

CREATIVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION TO WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT: BUILDING THE CARE WORK CAPACITY OF THE WOMEN FARMERS IN THE RURAL EAST JAVA, INDONESIA

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Abstract

Indonesia is an agrarian country believed to embark in the industrialization in the near future. The majority of the farmers are poor informal employment small holders, receiving down graded attention in development. Although there is about equal number of women and men farmers, the women farmers are invisible human resource and ignored. It is not surprising therefore, that various development programs miss to reach them. As far as primary health care services are concerned, access to health care and health education, including reproductive health is limited. In the rural East Java, lack of reproductive health care from the health providers the baseline study has concluded that the women farmers ought to be able to conduct care work, at least among the women farmers' group. To realize it, the main obstacle is the existing patriarchy culture, where discussing sexual matters with women is considered a taboo. The absent of government development program on reproductive health care further restricts women's access to reproductive health information.

As an effort to address these problems, an action research project which integrates reproductive health education into agricultural extension program was undertaken in some selected regencies of East Java Province. In community where it is sensitive to discuss matters related to sexual organs and sexuality, a creative approach is sought. Using Women's Studies Research Methodology with Feminist perspective which is necessarily based on the grounded issues, bottom up approach as well as participatory approach involving women's farmers to mention several, plant and pest biology the farmers are familiar with have proven to be an effective entry points for the training model. Further more, involvement of husbands in particular and men in general as training participants turned out not only to be positive facilitating support for women's care work exercise their reproductive rights, but also open opportunities of men's for active participation in reproductive health care.

Keywords: Reproductive Health, informal training, women farmers, capacity building, men's participation.

Introduction

Indonesia is a southeast Asia developing country. An archipelago of more than 1,000 islands, stretching from east to west as long as United States of America, developing this country indeed is not is designed as a follow up of a baseline study concerning agricultural extension in five selected areas of East Java, to identify any practice of discrimination against women farmers. population resides in Java which is only 7% of Indonesia. Hence Java is heavily populated.

The province of East Java still suffers from sticky economic crisis, Formal employment is limited and the vast majority of the population earn to make a living in the informal employment including agriculture. Along with industrialization spirit in development, and implementing the free trade, it is only a logical consequence that agriculture industry has become a sunset primary industry. However, still more than one-half of the working population remain in this industry. Small farming remains practice and source of income earnings, in the form of self employment by both men and women farmers. By 2011 in this province, 58 per cent of its population work as farmers. However, targeting industrialization in its development path, agriculture has become secondary. Globalization and free trade govern by World Trade Organization makes domestic agriculture less important along with open market by exporting countries selling agricultural product to Indonesia. Agricultural sector is less important with its contribution of only 3.2% GDP by 2010 than manufacturing industry which contributes at 83%. Small farming sustainability is questionable. With respect to the human resource, it's logical consequence is that farmers, and small farmers in particular is no longer central in development. In the Javanese patriarchy culture, the women farmers has remained ignored in the development program. In this situation, an action research to improve the farming system to be women friendly. The ultimate problems are that it seems clearly that women farmers are neglected and ignored. Using people centered development approach, this research is expected a longitudinal one.

This research is also inspired by the absent of the work of our concern among the women farmers. Moreover, thinking about education, Kabeer (2006) who criticize the world concern in the third Millennium Development goals is about formal education, the women farmers in the studied area need not this kind of education. Instead, they need reproductive health knowledge. This action research is responsive to this needs.

Initially, this research put forth the following goals:

1. Provision of policy recommendations to include women farmers in the agriculture development program.
2. a sustainable agriculture with increasing farm productivity of both human and natural resources.
3. Ensure women farmers are respected as equal to men.

The research started with a baseline study. The main findings are twofolds:

- that the men are superior and the women farmers are their subordinates, both in the family and in the farming community, and
- that women farmers is excluded from both agriculture development project and in the routine agriculture extension programme.

To change the women's situation, an action research is undertaken focussing on provision of agriculture extension program. Research methodology with feminist perspective is employed. A bottom-up approach, concentrating its programming and activities on small farm development, gender conscientation and agriculture sustainability. The research team are predominantly women and the male research team members are feminists. This is a strategy to make the male farmers to feel comfortable in the training process. Male farmers participation was not design from early at the beginning of the research. When the action research is about to start, creative approach related to gender equality necessitate the involvevent of men together to build gender awareness. This is a new approach which is no longer using the feminist concept populer in the 70's that action should be "By women, through women, for women".

Soon it has been revealed that reproductive health has been never delivered to the women, while family planning contraception is strongly forced by the Government to the rural women. It is in this background a new extension material is delivered to the women farmers as the main beneficiary, namely reproductive health education . At the beginning all of the participants are women farmers. A dynamics took place. The women later decided r to invite the men as they felt it is better running a separate training session because in sexuality both men and women are involved. Furthermore it is expected to be time efficient and should make it asier in practice for the women farmers. Although it is not easy for both women and men to talk about sexuality since it is labelled as taboo by culture, soon the feel comfortable with the delivery method which is refering to plants and crops they are familiar with as farmers. This way reproductive health education with men's participation is acceptable in this action re-search project.

Research Methodology

The research employing Women's Studies Research Methodology with feminist perspective, that requiring praxis (Stanley, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1991). This is a

participatory research (Lykes & Cocquilon, 2006). To change the women's situation, the women farmers are invited to be involved in the first place, Later on as the research process goes on, they propose that the men should be invited as well to join, as a strategy to arrive at the goals efficiently. In-depth interview is used at the beginning (Hesse-Biber, 2007) As Leckenby (2006) wrote, feminist empiricism to encounter gender bias requires special attention from the beginning all the way. The research designed as qualitative research (Cresswell, nd)

Objectives of the Action Research

The research team unanimously has come to a decision to educate women farmers about reproductive health and their rights. In particular this is based on the common understanding that the reproductive processes and the gender ideology necessarily involve both men and women. Although women farmers are the human resource as target group, dealing with one type of sex only as the training participants would be less effective. Therefore, the project considered that it is fine to involve men. Moreover, although the men are related to the women farmers as husbands, still, taking this stand is a new approach, which challenged feminist proposition of doing action. Of course the research team holds strongly the feminist ethics that the men should not dominate the women farmers for example.

Streamlining, within the participatory approach, it is collectively agreed that the education with respect to reproductive health is aimed to:

1. to introduce both women farmers and their husbands with their reproductive organs as well as its functions;
2. building women farmers capacity to care their reproductive health;
3. reproductive rights awareness raising and to exercise these rights in their daily life.

For the research team, these goals as well as men participations are challenging. The first "test" is the needs identification process as describe in the next session. When the process of need identification has been successfully undertaken, everyone feels relaxed and confident. The fact that the men are the spouses of the women farmers has turned out to be helpful.

Activities

Because the initial project is about agriculture extension to the women farmers, the idea behind the action research was to integrate reproductive health education with agricultural activities. The project took place in eight villages where the initial project is located. In these villages there already exist eight groups of women farmers, about 20 women per group, who are members of the Women's Access to Agricultural Extension community.

The activities began with a series of public education activities on the importance of reproductive health for both men and women. Subsequently, a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was carried out with main expected output to identify needs and to design intervention activities. Unlike the original PRA where the whole rural villagers are participated, due to the sensitivity of the items in the reproductive health considered taboo by the Javanese culture, This PRA was designed limited to the women and the men who are going to undertake the training. Participated actively in the needs identification of the reproductive health training, the training program planning, its implementation and its evaluation to be undertaken.

The PRA Implementation in the Reproductive Health Project

In the world in general and in Indonesia in particular, PRA method for appraisal is commonly practiced for the rural agriculture development project. With respect to its practice in reproductive health, taking into account the sexuality taboos to avoid disagreement, community commotion or, at worst conflict affecting the rejection of the whole project, it is handle with extra care. As it was the first time for the researchers and the field workers, it is even considered a trial and error. A three-day PRA exercise allowed the women farmers and their husbands to familiarize themselves with the issues, new terminologies, relaxing themselves against prejudice about sexuality being discussed in the public. Taking it slowly and strategically avoiding sensitive wordings and issues such as that related to sexual body parts, the participants are facilitated to identify their needs and to discuss implementation strategies. A selected of PRA techniques were employed :

Table 1. Selected PRA techniques implemented and its purpose

PRA techniques	Purpose
Time line	To identify participants' perception of issues related to reproductive health such as family planning, maternal mortality, and reproductive health and rights.
Seasonality	To identify the relationship between women's work patterns and their reproductive health.
Venn diagramming	To determine participants' perceptions and expectations of the existing health institutions.
Individual family profiles	To identify women with reproductive health problems such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases, cervical cancer, miscarriages, etc based the personal experiences of the participants
Social mapping	To identify social conditions of the village inhabitants related to men, women, teenagers, with respect to reproductive health problems, family planning practices, type of contraceptives, reproductive cycles
Matrix ranking	To identify decisions related to various reproductive health issues, family planning practice, sexual behavior, and marriage.
Mobility	To identify the relationship between farmers. migration and the spread of reproductive health problems STDs and HIV/ AIDS.

In the social mapping process, for example, the men were made aware of women's experiences with contraceptive methods. It was revealed that the men usually do not pay any attention to the contraceptive devices used by their wives. Therefore, when a comparison is made, the men were astounded to find that the women have a longer list of complaints and suffer more than they do (Annex 1). Analysis on these problems prompted the participants to make two suggestions. These are:

1. to address women's problems related to contraceptive use; and
2. to offer training courses on male participation in family planning.

The matrix ranking exercise helped participants to understand the sexual behaviors of

couples, in this case every pair of husband and wife was requested to sit together and analyze themselves jointly. Using grains, the husbands and wives separately placed quantity of grains in the appropriate cell of the matrix. (see table 2)

Table 2. An example of Matrix ranking regarding sexual behaviour

Sexual behavior			
<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Both husband and wife</i>
Initiator			
Partner determining technique of sexual relationship			
Partner reaching orgasm earlier			

From worryness that handling it with extra care particularly at the first group, the researcher and all of the facilitators finally felt relieve because the session went well, relax, enjoyable, full of fun. It is better and better handled for the next group, particularly the last one, the eighth group

To our surprise the needs for information identified at the eight project sites for training materials were as follows:

- The types, the functions and the side effects of contraceptive methods
- Family planning and reproductive rights
- Knowledge about human reproductive organs and reproduction
- Safe pregnancy and safe child delivery
- Information about sexuality
- STDs, including HIV/AIDS and their prevention

Enough to say that following the PRA exercise, finally the important training materials was included. Based on this list, intervention activities were designed. These activities, taking into account cultural and religious sensitivities, used plant and crop analogies in imparting reproductive health knowledge. In fact this approach was referred by the participants again and again during the PRA exercise. Whenever appropriate and acceptable to the community, both men and women were present during the activities.

At the beginning, 3 groups of the women farmers conveying shyness and uncomfotability to be trained in one room with the husbands regardless the easyness and the joy during the PRA, while in five of the eight villages, almost all activities were jointly participated by husbands and wives. This is Issues of gender were given emphasis in all activities.

Training Module

Materials used during the initial activities relied heavily findings of the PRA exercise. Subsequently, a module entitl *reproductive Health Module for Women Farmers*, incorporating experiences from the initial activities, was developed. Booklets containing guidelines and ways women could protect their reproductive health were also available.

Training Implementation: Educating Reproductive Health to the Women Farmers

The training is an informal education, using a bottom-up approach aimed at both the men and the women as the target groups. The goals are to enhance the knowledge and understanding on reproductive health protection for the women farmers, in which to enhance and to make it more efficient, rather than the women alone being trained empower both women and men with respect to awareness raising and to make women gain knowledge about women's reproductive rights, and later is expressed their motoric toward action. The men are expected to be responsible and to be accountable for every reproductive health activities that involve both men and women, and to be supportive as well as actively participate in the women's reproductive health protection. This was started from their own family, extended to the grpoups and later to be amplified in their community at large.

Now and again, the facilitator ought to be extra careful In the training, in dealing with the existing socio-cultural conditions which sensitive in discussing sexuality and mentioning body parts. Good control is also taken into account, to handle those, particularly the men who was getting to loose and carried away. In short, it is highly situational from area to area. For example, in Kediri Regency and Jember Regency, both men and women can be trained jointly in a class without any problem, while in the Bojonegoro regency, where social taboos are strong, for quiet a while the men were be

trained separately from the women.

To provide a short description during the classical training, using a participatory approach under the facilitation of the facilitator, the women and their husbands engage in lively discussions following particular delivery technique. It can be short lectures, group discussions, role-playing, simulation, drawing and question-and-answer, to mention several where ever appropriate. Usually to begin with, there is an individual reflection as an ice breaking attempt to awaken the participants' training spirit. Then the participants are encouraged to analyze the reflection in the hope that changes in the way of thinking, attitude and behavior would take place. The training experience reveals that discussion between men and women are effective in highlighting gender issues. Because the existing gender ideology pale men as superior and leading the women, the facilitator takes control the balance to lower men dominations and improve women's active participation. Discussion is perceived as method to improve capacity by the women. This was expressed in the words of a women farmer who was an active participant:

' : ...the discussions have resulted in easier communication between husbands and wives. Further discussions are also taking place at home and couples are sharing the information with their neighbours and relatives".

As the training is fully participatory people centered, which is totally different from formal education which teachers' centered. A skilled facilitator is required, not only in the training materials, but also in their sensitivity to the gender issues. For example, the facilitator will try to make the men stop dominating the women or to facilitate the women to be more actively participating in the discussion equally as the men are.

Field school Education Method

From the main agriculture extension project, the delivery technique for it as appropriate to women farmers is carried out using Field School method in which a plot of land is assigned with real group planting worth a demonstration plot. The type of plant is different areas to areas depending on the needs of the women farmers. For example in Malang at a time it was paddy, in Bojonegoro it was tobacco, in Jember it was corn, in Blitar it was peanuts. The school operates on a plot of demonstration farm land once a week. Basically it was an agriculture Field School which is gender

sensitive in response to the women's need for agricultural education. This school is also being used by the women's group in line with the strategy of integrating reproductive health education. More than often from the class, the reproductive health training materials was internalize further using materials that fit during the field school sessions. Another benefit is that the field school is strategic to allow discussions of subjects matters considered taboo a little easier to do as well as to make it easy for the group members to learn. An example of the discussion is given in table 3.

Table 3. Discussion concerning fertilization: learning from corn fertilization

Subject: <i>Fertilization</i>	The discussion (it was held while observing corns : in the field)
Facilitator	If you only plant a stalk of corn, can it bear fruit?
Group	Yes, it can, as long as the pollen fall on the "hair".
Facilitator	If the plant is covered with plastic covering, can it bear fruit?
Group	We had better try on a stalk which has not Bloomed
Facilitator	Okay we will try it later! Now let's continue. What are the signs of a plant which is ready to fertilize?
Group	The pollens are dangling all over. For women, it is time to have menstruation while for men it is time to produce sperm.
Facilitator	If it's not yet the time for the pollen to fertilize the pistil and it's shaken and forced to fall on the pistil, what would happen? For human it is being forced to marry at a young age.
Group	It may bear fruit, but the fruit is abnormal.
Facilitator	If a woman has got her period, does it mean that she is ready to give birth?
Group	Yes, because if you have got your period it means that you can have a child
Facilitator	If a nine-year-old already has menstruation, is she ready to give birth? What about her mental and physical condition and how to nurture the baby?

<p>Group</p>	<p>Usually the couple's mother (the baby's grandmother) will take care of the baby. Here, usually at the age of 14-15, one is already married especially girls (under 20 years old).</p>
<p>Facilitator</p>	<p>A seventeen-year-old girl is considered ready to get married but to give birth it's better between the age of 20-35 years old because this period is the healthiest reproduction phase where a woman is mature and physically and mentally ready. At 10-20 years of age, it is the time for reproduction organs to develop, not to give birth. Just like a flower which already has pollens and pistil but if it's not the time to fall and we force it then the result will be bad. At the age of 35-45 years, the reproduction organs show decreasing function. The body has become weak. The women are at high risk to conceive.</p>

The facilitators needs to choose a reproductive health topic relevant to the agricultural topic to be discussed during as school day. For example, the impact of pesticides on women’s reproductive health is discussed when the agricultural lesson is the effect of pesticides of agricultural products. Back in classroom, the group will further discuss the productive health topic introduced during the field observation. Group presentation and discussion are important practice for the women to be assertive, to learn speaking up, and to convey their ideas, even their feeling and thoughts, also to convey critical comments without hurting others

The benefit of the male facilitator

Contrary to the usual feminist practice employing women facilitators in action, this action research working with four male facilitators. We believe that this is quite rare phenomenon. These men are feminists and have experience before in women’s projects. Most of their gender sensitivity and gender awareness skill are developed together with the women in the field in a participatory manner, as dictated by the research methodology with a feminist perspective.

To the joy of all, the existence of male facilitators was found usefull indeed. The benefits are:

1. they are easier to talk and to discuss various sensitive issues
2. in dealing with the men, to talk and to discuss social taboos, especially when the culture dictates women not to mention these taboos
3. similarly being men living in patriarchy society, they understand better than the women regarding the male ego, male superiority, violence, and male domination, male facilitators make the intervention more effectively accepted by the male participant for awareness raising

The availability of male facilitators, while making the task of approaching men such easier, also allows open discussions among the men. They are more easily accepted by the male participants. When both men and women are the target groups, a mixture of male and male facilitators is available During the preparatory work, namely training of trainers session, even shapping these male facilitators to committing themselves to feminist is not an easy task for the researcher. It has been their experience that working on gender issues and to change the women situation cost a price. They are subjected to humiliation, assault and their work is considered worthless or inappropriate. Thus it has been sterotyped that uplifting women's status is considered women's job, not that of men.

Results and Discussion

Evaluation is conducted at two levels: (1) target group level; and (2)researcher's level. At the target group level, evaluation is carried out longitudinally through monthly and annual meetings and discussions. These meetings are conducted by the target group and facilitated by the fieldworkers. Deliberations from these meetings are used not only as a source of evaluation data but also as feedback for program improvement and development of future program.

At the researcher level, unlike the usual one comparing before and after treatment, evaluation is conducted every three months and also annually. While the former evaluation aims to obtain feedback for program improvement, the latter is used to assess program achievements. A final evaluation to assess project impact is also carried out.

From the evaluation the results have shown that changes in the attitudes and behaviors concerning reproductive health of both women and men are taking place. The

women found changes as follows:

- having knowledge about physical body related to sexuality
- increase understanding about sexuality
- both women and their husbands understand their reproductive organs, its functions.
- increasing capacity and skills to care their own reproductive health.
- knowledgeable that they have reproductive rights and that the rights should be exercised in their daily life.
- understand that STD and HIV/AIDS transmitted by husband who often bought sex

From the men's side, the following changes have been reported;

- men are taking a more active role in family planning
- husbands are aware of, and sensitive to, the contraceptive use related problems suffered by their spouses
- the men are willing to (1) motivate key persons in the community, such as religious leaders, to help educate their congregations about women's reproductive rights; and (2) spread the knowledge to members of their communities

the men said that the discussion have improved the husband-wife's social and emotional relationship. Two men have voluntarily undergone vasectomy after same discussion with their wives. With support from their husband, 42 women have undertaken the Pap smear test for first time in their live. Thus, it seems clear that men's increased knowledge and sensitization have helped women to exercise their reproductive rights. Prior to the project, the women would not dare to say no to sex. Every time the husband wanted sex, they women would subserviently consent to it although they did not want it. In the training and counseling, the women started learning that sexual relationship should be enjoyed by both partners.

It is also interesting to note that although they the farmers reside in the remote rural agriculture areas, the topic of discussion can be as good as the men in the other part of the world questioning such as whether men can be feminist (Hiebert, 2009).

Future Implications

One major achievement of this project is the increase in knowledge about reproductive health among farmers, both women, capacity to deliver the message orally, and preparing them to use their psychomotoric skills to take action.

An important finding with future implications is that based on the women personal experience, they have concluded that the health provider by Venn Diagram analysis the knowledge have been created, to a certain extent, and demand for comprehensive services are identified by the farmers. Unfortunately, the existing health facilities have neither the priority nor the capacity to offer comprehensive reproductive health services. Consequently, the women's needs on reproductive health matters would be ignored are ignored. In view of the above, finding follow-up action plans should include establishing working relationships with the local health providers. access existing health facilities, on priority efforts suggested as follows:

- A study on how best tis he health facilities and health providers can address the reproductive health needs o(' women and men farmers'.
- Health providers; training on reproductive health care.
- Establishmenmt of special Reproductive Health Care Centre for women
- Organize dialogues between the farmers, both men and women with the local Primary Health Centre to socialize service providers to reproductive health issues

At the policy makers' and practitioners' level, action is also required since it has been observed that they are target oriented and as human being a women seems to be undervalued, This is pulled further down graded when a women is a rural women, and valued lowest when their job as farmer is revealed. Valuing a women farmer as a rspectable human being should be included in the future action research. Creative approach have to be sought. Technique such as discussions, dialogues, seminars and workshops may be used following an adaptation fit to the needs and condition of each stakeholder.

Conclusion

The research indicates that in rural agricultural areas where culture and customs prohibit open discussions on reproductive women and men can be reached through innovative program strategies. In this case, the use of plant and crop analogy, proved to be useful and it works well indeed. The results imply that men's participation has driven their psycho-motoric action to support women's empowerment to take action regarding their reproductive rights.

The long-standing relationship between the community organisers facilitates the community facilitates the implementation integration reproductive health education with the plant in existing agricultural farming. Thus, it seems that there is a possibility of introducing innovative reproductive health education into existing programs, whether that of health or other development programs, when there is good relationship between a program and its target groups

As scientists feminist must be courageous to challenge the bleak situation resulted from gender ideology practices that is supported by strong patriarchy culture to produce new approach for the benefit of the women

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