

The economy of rural women under the gender approach



According to César del Pozo, from the Bartolomé de las Casas Center, no regional or local government considers an intercultural perspective -and less gender- in the policies it implements, and assumes that the agricultural unit is led by a male who, in addition, speak spanish

Studies on gender and agricultural production are not topics that often cross roads. The results of two studies presented in this research table show that the gender imbalance in the field is as or stronger than in the city and is revealed in different dimensions. How does this situation affect the economy of women producers? What are the underlying mechanisms that explain the differences that studies show? Next, we attempt to answer these questions.

One of the barely addressed areas by academic research on gender issues in Peru is that of agricultural production. Precisely, this is the topic that the research table “Agriculture, associativity and gender” addressed. In this space, the results of two investigations were presented. The first was Crop Selection: an analysis from the gender perspective applied to the case of Cusco, by Diana La Riva and Denisse Castillo, from the Development Analysis Group (Grade).

The objective of this study is to understand how gender factors affect agricultural decisions, assess the contribution of women in the management of natural resources and account for the “feminization” of agriculture, based on census data, said Denisse Castle. In order to study the impact of gender in different rural areas, we worked with groups of families considering the sex of the main producer or producer in the mountains and in the jungle, in the Cusco region.

1/ The presenters of this research desk were Diana La Riva and Denisse Castillo, from the Development Analysis Group (Grade); and César del Pozo, from the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentina) and the Bartolomé de las Casas Center (Cusco). The comments were made by economists Patricia Fuertes, researcher at PUCP, and Eduardo Zegarra, researcher at Grade. The moderation of the table was in charge of the anthropologist María Amelia Trigos, coordinator of projects of the CIES.)

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In one of its most striking findings, the study reveals how, while men benefit from the easy access to local non-salaried labor, which is transmitted through the Andean social figure of the *ayni* -which consists of an exchange of benefits of labor services between individuals for concrete works such as harvesting in the family plot-, women producers without a partner do not enjoy the same facility. This is because their participation in

these activities is limited, given that, generally, they require great physical effort. Consequently, explained Diana La Riva, women without a partner are forced, to a greater extent than their male counterparts, to pay for the labor they need, which negatively impacts their productivity and profitability.

The producers without a partner also turn out to be less inclined to dedicate themselves to crops that demand more technology or that are more prone to pests, since they require more investment for their production, even though these crops are often the most profitable. This context, coupled with limited access to credit and other physical and financial resources, does not allow women to work on equal terms with their male counterparts. The situation is especially delicate in the jungle, where the researchers were able to prove that the most important crops in the area - cocoa and coffee - generate some

barriers for women's participation, due to the high labor costs and investment in equipment they require for processing.

The authors recommend that the authorities pay special attention to the sector of women without a partner, especially the elderly (mainly due to widowhood), as it is one of the most vulnerable social segments of the Peruvian countryside and is not being directly served by public policies. "Targeted policies are required," the authors pointed out, emphasizing that the study's contributions may be useful for the National Plan for Gender Equality, especially in rural areas.



Among the results of the study presented, Diana La Riva, Grade researcher, argues that women without a partner are forced, to a greater extent than their male counterparts, to pay for the labor they need, which negatively impacts their productivity and profitability.



On the studies presented, Patricia Fuertes, of the PUCP, stressed that both have found that men and women of the field decide differently. Women tend to sow less profitable products or are less market oriented. In that sense, she suggested giving greater importance to analyzing the use of time.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHARACTER OF THE GENDER GAP

The research Gender Gaps in Peruvian Agriculture, by César del Pozo, the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentina) and the Bartolomé de las Casas Center (Cusco), was based on census information and found a wide gender gap since the gender approach -even higher for single-parent households-. According to Del Pozo, agricultural households headed by women have 42% less farmland and 21% fewer livestock units than households headed by men. "These gender gaps could be explained because women have less access to land, less possession of assets and equipment, and

"Agricultural households headed by women have 42% less farmland and 21% fewer livestock units than households headed by men. These gender gaps could be explained because women have less access to land, less possession of assets and equipment and less access to productive credit".

less access to productive credit," said the author. It is not surprising to know that when the language factor is added, the gap increases: single women with indigenous mother tongue are double penalized. In that sense, explained Del Pozo, gender gaps in rural areas have a multidimensional nature.

The situation of economic and social vulnerability of agricultural producers is more worrisome because, according to the study, female participation in agriculture has increased over time (the so-called "feminization" of agriculture). This is manifested in the growth of the number of single-parent households, as well as in the growing female participation in two-parent households.

What explains the gap? Mainly, the asymmetric distribution of endowments (inputs, assets, productive resources), and on a smaller scale, discrimination.

Among the necessary measures to solve the problems raised by the study, the author recommended making a greater effort in future censuses to differentiate from the underlying family structure in rural households.

He also suggested that Agrobanco and other financial institutions could design financial products suitable for these social groups, to the extent that access to credit is more limited for women, especially for those who are alone and speak an indigenous lan-

guage. Finally, he argued that no regional or local government considers an intercultural perspective -and less gender- in the policies it implements, and assume that the one driving the agricultural unit is a male who, in addition, speaks Spanish.

Therefore, Del Pozo recommends that, for local governments and executive agencies to be more effective, elements of interculturality and gender need to be incorporated.

COMMENTS

Among the commentators, Eduardo Zegarra, Grade's principal investigator, highlighted that both papers present interesting research questions, and focused on their methodological challenges. The split in households of women with and without a partner was considered a significant contribution, which makes it possible to identify different problems for rural women. In the study on crop adoption, however, econometric relationships were estimated separately for each type of household, which does not allow clear assessment of different behaviors between men and women, and therefore recommended revising the specification. She also suggested to the researchers to broaden the range of questions about producers' decisions beyond what crops they sow. "I think that before analyzing specific crop decisions, the census allows us to look at more general decisions; for example, livestock versus cultivation, subsistence versus market, diversified versus specialized production, transitory versus permanent crops," he said. In his opinion, this analysis "would help identify some key gender differences in agricultural decisions of strategic importance."

Patricia Fuertes, economist and rural development specialist at PUCP, said both studies raise key questions. "First, why is gender equality important in agriculture, and secondly, what factors explain inequality and what results are achieved," she said. "These questions seem very important to me and should be formulated by policymakers," she added.

Fuertes also argued that studies have found that rural men and women decide differently; For example, women tend to plant products with lower profitability or are less market oriented. The question is why these differences occur. In that sense, she suggested giving greater importance to analyzing the use of time. "It's not that women do not want to plant more profitable crops, but often they do not have the time. And this is because of the sexual division of labor: women perform domestic work, the work of home care. Thus, the time of women is mediated by the anchorage of the home," she said.

Finally, Fuertes recommended analyzing gender systems that are composed of regulations, customs, laws and institutions (formal and informal) to understand the determinants of gender gaps. "One of the studies presented found that the *ayni* was a communal labor allocation regulation, which in the exposed case was operating as a generator of gender gaps in agricultural production, placing women producers at a disadvantage because they can not have that source of labor," recalled Fuertes. "This has had an impact on what they could or could not produce," she said.