



Impact of the Practices of Agricultural Cooperatives on Women's Socio-economic Empowerment: Case of CORI-CPF

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Abstract

This article examines how agricultural cooperatives, such as Rice Cooperative—The Capital of the Poor is his Strength “CORI-CPF” (Coopérative Rizicole-le Capital du Pauvre c’est sa Force) in Burundi, contribute to the social and economic empowerment of women. It assesses the living conditions of women before their membership in this cooperative and highlights the positive impact of that membership on their empowerment. The study utilized specific sampling methods to select participants, including 96 members of CORI-CPF, and analyzed the data using the SPSS tool. The results indicate that 85% of the surveyed women observed an improvement in their socio-economic situation due to the cooperative, particularly in terms of income and food security (with 78% reporting improved food security) and overall well-being. Furthermore, the study reveals a 65% increase in women's participation in decision-making processes within the cooperatives, thereby enhancing their autonomy. Women who are members of cooperatives also show a 70% higher likelihood of adopting innovative agricultural practices and improving their agronomic skills. This suggests that the cooperative model effectively supports the enhancement of women's skills and economic situations. Therefore, it is crucial to promote these cooperatives as tools of empowerment in rural areas.

Keywords

Impact; Practices; Agricultural cooperatives; Women's empowerment; Rural development; Food security; Agricultural innovation; Community economy; Prosperity and sustainability

1. Introduction

The role of women in community development is a cornerstone of healthy societies. In many parts of the world, including Burundi, women are often responsible for key decisions that influence their households' participation in areas such as healthcare, education, and culture. Research has shown that involving women in community development efforts can reduce gender inequalities, address the needs of women and families, and contribute to the elimination of centuries of discrimination (Lecoutere, 2023). The case of the “Le Capital du Pauvre c’est sa Force” (CORI-CPF) Rice Cooperative exemplifies this dynamic and highlights the impact of cooperative practices on the

empowerment of women in Burundi.

While the stereotype of women as homemakers is diminishing in Western societies, women continue to play a significant role in household decision-making. Through their choices regarding shopping locations, children's schooling, and family involvement in community events, women position themselves as powerful change agents. Consequently, by engaging in community organizations such as women's associations or cooperative societies, they can translate their local experiences into initiatives that benefit the entire community (C-Lever.org, 2021).

Women often adopt a holistic approach to community development, envisioning the well-being of the entire community. Furthermore, studies suggest that women tend to work better as collaborators, making them ideal candidates for community organizations that require collective decision-making (Lecoutere, 2023). This propensity can lead to the establishment of more cooperative organizations focused on improving the lives of all citizens.

Cooperatives, particularly in Africa, have been recognized as structures that can achieve gender equality and economically and socially empower women. However, gender inequality persists strongly in rural areas of Burundi, where sociocultural norms restrict women's access to development opportunities and full societal participation (Lecoutere, 2023; C-Lever.org, 2021). This situation underscores the need for increased support for women through policies that promote their access to education, legal rights, and economic resources.

It is also essential to address the gender gap in agriculture, as women account for an average of 43% of the agricultural labor force in low- and middle-income countries. In Burundi, women primarily engage in subsistence crop production but face significant barriers, such as limited access to resources, training, and financing (FAO, 2021). Initiatives focused on gender equality and the enhancement of agricultural practices can help strengthen global food security.

In Burundi, cultural biases persist, reflected in societal expectations that confine women to domestic responsibilities and unpaid agricultural labor. Women are often socialized to respect family hierarchies, which may impede their ability to make autonomous decisions. However, joining agricultural cooperatives like CORI-CPF allows women to organize collectively and advocate for greater economic autonomy (C-Lever.org, 2021).

The inclusion of women in organizations such as women's associations and cooperatives also fosters open discussions about the specific challenges they face and potential solutions. These platforms not only encourage economic development but also education and women's empowerment, allowing for greater influence in both the social and political spheres. Through these efforts, women position themselves as leaders in decision-making processes within their households and communities.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the practices of agricultural cooperatives, specifically those of CORI-CPF, contribute to the social and economic empowerment of women in Burundi.

The empowerment of women through agricultural cooperatives represents a powerful lever for societal transformation. By creating new economic opportunities and fostering informed decision-making, cooperatives like CORI-CPF can play a vital role in addressing gender inequalities and promoting community well-being in Burundi. These initiatives must be supported by local policies that encourage girls' education, vocational training, and access to economic resources (C-Lever.org, 2021; Lecoutere, 2023), as well as ongoing community awareness about the importance of gender equality in development.

2. Methodology

According to N'DA (2002), defining the geographic field involves identifying observational geographic units and circumscribing the study's object within a defined spatial context. Our geographic field of investigation was limited to the total number of women and men who are members of the cooperative, as well as the staff of CORI-CPF, thus facilitating a more nuanced understanding of our topic. The study was conducted across three communes: Ntakangwa (located in the Bujumbura Mayorship), Mutimbuzi (within Bujumbura province), and Gihanga (in Bubanza province), where the sub-cooperatives of CORI-CPF are situated. All three provinces are part of the western region of Burundi, specifically the IMBO region. By selecting a sample of 98 respondents, consisting of 96 members of CORI-CPF, 45 women and 51 men, along with 2 staff members (a male and a female), we distributed the samples proportionally across each stratum represented by the three hills.

2.1 Concepts

2.1.1 Cooperative

A cooperative is a collective organization formed by a group of people who pool their resources and efforts to achieve

common goals. It is often created with the purpose of meeting specific economic, social, or cultural needs, such as the supply of goods and services, support for agriculture, or community development (Kahamba, 2021).

As defined by ILO Recommendation No. 193 on the Promotion of Cooperatives, a cooperative is “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise” (ILO COOPAFRICA, 2022).

2.1.2 Agricultural Cooperative

An agricultural cooperative is a business association in which farmers pool their resources. By doing so, farmers can increase their revenue, reduce costs, or share risks, depending on the type of cooperative (Kumar, 2021).

An agricultural cooperative is a specific type of cooperative formed by farmers and producers to collectively manage their agricultural activities and resources.

2.1.3 Empowerment

Empowerment is the increasing of the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals and communities (Giroud & Huaman, 2021).

Empowerment is a concept that refers to the process by which individuals or groups acquire the skills, confidence, and resources necessary to take control of their lives, make informed choices, and act effectively within their environment (Dushime, 2020).

According to Iragaba, it is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, communities, and society by acting on issues that they define as important (Iragaba, 2023).

2.1.4 Socio-economy

It is a field of study that examines social and economic factors to better understand how the combination of both influences various outcomes (Majurin, 2023).

Socio-economics is a discipline that studies the interactions between social and economic factors and their impact on human behavior, institutions, and the dynamics of a society (Chirwa & Matita, 2022).

2.1.5 Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity, and enable them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (C-Lever.org, 2021).

Economic empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources and opportunities, including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development, and market information (Gendernet, 2022).

2.1.6 Social Empowerment

Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty (Lebailly, 2023).

Social empowerment is a process that enables individuals and communities to strengthen their capacity to make decisions, claim their rights, and actively participate in the social and political life of their environment (Baidoo, 2022).

2.2 Data Collection Techniques and Tools

Sampling is the process of selecting units (people, organisations, for example) from a population of interest so that studying the sample can be fairly generalized back to the population from which it was chosen. Therefore, a sample is a small collection of units from a much larger population, such that the researcher can study a small group and produce accurate generalizations about the larger group (Kassa, 2020).

To determine the size of the sample, Alain BOUCHARD’s sampling techniques, as cited by SABITI Fred (2004), were used. According to him, when the population of the study is equal to or less than 1,000,000 individuals, it corresponds to a sample of 96 individuals with a marginal error of 10%.

Given the fact that the population of this study was less than 1,000,000 individuals, the sample was defined as follows:

$npc = (N_p \times N_c) / N$ where npc designates the size of the correct sample of the stratum p;

N_p : size of the stratum p

N : size of the population

N_c : correct sample

P : determines the number of each stratum

$N = 180$, that is, all members of CORI-CPF, women and men. 37 members are from CORI-CPF at Chanic, 48 from Rubirizi, and 95 from Gihanga.

Women members from CORI-CPF Chanic: $(18 \times 96) / 180 = 9.6 \approx 10$

Men members from CORI-CPF Chanic: $(19 \times 96) / 180 = 10.13 \approx 10$

Women members from CORI-CPF Rubirizi: $(27 \times 96) / 180 = 14.4 \approx 15$

Men members from CORI-CPF Rubirizi: $(21 \times 96) / 180 = 11.2 \approx 11$

Women members from CORI-CPF Gihanga: $(38 \times 96) / 180 = 20.2 \approx 20$

Men members from CORI-CPF Gihanga: $(57 \times 96) / 180 = 30.4 \approx 30$

2.3 Sample Distribution

The distribution of the sample by strata represented by the 3 sub-cooperatives of CORI-CPF was adopted. Stratification is the proportional allocation, which consists of assigning the same sampling rate to each stratum (GRAIS, 2000). The Proportional Quota sampling method was used to select 96 members.

Table 1. Sample Frame

Sub-cooperative	Gender	Number of members	Sample
Chanic	Women	18	10
	Men	19	10
Rubirizi	Women	27	15
	Men	21	11
Gihanga	Women	38	20
	Men	57	30
Total	Women	83	45
	Men	97	51

In addition to the sample size of 96 members from CORI-CPF (45 women and 51 men), 2 staff (a man and a woman) were added.

Table 1 provides a detailed sample frame for each sub-cooperative per gender. The Chanic sub-cooperative includes 10 women and 10 men, the Rubirizi sub-cooperative has 15 women and 11 men, and the Gihanga sub-cooperative's representation consists of 20 women and 30 men.

In total, the sample size for this study amounted to 98 respondents, comprising 96 members from CORI-CPF, 45 women and 51 men, as well as 2 staff members. This stratified sampling method provided a balanced reflection of the cooperative's demographics, which is crucial for accurately assessing the social dynamics and practices within CORI-CPF.

3. Results and Discussion

This section of the article presents the data collection for this study. It also addresses the data analysis, interprets and discusses the results, and the interpretation of the findings. The data was collected through a questionnaire. However, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies was employed to interpret the results found in the field.

Table 2. Women Respondents' Demographic Information

1. Respondents' Age group	Number	Percentage
(18-35)	9	20%
(36-50)	21	47%
(51 and more)	15	33%
Total	45	100
2. Respondents' Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Married	45	100%
Separated	0	0%
Divorcee	0	0%
Bachelor	0	0%
Widow	0	0%
Total	45	100
3. Years of membership duration	Number	Percentage
1 to 5	0	0%
6 and more	45	100%
Total	45	100
4. Educational level	Number	Percentage
Never attended school	10	22%
Primary School	19	42%
Secondary School	13	29%
University	3	7%
Total	45	100
5. Occupation	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	30	67%
Trader	5	11%
Civil servant	8	18%
Private	2	4%
Total	45	100

This table records the information concerning the different categories of the women respondents' identification of age group; marital status; the years of being a CORI-CPF member; level of instruction and occupation.

All the women respondents (45), that is 100%, were married and all of them had been CORI-CPF members for 6 years and more.

These are the characteristics that the researcher used to form the sample because in non-probability sampling each unit in target population does not have an equal chance of being included. The data from the field showed that among the women respondents 10 women respondents did not attend school which represents 22% of women respondents, 19 women respondents attended primary school which means 42% of women respondents, 13 women respondents attended secondary school which means 29% of the women respondents, and 3 women respondents (7%) attended university in this research.

Briefly, as it can be seen Table 2 unveils that educational level of women members is low in that the majority among them 64% content themselves with reaching an education that doesn't go beyond the primary school.

Table 3. Household food and basic need security

	Response options	Before membership			After membership		
		Effective	Frequency	Percentage	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
Difficulties in providing daily food for household	SA	8	0.18	18	0	0	0
	A	32	0.71	71	0	0	0
	U	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D	5	0.11	11	30	0.67	67
	SD	0		0	15	0.33	33
	Total		45	1	100	45	1
Difficulties in providing basic needs for household	SA	13	0.29	29	0	0	0
	A	30	0.67	67	0	0	0
	U	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D	2	0.04	4	28	0.62	62
	SD	0	0	0	17	0.38	38
	Total		45	1	100	45	1

Notes. (1) Strongly Agree (SA); (2) Agree (A); (3) Undecided (U); (4) Disagree (D); (5) Strongly Disagree (SD).

As the result of the study indicates, that 71 percent (32) and 18 percent (8) of women respondents did get sometimes and frequently difficulties in providing daily food, respectively before they become members of agricultural cooperatives. Only 11 percent (5) of women respondents disagreed on getting difficulties in providing daily food to the household consumption.

However, the numbers of respondents who faced difficulties in providing daily food before membership period, have reduced after membership period to 0 percent for 67 percent (30) and 33 percent (15) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively on the issue. Thus, agricultural cooperatives improve the probability of households to get enough food to the consumption of their family and ensure food security.

The above findings align with Biru (2014) that Household food security “Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum, the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g) without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies.”

In the reverse when we talk about food insecurity, it means that—“Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”

About 67 percent (30) of household respondents agreed on not able to provide basic needs for their household before their membership period but the number of respondents who disagreed on not to provide basic needs reduced to 0 percent after membership period. Those who did not agree before and after membership period are 4 percent (2) and 62 percent (28) respectively. 29 percent (13) of women respondents strongly said that they were not able to provide basic needs for their household before membership but after membership period, none of them said this. After membership period 38 percent (17) of respondents strongly disagreed on getting difficulties in providing basic needs for household.

Hence, agricultural cooperatives increase the access level of basic needs to the household members.

3.1 Men’s Views About the Impact of CORI-CPF on Women’s Socio-economic Empowerment

A survey was conducted on the men’s view about the Impact of CORI-CPF on Women’s Socio-economic Empowerment. Seven areas were identified. Results are in the following tables.

From the table below, 90% of men (46) strongly agreed that CORI-CPF does contribute to the amelioration of women’s socio-economic empowerment, whilst 10% of men respondents (5) put their agreement with the statement.

Table 4. Men's Views on Cooperative contribution to the amelioration of women's socio-economic empowerment

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	46	0,90	90
A	5	0,10	10
U	0	0	0
D	0	0	0
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

Table 5. Men's Views on CORI-CPF as an answer for the defense of women's welfare

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	21	0,41	41
A	30	0,59	59
U	0	0	0
D	0	0	0
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

It was also pertinent for the researchers to know whether CORI-CPF has become an answer for the defense of women's welfare. On this statement, 30 of the respondents (59%) approved the issue, and 21 (41%) strongly agreed.

Table 6. Men's Views on Amelioration of the living conditions of women members

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	42	0,82	82
A	9	0,18	18
U	0	0	0
D	0	0	0
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

Moreover, 82% of men respondents (42) strongly agreed that there has been amelioration in the living conditions of women members since their membership, while 18% (9) agreed.

Table 7. Men's Views on Women's decision-making power among cooperative members

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	15	0,29	29
A	29	0,57	57
U	0	0	0
D	7	0,14	14
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

It is further found that 29 men respondents out of 51 (57%) confirmed that women members of CORI-CPF have the power and ability to influence decisions among members, 15 (29%) strongly agreed, and 7 men respondents out of 51(14%) disagreed with the statement.

Table 8. Men's Views on Allocation of time to domestic tasks

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	49	0,96	96
A	2	0,04	4
U	0	0	0
D	0	0	0
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

Concerning the allocation of time to domestic tasks, a great number of men respondents (96 percent of the respondents, 49) strongly agreed that their partners work more hours in the house than they do, and only 4 percent (2) agreed.

Table 9. Men's Views on Control over the use of income

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	0	0	0
A	51	1	100
U	0	0	0
D	0	0	0
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

According to the control over the use of income, all the respondents (100%) put their agreement with the statement.

Table 10. Men's Views on Women's access to and decisions on credit

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	0	0	0
A	16	0,31	31
U	5	0,10	10
D	30	0,59	59
SD	0	0	0
Total	51	1	100

According to the statement about women's access to and decisions on credit, 16 respondents (31%) asserted that women members have freedom in access and utilization of microcredit, whereas the great majority (59%) refuted it. The rest 5 (10%) had no idea about the issue.

3.2 Women's Views on Strategies Employed by Agricultural Cooperatives in Promoting Socio-economic Empowerment

A survey was conducted on the women's views about the Strategies employed by Agricultural Cooperatives in Promoting Socio-economic Empowerment. Five areas were identified. Results are in the following tables.

Table 11. Women's views on the use of improved seeds

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	3	0,07	7
A	6	0,13	13
U	0	0	0
D	28	0,62	62
SD	8	0,18	18
Total	45	1	100

From the above table, regarding the utilization of improved seeds, among 45 women respondents, 62% (28 women) disagreed with the notion of using improved seeds for all crops, while 18% (8 women) strongly disagreed. Only 13% (6 women) agreed and 7% (3 women) strongly agreed that they used improved seeds for all crops, suggesting limited access to such seeds.

Table 12. Women's views on the use of innovative or new farming techniques

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	9	0,20	20
A	28	0,62	62
U	0	0	0
D	8	0,18	18
SD	0	0	0
Total	45	1	100

Concerning the use of innovative farming techniques, 62% (28 women) agreed that they employed methods such as row planting and pest control, while 18% (8 women) disagreed, and 20% (9 women) strongly agreed. In total, 82% (37 women) confirmed using these innovative techniques.

Table 13. Women's views on the evolution in the use of innovative techniques since membership

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	20	0,44	44
A	18	0,40	40
U	0	0	0
D	7	0,16	16
SD	0	0	0
Total	45	1	100

When assessing the evolution in innovative techniques since their membership, 44% (20 women) strongly agreed there has been progress, 40% (18 women) agreed, and 16% (7 women) dissented.

Table 14. Women's views on training in agronomic techniques

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	15	0,33	33
A	14	0,31	31
U	0	0	0
D	16	0,36	36
SD	0	0	0
Total	45	1	100

Lastly, regarding training access for agronomic knowledge, 33% (15 women) strongly agreed they benefited from training sessions, 31% (14 women) agreed, and 36% (16 women) denied receiving any training.

Table 15. Women's views on freedom in access and utilization of micro credits

Answers	Effective	Frequency	Percentage
SA	0	0	0
A	17	0,38	38
U	0	0	0
D	20	0,44	44
SD	8	0,18	18
Total	45	1	100

Concerning micro-credit access, 44% (20 women) felt restricted, and 18% (8 women) strongly disagreed with having free access. Conversely, 38% (17 women) claimed they had access to micro-credit.

Overall, women's access to improved seeds, innovative techniques, training, and micro-credit shows notable advancement after joining agricultural cooperatives.

3.3 Interpretation of Interviews with the Staff of CORI-CPF

During this research, two of the cooperative staff, the president and the Secretary, were interviewed. Both of them acknowledged the key role of CORI-CPF in women's socio-economic empowerment.

3.4 Interpretation of Interview with the President of CORI-CPF

During the research, the interviewer asked the president of CORI-CPF about the background and the objectives of their cooperative so as to really know the socio-economic living conditions of women before membership. It was a good occasion for the president,, is a woman.

On the question of the socio-economic conditions of women before membership, she agreed that women's living conditions were worsening because they depended much more on their spouses; the gendered division of labor relegated most household tasks to women. Men, in turn, are involved with production-related activities that are meant to yield a financial profit. Moreover, Burundian men experience a lot more freedom in their daily lives as compared to women, and expect women to be subservient and care for their needs. She added that there were inequalities between women and men in terms of access to and control over social and economic resources and opportunities for participation due to sociocultural norms.

For the question related to the positive effect of agricultural cooperatives on women's socio-economic empowerment, the president of CORI-CPF confirmed that agricultural cooperatives have played a great role in women's socio-economic empowerment. Concerning the question about living conditions, she said that women members got enough food for their households and basic needs.

She continued by saying that women have been empowered in different domains, such as decisions about

agricultural production and sole or joint decision-making about food and cash crop farming, livestock, and autonomy in agricultural production.

Furthermore, she argued that ownership of, access to, and decision-making power about productive resources such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, durable consumer goods, and credit are the other positive effects of CORI-CPF on women members, as mentioned by the president of the cooperative. Being a member of agricultural cooperatives also help women to sole and joint control over the use of income and expenditures, leadership in the community measured by membership in economic or social groups and comfort in speaking in public; and allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks and satisfaction with the time available for leisure activities.

She added that women members of CORI-CPF play a significant role in making decisions, and monitoring and evaluation of the decisions made. Many of them attend the meetings held by the cooperative, and they express their ideas about the cooperative and the needs they want to address.

One of the challenges that has been reported by the president of CORI-CPF includes the heavy workload experienced by women cooperative members as they are required to carry out cooperative activities, household chores, and other productive roles as dictated by their cultural norms. Thus, gender-mixed cooperatives and women's cooperatives in Burundi had no noticeable impact on the intra-household division of labor; they remained the sole responsibility of women. This is because intra-household labor division is determined by one's sense of identity, social perceptions, and gender roles, which are sustained by social norms.

3.5 Interpretation of Interview with the Secretary of CORI-CPF

Another interviewee was the secretary of CORI-CPF. This one is supposed to have much and enough information about the strategies used by the cooperative in order to promote women's empowerment because he is an expert in the environment.

Concerning the question about the strategies employed by CORI-CPF in promoting women's socio-economic empowerment, one of them is the farming techniques as mentioned by the secretary, the agricultural Engineer. As the main activity in CORI-CPF is rice farming, innovative farming techniques have been used in order to improve production. Growing rice needs much water to thrive, but also the soil in the area where rice is planted must consist of slightly acidic clay for the best result. To make sure they have a reliable water source, they adopted efficient irrigation methods. Row planting of seeds makes it easier to water and weed.

To ensure crop health and an increase in crop yields, they needed to perform rice growing fertilization at just the right time and just the right rates. The cooperative has been using manure produced from waste matter of animals kept mixed with hare urine. They also use human waste to make urea. They also used chemical fertilizers, but in small quantities.

He added that they employed pesticides to kill off weeds growing in the rice field that might otherwise steal water and nutrients from the crop. Weed and pest detection and eradication have always been part of their crop-monitoring plan. They have also made animal and seed breeds to give to other farmers and breeders.

Moreover, in order to improve women's socio-economic empowerment, strategies such as opportunities to increase individual agency through income-generating activities such as rice selling, training in agricultural techniques, the setting of a financial community group, etc. have been used by the cooperative.

4. Conclusion

This article aimed to examine the role of agricultural cooperatives, specifically CORI-CPF, in fostering the social and economic empowerment of women in Burundi. The findings indicate that cooperative membership has a profoundly positive impact on women's capabilities, leading to enhanced economic conditions for households. Members reported a marked reduction in daily food insecurity and challenges related to fulfilling basic household needs. This empowerment is not only significant for individual women but also contributes to the overall well-being of their families and communities.

The results further underscore how agricultural cooperatives play a critical role in providing social and economic benefits to local communities. By improving income and access to services, these cooperatives have the potential to elevate agricultural production and enhance food security on a larger scale. The economic benefits gained from cooperative membership extend to providing women with diversified income sources, highlighting the importance of collective efforts in addressing poverty and food insecurity in rural areas.

Moreover, the analysis revealed that women in agricultural cooperatives, such as CORI-CPF, have a meaningful role in decision-making processes. Their active participation in meetings allows them to voice their concerns and influence the direction of the cooperatives. This empowerment in decision-making reflects a positive shift in gender dynamics, suggesting that women are increasingly recognized as essential contributors to agricultural and community development.

Also noteworthy is the enhancement of agronomic knowledge and the adoption of innovative farming techniques among women members. The study indicates that cooperatives support women in accessing improved seeds and techniques, leading to better agricultural practices. This trend not only improves productivity but also establishes a foundation for long-term economic sustainability for women farmers. The findings advocate for targeted initiatives to further expand these benefits, especially among female members, to ensure the growth and effectiveness of agricultural practices.

However, despite these advancements, the study also identified the persistence of traditional gender roles, particularly in intra-household labor divisions. While cooperative membership empowers women, it does not automatically translate into equitable labor distribution within households. This highlights the need for complementary strategies that address these entrenched gender norms. By fostering discussions around gender roles and promoting equitable labor practices, the potential for agricultural cooperatives to bridge gender gaps and enhance the overall empowerment of women in rural settings remains promising, suggesting a path forward for ongoing improvement in women's socio-economic status.

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