Improving Access to Productive Resources and Agricultural Services through Gender Empowerment: A Case Study of Three Rural Communities in Ambo District, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT This article is the second of two papers produced through a research on gender in agriculture that was conducted in Ambo district, Ethiopia, between July and September 2007. The first article was on “Gender Roles in Crop Production and Management Practices: A Case Study of Three Rural Communities in Ambo District, Ethiopia”. Employing the concept of gender empowerment, this second paper identifies and analyzes the factors constraining the productivity of female farmers in the district. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus group discussions, participatory rural appraisal, gender analysis and case studies (life history approach). The statistical package for social science (SPSS) was used to analyze data from the field. Excel spreadsheet was used to summarize and analyze the data collected through focus group discussions, participatory rural appraisal and interviews. The results of the study indicate that gender-neutral crop production and management interventions do not have the same impact on rural male and female farmers. The latter have limited access to key productive resources such as land, irrigation water, extension services, credit and rural institutions. The conditions of both rural male and female farmers in Ethiopia can be significantly enhanced if agricultural development policies are improved and the existing gender-neutral extension services made gender responsive, and access by female farmers to productive resources improved through the formulation and implementation of effective gender empowerment strategies.