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SIL'S MULTI-CROP THRESHER INITIATIVE

Promoting Gender Equity & Ownership Webinar



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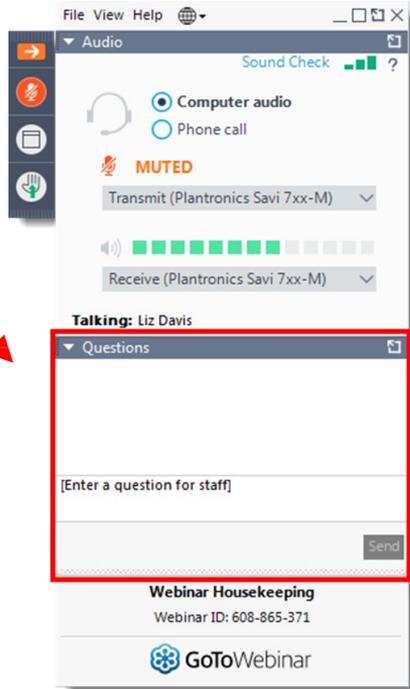
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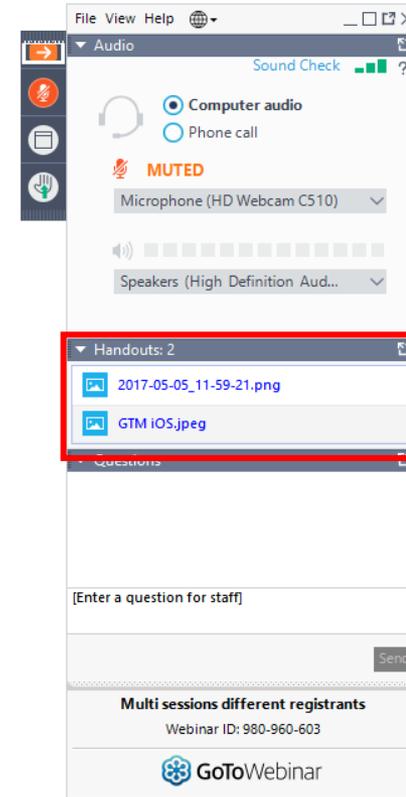
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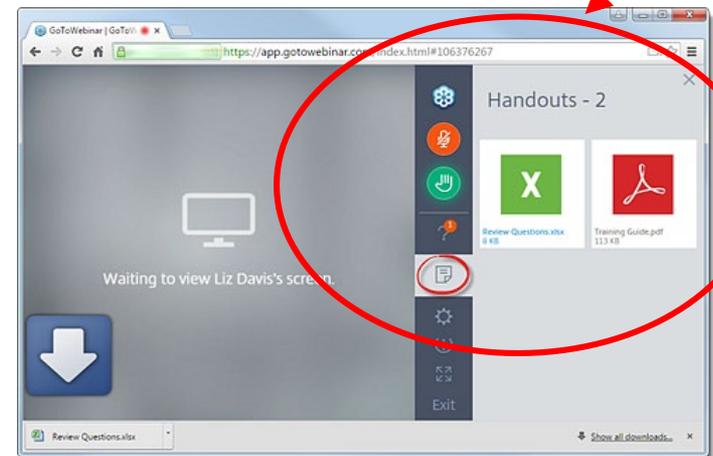
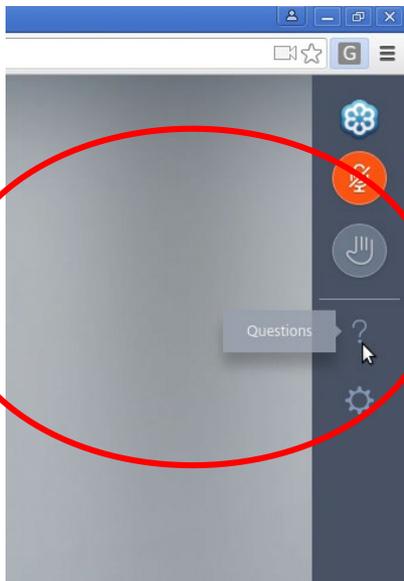
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And we have a few quick questions for you before we get started...



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SIL'S MULTI-CROP THRESHER INITIATIVE

Promoting Gender Equity & Ownership

Kathleen Ragsdale PhD¹

Mary Read-Wahidi PhD¹

Robert Kolbila MA^{1,2}

¹ Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University

² Department of Sociology, Mississippi State University

Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab Webinar | 28 August 2020

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Photo: J. Appiagyei / SAYeTECH



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Meet the Presenters



Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale leads the Soybean Innovation Lab's Gender Impacts Research. She is a Research Professor at the Social Science Research Center of Mississippi State University



Dr. Mary Read-Wahidi co-leads SIL's Gender Impacts Research. She is an Assistant Research Professor at the Social Science Research Center of Mississippi State University



Robert Kolbila MA is a PhD candidate of Sociology and is supported by SIL's Gender Impacts Research at the Social Science Research Center of Mississippi State University. Prior to joining MSU, Robert worked with Catholic Relief Services (2016-2019) and MEDA (2014-2016) in Ghana



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**What are the benefits
of **gender equity and
ownership** in agriculture**

“

*by providing women farmers with the same access to land, new technologies and capital that men have, we could increase crop yields by as much as **30 percent***

—Mark Green, USAID, 2019

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Women's Thresher Project Evaluation

Benefits and Challenges of Women-Led Thresher Micro Enterprises in Ghana

Kerry Clark, PI (University of Missouri)

Kathleen Ragsdale, PI (Mississippi State University)

Mary Read-Wahidi, Co-PI (Mississippi State University)

Robert Kolbila, Field Team Leader (Mississippi State University)

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Background

- In many parts of rural Ghana – and SSA – women farmers are expected to thresh their crops and their husbands' crops
- Tremendous **physical** and **time burdens** for women farmers, as mechanized threshing is rarely available
- **Our Goal:** Understand how mechanized threshing impacts efficient crop production, food security, economic gains, and empowerment among women-led thresher groups
- Evaluate benefits/challenges women farmers encounter as members of thresher groups in Ghana's Upper West Region





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Women farmers hand-threshing a soybean crop in rural Ghana, where women are expected to thresh their own crops **and their husband's crops**. It is estimated that hand-threshing takes 8-10 women farmers two weeks of steady back-breaking labor per acre of soybean. In contrast, mechanized threshing takes 4-5 women four hours per acre. Photo: K. Clark / University of Missouri



MEDA Women-Led Thresher Groups

- In 2018, MEDA provided 20 mechanized threshers to VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Associations) in Ghana's Upper West Region
- Members were primarily smallholder women farmers
- VSLA – “informal self-managed group of 15-25 people (normally women)” who save together and can access small loans from those savings (CARE, 2020)





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Mechanized threshers have the potential to reduce labor per acre of crop from two weeks of hand-threshing to only **four hours of mechanized threshing**. Photo: K. Clark / University of Missouri



Our Approach

- In 2019, we explored the benefits and challenges of machinery sharing by conducting 15 focus group discussions (FGD) among women farmers (N=128)
- Eligibility: Members of thresher groups that received  MEDA threshers in 2018
- Focused on: “What constitutes **successful** women-led thresher groups?”
- Viewed success from different angles:
 - Increasing women’s production, food security, and empowerment
 - Reducing the labor of women [and children]



What Constitutes a Successful Women's Thresher Group?

- Members financially benefit from:
 - **Increased income** from providing thresher services
 - **Increased profit** from higher yields and/or higher quality crop
- Labor burdens are reduced (physical and time burdens)
- Implement effective thresher **ownership** model:
 - Have effective thresher service fee scheme
 - Keep good records of profits and payouts
- Implement effective thresher **operator** model:
 - Employ safe thresher operating practices
 - Have a regular thresher maintenance strategy
 - Keep good operations and maintenance records
- Create a **sustainability** and expansion plan



Thresher Group 'Successes'

Women-led thresher group's 'successes' included:

- Increased food security for households
- Increased women's empowerment and visibility as economic actors
- Reductions in women's and children's labor
- Increased economic security for women





Increased Food Security

- Belonging to a women's thresher group provided resiliency against food insecurity:
 - Allowed harvested grain to reach households faster due to reduced threshing time
 - Increased grain by substantively reducing post-harvest loss
 - Allowed grain collected as **payment-in-kind** to serve as a FOOD BANK for group members whose households were food insecure





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“The grain we collect after threshing for people becomes a food bank for the group. Members who need food come to borrow from the group. The thresher has come to reduce hunger in our families.”

“Our food is no longer delayed on the farm, that is why we have more food available now. We harvest and thresh the same day and can even use it in cooking the same day.”

“My soybean crop was burned last year in the field [during a bush fire while waiting to be hand-threshed]. But not again this year because of the thresher.”



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“I am an old lady and a widow. I gave up on soybean cultivation because I do not have the strength to thresh [by hand]. All hope was lost until the thresher came. And then I went back to soybean cultivation.”



Smallholder farmer in rural Ghana works with a mechanized thresher operator to thresh her crop. Photo: J. Appiagyei / SAYeTECH



Increased Empowerment

- Belonging to a women's thresher group increased women's empowerment and visibility as economic actors within their communities:
 - Men recognized that the women's group controlled a valuable resource – a mechanized thresher
 - Men were willing to engage women in a respectful dialogue on how they could access the women's thresher services





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“The men in our community have seen our importance, and they can’t believe we have a thresher to ourselves. When they want to use our thresher, they come, and we negotiate in a meeting.”

“Women now have respect in this community. No woman is begging any man to come thresh her soybeans. We are happy about that.”



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Labor Reduction

- Another important benefit of thresher ownership is a substantial reduction in manual labor and time needed for threshing
- Participants reported that the reduction in manual labor reduced dependence on child labor
- School-aged children no longer needed to miss school during harvest because mechanized threshing replaced labor-intensive hand-threshing





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“The thresher has brought relief to women. For the first time in my life, I finished my farm before my husband’s, and we will no longer manually thresh again. See my palm this year!”

[Participant showed that the skin of her palm was not torn or damaged from hand-threshing]

“The reduced labor is the most important change for us. It [the mechanized thresher] has shortened the harvesting season, and we have time to do other things at home.”



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Children hand-threshing soybean in rural Ghana, where boys and girls are often pulled out of school at harvest time to assist with the labor-intensive demands of hand-threshing. Photo: J. Appiagyei / SAYeTECH



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Women farmers in rural Ghana working with their children to clean chaff from hand-threshed soybean. Photo: K. Clark / University of Missouri



Increased Economic Security

- Results highlight direct and indirect economic impacts of threshers on project beneficiaries and their households
- Thresher benefits cut across the value chain:
 - Increased access to credit and lending
 - Increased market value of farmers' produce
 - Reduced cost of threshing
 - Improved grain quality
 - Reduced postharvest loss
 - Reduced intensive manual labor
 - Reduced time engaged in threshing
 - Increased ease in selling mechanically threshed crops



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58%
reported
no longer
needing cash
to pay for
threshing
services



61%
reported
better prices
for their
mechanically
threshed
crops



55%
reported
an increase in
cash on-hand
and access
to credit



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Conclusions I

- These preliminary results suggest that:
- When adequately supported with even a **modest training program** – such as provided to the **MEDA** thresher groups we evaluated – women farmers with little formal education can profitably provide mechanized services to other rural farmers
- And can simultaneously **increase crop production** for both household consumption and income-generation amongst vulnerable community members



Conclusions II

- By significantly reducing time/labor needed to thresh, mechanized threshing is a clear opportunity to **boost productivity** among smallholders of both genders
- These results will guide SIL's development of best practices to increase participation across SSA among:
 - Women-led groups in providing mechanized thresher services
 - Women farmers in accessing these services





Conclusions III

GLOBAL BENEFITS OF GENDER EQUITY

- Increases chances for sustained agricultural impacts
- Increases agricultural productivity → economic outcomes
- Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

BENEFITS TO YOUR WORK

- Mandated by cutting-edge donors such as USAID, CGIAR, Gates Foundation
- Produces rich data and publications





Agriculture is under-performing because of women's unequal access to land, fertilizer, technology, extension and credit.

At the same time agriculture also faces formidable challenges; from increased food demand to climate change impacts.

Closing these gender gaps, therefore, would be good for both women and for agriculture.

— CGIAR, 2018



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Q&A Session



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Courtney Tamimie MS is the Associate Director of the Soybean Innovation Lab, which is based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She will serve as the Moderator of the Q&A Session



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Gender Resources

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- Ragsdale K, Read-Wahidi MR, Wei T, Martey E & Goldsmith P. (2018). Using the WEAI+ to explore gender equity and agricultural empowerment: Baseline evidence among men and women smallholder farmers in Ghana's Northern Region. Journal of Rural Studies; 64(2): 123-134. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.09.013. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.09.013>





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Thank you for participating! Please take the exit survey

And look for a follow-up email with
a recording of today's webinar

**SIL's Multi-Crop Thresher Initiative:
Promoting Gender Equity & Ownership Webinar**

Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab Webinar | 28 August 2020



Photo: K. Ragsdale / Mississippi State University



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