



Integrating gender into other research areas: challenges and opportunities

Analytical essay

Prepared by the CGIAR Gender and Agriculture Research Network Coordination team

Introduction

Gender research in CGIAR Research Programs has a dual function: (1) to influence the way a Program plans and conducts its research and (2) to produce gender research that is put into use for development impact. Three rounds of discussions were held with gender research coordinators to facilitate the sharing of their experiences with regards to

- what extent gender research has influenced planning and priority setting in their relevant CRPs
- crucial bottlenecks impeding progress on this task
- good practices or initiatives that could be adopted more widely.

This discussion drew on the Gender Annex ([view all annexes submitted here](#)) prepared by each Program for its Phase II Proposal- an analytical essay prepared because the Fund Council had asked for a reflection on how the past four years of emphasis on gender mainstreaming had influenced and shaped the direction of the new proposals. The purpose of these discussions was therefore, to distill some lessons learned, identify challenges faced and exchange good ideas that have been developed thus far.

Below are some of the areas and initiatives discussed as good practice

Reflexive analysis assists learning from the past and planning for the future

Developing the annex was a useful reflection on how to position gender research effectively in relation to a Program's existing gender strategy. Writing the annex helped researchers to narrow the scope of research and identify promising entry points for future influence on planning and priority setting. In addition to examining at what had been achieved, the reflexive analysis helped identify which efforts were realistic and which stakeholders within the program and among partners demonstrated the buy-in needed for gender research to influence decisions about program-level priorities. Preparation of the Annex provided an opportunity and a need to interact with research leaders across the different internal flagship projects for in-depth discussions about their key research questions and expectations.

Short talks given during these facilitated discussions highlighted that Phase 1 research has allowed for progress in areas such as sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis, clarification of priorities in terms of geography and demography, stakeholder identification, and knowledge about the main issues that women face in the different contexts that are studied.

Ensure a mandate for leadership of gender research across projects

Across the CRPs, there is a diversity of approaches to integrating gender research into other technical research areas. A point of discussion was whether successful integration of gender research removed the necessity of a dedicated unit or project on gender. A key point highlighted was that successful integration of gender cannot take place without clear leadership and well-identified roles and responsibilities to ensure that gender research will indeed be resourced and executed as planned in grant proposals and plans of work and budget.

A good practice highlighted in this respect is to ensure there is a group with a mandate for leadership of gender research across an entire program. One such example is AN4NH's Gender, Equity and Empowerment (GEE) Unit, which made an initial inventory of gender research being undertaken in different projects, developed a cross-project framework for explaining or

hypothesizing gender and nutrition impacts and then worked to disseminate this framework, while monitoring the progress of gender research in the inventory.

Another example is Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA)'s gender integration team with gender focal points who represent each of the four Centers involved in the Program. Each gender focal point works directly with a flagship to reflect on questions that are relevant to that particular flagship. Regular interaction amongst the team is institutionalized in monthly virtual meetings and face to face meetings every 3 months. These regular interactions help develop an ongoing process of influencing the flagships over time by facilitating different leaders to engage routinely with the team.

Encourage pro-active buy-in through leadership support and financial incentives

The vital contribution of support from Program leadership was strongly emphasized during these discussions. Leadership from senior management is particularly important for changing the mindsets of program scientists and partners. Leaders' support was especially influential in enabling gender research coordinators, units or teams to offer financial incentives for including a gender component in research since a frequent objection is that it requires more data to be collected and increases research costs.

The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish developed a gender budget flowchart using the Budget Guidelines for the CRP phase 2 proposal. The detailed guidelines are used to help scientists identify what level of resources they should assign for a given study with gender content. The team has also worked on coaching scientists to integrate gender. It is important to note however, that sometimes those who are trained are not necessarily the ones who are in charge of decision making. These two resources provide 2 functions (1) moving through the flowchart shows how much of the budget a researcher can access via a particular activity and (2) more detailed guidelines as the CRPs move into phase 2. [Download the guidelines here](#) .

Livestock and Fish also used an internal competitive fund to encourage better integration of gender, such as can be seen through the Feed Assessment Tool (FEAST)- systematic method to assess local feed resource availability. In this case, an e-learning version was developed in collaboration with the CRP Humidtropics and the Learning Management System launched in partnership with SONATA Learning and which provides a centralized platform for developing online courses to reach wider audiences. The value of incorporating gender dimensions into the tool was demonstrated in work in Ethiopia, where the tool was used to characterize farming and livestock production system including feed resources and related aspect of small holder farmers.

The A4NH Unit provided a series of small grants and technical assistance helping new research studies to incorporate gender into their design. The FTA team guided flagship projects to link gender research questions to their budget in very clear terms.

In 2014, The CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE), launched an open competitive call for funding in each of the program's focal regions (East Africa and the Nile/East Africa corridor, the Volta/Niger, the Ganges and the Greater Mekong). Gender was an important selection criterion, and each project worked with the Gender, Poverty and Institutions (GPI) unit to integrate gender into the problem analysis and to identify gender-specific research questions and outputs. Although the projects are still in early stages, interesting findings are already emerging. Research in the Volta aims to support investable water management options for women. One project has demonstrated that small reservoirs with built-in canals are the most functional for women, and that women often benefit more from informal schemes. Whereas, in the Nile, UNESCO-IHE and partners are examining how to make water accounting contextually relevant by including social, gender and ecological dimensions. The project is looking at the issue

of re-allocation of water in irrigation and the gender differential implications of irrigation investments. 2016 will be dedicated to analyzing, publishing and synthesizing the research and lessons from these and the other focal region projects.

The Gender Annex developed by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) is also another example of how financial incentives can be used to encourage the integration of a gender component in research activities. In this case, there is support from leadership, not only at the flagship levels but also from the CCAFS Director, where gender and social inclusion is given prominence in budget, management and other organizational areas. The program has also developed gender targets for all flagships. As a result, the flagship leaders have initiated gender research within their flagships to varying extents, with the result that they all understand that gender is an important element of the CCAFS agenda and how results are measured. An interview with Sophia Huyer, CCAFS Gender and Social Inclusion Leader is available [here](#).

Improve accountability for gender research by leveraging the gender budget

Earmarking resources explicitly for gender research is a new practice for CGIAR that has been widely implemented in Phase 1. However, in many CRPs the majority of the resources earmarked for the gender budget are not directly managed by or under the control of gender researchers. This has led to difficulties in implementation, especially in cases where the scientists responsible for conducting the gender research in a technical area are expected to do so with the more limited funds directly allocated to them. Nonetheless, this practice helps reinforce integration of gender research.

The CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) noted that influence over planning improved when they linked sex-disaggregated data collection to a certain percentage of the budget in a given project. An important aspect of this however, was to ensure that this data collection addresses an overarching, gender research question to ensure that each small study contributes to a larger scale study. Drawing these small studies together and framing them around a common question that is theoretically grounded is expected to enable the scaling up of gender research to generate more significant and influential findings.

CCAFS will follow guidelines for budgeting and has introduced the monitoring of attention to serious gender research through Results Based Management such that poor performance will be penalized by budget adjustments.

Provide a framework to guide integration

Integration of gender with other, technical research areas can be easier to guide when gender researchers provide an overarching framework for identifying and interpreting cause-effect relationships between gender variables and between gender and other factors in the Program's theory of change. For example, the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) has developed pathways for gender effects on outcomes and impacts. A framework for studying nutritious value chains was developed (Gelli et al. 2015) for explaining gender as an important variable of analysis.

This framework helps assess gender related trade-offs caused by value chain activities. A4NH will use the framework in Phase II to design value chain interventions in which gender explicitly influences different actions and actors along the food chain, such as food choice. The framework

has proved useful in mainstreaming gender within the CGIAR Research Program and partner organizations. A4NH's framework provided a tool for the value chain flagship project to frame gender research questions. [View the discussion paper here.](#)

A framework is useful not only from a planning perspective but also for assessing progress with the mainstreaming of gender research with partners. In future, A4NH's framework will be used by [a learning platform \(or Community of Practice\)](#) to ensure that food system research and food chain assessments examining impacts on diet-related indicators incorporate sex-disaggregated data and gender in their analysis. A detailed review of food systems in target countries will be undertaken, where gender relationships will be viewed as crucial to understanding how food systems work, along with implications of agriculture and food policies on different gender groups.

With support from RTB, a CIP training manual on participatory varietal selection (PVS) has been improved by adding gender-sensitive elements at each step of the selection process. The manual, now entitled *How to Conduct Participatory Varietal Selection in Potato: A Gender Responsive User Guide* was revised in 2014 and will support training of trainers in gender-responsive PVS. The methodology was originally adapted for root and tuber crops in 2008 under the RedLatinPapa project and since then has been used by CIP and partners in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and, more recently, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. In order to ensure gender representativeness in the results, recommendations were added for PVS facilitators and trainers to adequately address the issue of trait preferences by gender, given that involving all farmers is regarded as a prerequisite to adoption and upscaling.

Develop strong partnerships with external sources of expertise

CGIAR Research Programs cannot expect to assemble all the expertise in gender research needed, within the program alone. Within the current CGAIR landscape, fostering partnerships with advanced research organizations, universities in particular, is proving to be a good practice. For example, WLE expects its partnership with north and south university faculty members will be crucial to understanding how gender affects power relations that govern the use of land and water resources.

To access multiple resources for research on power relations, WLE maintains strong partnerships with external sources of gender expertise. Its partners include the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, UK), Wageningen University (The Netherlands), Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) (South Africa), Pennsylvania State University (USA), and national universities.

Capacity development

Effective gender mainstreaming does not take place exclusively by training every type of researcher to become an analyst of gender relations. Several types of capacity development are needed, one of which is awareness-building which aims to enable non-social scientists to better understand why gender differences will affect the impact of their work.

Awareness building is especially important for leaders who are in charge of decision making but it's also fruitful if used broadly to foster broad acceptance of gender as a research topic in the organizational culture. For example, Bioversity International ensures that its researchers have the capacity to deliver gender-responsive research in a number of ways, one of which is through a gender and social inclusion community of practice, [where community members have a wide range of disciplinary and national backgrounds, represent all initiatives and components and contribute to all the CGIAR Research Programs in which Bioversity International is active.](#) This CoP is a collaborative space for exchanging experiences with tools and methodologies for conducting gender-responsive and strategic gender research, including among gender

'champions' embedded in initiatives. Members include scientists interested in gender and social inclusion issues at every level of Bioversity and throughout its research.

Awareness-building can be reinforced by monitoring gender content in other types of capacity development as well. CCAFS, for example, included in its capacity development strategy, four gender-focused indicators that will be tracked over time. Its capacity enhancement activities are mainstreamed within research and engagement activities so as to raise both research capacity among partners, research users and co-creators.

A second type of capacity development involves helping non-specialists to discern why, when and how to make use of gender experts and the different types of studies they can conduct. This is especially important for planning when identifying target beneficiaries and how they are expected to benefit from research-based innovations.

These two tasks require highly specialized types of analysis using a range of methods and disciplines. For example, CCAFS used the process of writing the Gender Annex to conduct a meeting with each flagship project and familiarize researchers with findings from gender research and their implications. This facilitated consensus for planning a large-scale, cross-program impact study ([see CCAFS gender annex](#))

Livestock and Fish development a participatory gender capacity assessment tool for partners, in collaboration with Transition International. The program also focused on addressing the challenge of developing internal capacity for gender mainstreaming by moving forward with a coordinated set of activities to strengthen the capacity of non-gender scientists to use and understand gender concepts, tools and analysis. Led by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) with the support of the CRP gender experts, this initiative involves coaching non-gender scientists to apply a gender lens in their research. Ten gender-integrated research projects were funded and implemented specifically in response to the 2014 call for gender-integrated research proposals, and sixteen projects were coached across all flagships and in six target value chains.

Initial reports from the coached studies have been written and a subset are being prepared for publication. Integrating gender into Livestock and Fish research is an ongoing process to build up the collective capacity for interdisciplinary research teams. This approach has generated increasing appreciation by non-gender scientists of the value of gender analysis for improving the quality and impact of their technical, value chain and systems research. The surge of interest in and commitment to gender-integrated research has, however, put additional pressure on the limited gender staff in trying to respond to all of the requests to integrate gender in proposal writing, tool development and implementation, data analysis and discussion. A challenge going forward will be to clarify roles and responsibilities of all researchers (gender and non-gender) to ensure high quality science and benefits are appropriately shared by the researchers involved.

A third type of capacity development involves specialized expertise in social and gender analysis. For example, Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA), identified different types of capacities needed for gender mainstreaming which led to the establishment of a research fellowship to build the expertise of the gender team.

Food for further thought...

- Getting buy-in from research leaders was a clear and obvious requirement for ensuring better integration of gender within the research planning and priority process.
- Progress has been made in terms of awareness building and coaching scientists on why and how to integrate gender in technical research areas
- With support from leadership, there are practical ways to improve accountability for execution of proposed gender research and budgets
- Gender research still needs to progress from a focus on diagnosis (why gender is important) to an emphasis on influencing the development of actionable gender-responsive or transformative technologies, institutions and policy options
- Whilst there is ambition to implement transformative approaches, broad acceptance of this as a suitable goal of CRPs remains a bottleneck and this will be a challenge for Phase II CRPs.

Additional resources:

Spatial mapping of SDD aids priority setting

Mapping of gender and natural resources, as in the case of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE), helped provide insights useful for setting priorities regarding access to and use of ecosystem services and natural resources. Better known as “[Four Gender Basin Profiles](#),” the project collated data for each of the WLE focal regions to build indicator maps and profiles of regional gender issues.

Shared online spaces

Building a thematic blog such as the [Gender-Nutrition Idea Exchange](#) helps not only document but also provides a central space for gender research activities being carried out by partners.

Livestock and Fish uses [a section of the program’s central wikispace](#) to document strategies, news, tools and resources related to its focus on gender, learning and impact.