

RURAL PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN UGANDA: ARE THERE GENDER DISPARITIES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS?

by

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Journal of Rural Cooperation, 41(1), 2013: 60-79

Abstract

The Ugandan government considers rural producer organizations (RPOs) as an effective tool for promoting greater market participation for smallholder farmers, which is necessary for rural poverty eradication. Hence, the government has invested substantially in the development of RPOs during the last decade. Whether the RPOs are contributing to rural poverty reduction will be demonstrated by the benefits that accrue to their members, both females and males. The paper examines the nature of these benefits and determines whether there are any gender disparities in their distribution. Significant disparities are found to exist in benefits such as access to information on product prices, management and extension training, access to credit, assistance with meeting buyer quality requirements, and formation of market networks. Overall, we conclude that RPOs have mostly benefited male members and fewer benefits have accrued to female members. This situation calls for the adoption and implementation of measures to promote equitable distribution of RPO membership benefits between males and females.

Keywords: rural producer organizations, gender disparities, benefit distribution, Uganda, market participation, smallholders