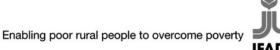


A few words about why and how important

- 3/4 of extreme poor are rural
- Most live off NRM and agriculture
- They are family farmers, landless workers, fishers, foresters...
- Most struggle daily with multiple inequalities, exclusion, weak entitlements, low capabilities
- Today, their environment is full of new challenges and opportunities...
- ... both of which often magnify vulnerabilities and exclusion





How to define empowerment in this context?

- Eyben: empowerment is a process that occurs when people define and pursue better lives, change power relations and influence processes that constrain their livelihood opportunities
- Emphasis on: a) process; b) people's own visions of "better lives";
 c) their own efforts to change relations and influence processes
- Also, focus on relations/processes that constrain <u>opportunities</u> (very dynamic perspective, focused on <u>change</u>)
- Policy matters but is no substitute for people's vision and actions...
- ... and these can vary by context, time, and for different people
- IN SHORT: no general recipe for empowerment or for policy

How policy (processes) can help, and where

- Policy can <u>contribute</u> to poor rural people's empowerment if:
 - it helps build and secure people's assets, skills, social capital
 - it helps address inequalities and exclusion
 - policy processes foster active and inclusive rural citizenship
- Key policy realms in light of new challenges and opportunities in the rural sectors include – inter alia:

Natural resource access and tenure rights

Production/access to knowledge and technology

Functioning of/participation in markets

Political participation (rights, organization...)

Challenges of rural citizenship

- Close link between empowerment in NRM/agriculture and "empowered" and inclusive rural citizenship
- Challenges of rural citizenship include:
 - unequal access to political rights
 - obstacles to realizing rights (e.g. poor rural women constrained by time poverty, social expectations, violence, mobility limits...)
 - weak or non-inclusive rural organizations
 - complex, non-linear, technocratic, policy
 processes, decisions made behind closed
 doors, volatility, implementation gaps, etc.





The role of rural people's organizations



- Many types of membership-based rural people's organizations (RPOs)
- Growing in numbers, not always in strength, but with great diversity
- Often key sites of empowerment around NR rights, knowledge and technology, markets
- Also important for political participation/citizenship, as:
 - aggregators of rural voices
 - advocates (also in non-local processes)
 - facilitators of collective action in NRM governance (and other domains)
 - sites of democratic practice (with caveats)

Some "lessons" about "good practice"

1. Supporting empowerment requires complementary efforts across policy domains besides NRM and agriculture



Two examples:

- •Gender sensitive land reform is often critical, but requires complementary policy measures in family law, access to finance, markets, education, extension, etc.
- •Social protection can help empowerment in NRM and agriculture if it simultaneously builds human capital in rural areas, diversifies livelihoods, restores the NR base

- 2. Policies for inclusive NR access and rights can be a key source of empowerment opportunities, if:
- •they are implemented effectively and in a pro-poor manner
- they are accompanied by complementary policies to build capacity



- Examples include land reforms targeting small farmers in China and Viet Nam in the 1980s, with accompanying policies expanding farmers capabilities and market opportunities
- Several recent examples, e.g. from Africa (Burkina Faso, Mozambique), at times also with specific gender equality provisions, but:
 - Implementation gaps are widespread
 - Weak capacity and budgets for implementation
 - Disconnect between policy and local reality/practice
 - Corruption, informal influence shape outcomes

- 3. Agricultural sector policies may foster empowerment of poor rural people especially if:
- They prioritize support to smallholder and family agriculture
- They are developed through genuinely participatory approaches
- •They have provisions for inclusive decision-making in their aftermath

One example: The 2006 Loi d'Orientation Agricole in Mali was to address challenges facing smallholder farmers and was developed through extensive consultations. The views of rural constituencies (including women, the poor) influenced the policy, thanks to:

- Political commitment at the top level of government
- Aggregating role of a network of farmers' organizations (CNOP)
- Time for rural constituencies to get informed, debate, consolidate positions

4. NRM policies around NRM can foster empowerment if:

- they promote and institutionalize truly participatory governance
- they are accompanied by capacity building measures
- One example: Land policy reform in Burkina in the 2000s involved extensive consultations, including rural constituencies, plus capacity building/affirmative action measures for marginalized groups (e.g. rural women). It also institutionalized the involvement of rural communities in piloting local solutions to land tenure issues, and in developing local land tenure management rules.
- **Also:** The India 2006 Recognition of Forests Rights Act recognizes inheritable forest rights in areas where scheduled tribes live, and entrust them with biodiversity conservation duties at the local level.
- But: institutionalizing participatory governance does not per se provide rural people with knowledge, resources, and political support to perform their roles

- 5. Decentralization policies can offer empowerment opportunities if:
- •there is actual devolution of powers and resources
- •local institutions are capable, inclusive, have solid upward linkages
- rural people's organizations are enabled to take part in governance

- One example: Decentralization provided the terrain for institutional innovations giving poor communities in the Peruvian Sierra responsibility for co-managing public budgets at municipal level, through competitions around initiatives in NRM and development.
- The Local Resource Allocation Committees (LRAC) helped strengthen social capital and promote transparent governance at local level, besides having positive environmental and economic impact.

A "work in progress" approach to policy processes

- Empowerment opportunities and risks can emerge at any point
- Implementation often an important terrain for rural people to engage
 - E.g. rural mobilization around implementation of agrarian reform in The Philippines and Brazil, with impact on policy discourse, legal practice, collective action capacity
- Participatory M&E is also important
- Policies made in regional and international contexts can be a tool to advocate in national processes
- ✓ E.g. Farmers' organization use of ECOWAP in policy dialogue in West African countries, int'l principles on prior free and informed consent carried over in multi-stakeholder consultations on safeguards for REDD+ programmes, etc.





In short:

- New challenges and opportunities in NRM and agriculture require strengthening poor rural people's (and generally small farmers') capabilities, rights, inclusion, and equality
- This agenda is closely linked to one of stronger rural citizenship for both women and men
- Policy processes can help on both fronts
- However, they are never the end point
- Challenges ahead include:
 - Bridging implementation gaps
 - Institutionalizing spaces for participation
 - Building inclusive institutions (not just local)
 - Building inclusive and capable organizations
 - Promoting gender equality at all levels



