one of Ethiopia's staple crops. A tuber plant native to the south-west region of the country, enset is planted in many backyard gardens as a safety net for households in times of need. When harvested, the whole plant is used as food, medicine, and rope. These products can be consumed in the home or sold at market for quick access to funds. Processing enset is extremely labour intensive, and is generally done entirely by women. Yet very little research addresses the gendered nature of this crop. "Gender and Enset: A documentary film" explores the relationship between gender roles, enset production, and enset-related agricultural research and technology development. Addressing technical issues, for example, about the types of equipment used for separating and collecting enset pulp from the pseudo-stem, the film questions the "normal" process of doing research. Through interviews with 5 female farmers as well as

Development Agents, agricultural researchers, and a gender specialist, the film makes visible the gendered nature of enset. The film is intended as a curriculum tool for agricultural sciences at Jimma University. By illustrating the emergent gap between the types of enset technologies that have been developed and the labour intensive realities of enset farming, the film hopes to evoke audience members to interrogate their own research. The film asks 2 main questions: (1) how can researchers integrate gender in all areas of agricultural research? And (2) how might incorporating a gendered perspective in to your work produce agricultural research that is more responsive and sustainable to the end users?

The film is currently entering its third round of edits and is scheduled to premiere at the Post Harvest Management to Improve Livelihoods Conference in Jimma, Ethiopia in May 2012.



Katie and Kemeru filming an interview about gender and enset processing



Katie and Kemeru filming an interview about gender and enset processing

Katie and Jen found their internship with PHMIL to be exhilarating and informative. The work has pushed their research in directions they would never have imagined and they want to thank the project, CIDA and JUCAVM for making their summer in Ethiopia such a productive, enriching and fun experience.



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How can you integrate gender into your own work? Some questions to get started:

- * Who is involved in the various stages of agricultural production?
- * What value is placed on this work?
- * How do you go about collecting information (data)? Who are you asking?
- * What kinds of barriers might be preventing or limiting women's participation?
- * When you do a survey, do you record the sex of the respondent?

For more information about gender, HIV, participatory visual methodologies, or this internship report please contact:

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