Gender mainstreaming performance indicators

*Analysis and Commentary*

July 2016
CGIAR Gender and Agriculture Research Network
Since 2013, CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) have been requested to provide a self-assessment of the status of gender mainstreaming in their Annual Reports, based on two performance indicators, designed to track performance over time on:

- Gender equality targets in place - the extent to which the CRP has clearly identified the changes in beneficiary gender equality that it intends to produce by defining a baseline and setting targets.
- Institutional architecture for gender mainstreaming in place - the extent to which the CRP and Center(s) have defined responsibilities, allocated resources and implemented practices for generating and using research evidence on gender equality.

Each indicator can be self-assessed at one of three levels: whether the Program “approaches requirements,” “meets requirements” or “exceeds requirements”.

**Box 1:**

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<th>CGIAR Consortium</th>
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<td><strong>Indicator 1: Gender equality targets in place</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Approaches requirements</strong></td>
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<td>Sex-disaggregated social data is being collected and used to diagnose important gender-related constraints in at least one of the CRP’s main target populations.</td>
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| **Indicator 2: Institutional architecture for gender mainstreaming in place** |  
| **Approaches requirements** | **Meets requirements** | **Exceeds requirements** |
| CRP scientists and managers with responsibility for gender in the CRP’s outputs are appointed, have written TORS and funds allocated to support their interaction. Procedures practiced to use available diagnostic or baseline knowledge on gender routinely for assessment of the gender equality implications of the CRP’s flagship research products as per the Gender Strategy. CRP M&E system has protocol for tracking its progress on integration of gender in research. | A CRP plan approved for capacity development in gender analysis. | The CRP uses feedback provided by its M&E system to improve its integration of gender into research. |

**Why these indicators?**

**Gender equality targets in place:** No organization or program can credibly claim to make an input to improving gender equality (a CGIAR Intermediate Development Outcome), without first establishing the point of departure (baseline) and the expected change.

**Institutional architecture in place:** When an organization commits to improving gender equality from a decade or more of downsizing its capacity to do so, as was the case in CGIAR in the first decade on the 2000s, then a minimum requirement is to build afresh the institutional capacity to take gender inequality into account in its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
These two indicators, based on similar measures developed for use by a number of international agencies, notably the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), were designed to track progress in gender mainstreaming for the first four years (Phase I) of the CRPs (originally 2012-2015), with the expectation that most CRPs would “meet requirements” by 2015. The basis for this monitoring is self-assessment because the Consortium Office does not evaluate individual CRPs. Self-assessment is primarily intended to provide the CRP and its gender research team an opportunity for reflection and formative evaluation. Since we are now approaching the end of Phase 1 of the CRPs, this is an appropriate point in time to reflect on what these indicators tell us at the portfolio level, as well as, at an individual CRP level about progress on gender mainstreaming.

As a measure of progress, at a minimum, we are looking for the lowest bar in each indicator “Approaches requirements” to decrease in size from 2012 to 2014 and the middle bar “meets requirements”, to increase in size over time. By the end of Phase 1, all CRPs should at least “meet requirements.” An increase over time in “exceeds requirements” is highly desirable but not essential to meet the expected standard of achievement built into the indicators.

Self-assessment is of course, subjective even though the indicators provide some specific guidelines on how to judge standards. Thus, the focus of attention should be trends rather than numbers of CRPs at a given level of performance.

Figure 1 below has the CRP-level data so that you can review what your CRP has reported over the last few years.

It’s important to bear in mind when interpreting these 2 indicators that gender research has a dual function in CRPs:

(1) Research on gender must influence the internal process of the CRP to increase attention to gender considerations in its planning, priority setting and targeting, so that other types of research in the program (e.g. breeding, agronomy, agricultural engineering, marketing) can produce outputs that change gender equality – and that can help achieve its final impacts (poverty reduction, improved food security, etc.)

(2) Research on gender must produce knowledge that informs the process of output delivery, out-scaling, partnership, participation of stakeholders, policies and impact documentation
Assessing progress

Figure 1:

Note: Figure 1 summarizes the trend in self-reported assessments on Indicators 1 & 2. These figures demonstrate the reported self-assessments for CRPs on Indicators 1 and 2 taken from the 2012 through 2015 Annual Reports. Not all CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) have reported or conducted a self-assessment of how well they meet the requirements. In such cases, the assessment has been done by the Gender network coordination team based on Section D of the Annual report. All percentages calculated for 2014 and 2015 are based on submissions by 13 CGIAR Research Programs instead of 15.

Figure 1 demonstrates that CRPs considered there was substantial progress on both indicators from “approaches” to “meets” requirements between 2012 to 2015. It is important to bear in mind that these performance indicators were designed to assess progress with the start-up phase of integrating gender in research, so that “meets requirements” represents a minimum standard that CRPs should have achieved by the end of phase 1, originally expected to end in 2014 for most CRPs that subsequently obtained an extension to 2016. Thus, by 2015 it is reasonable to expect that most CRPs would meet the requirements set for Phase 1. This has been accomplished by almost all CRPs: the 2015 Annual Reports (received in mid-2016) showed a reduction in the percent of CRPs assessing that they approach requirements and a corresponding increase in the percent that meet requirements.

In 2015 reports, a small proportion (18%) of CRPs assess that they remain at the level of “approaches requirements” on both indicators. This appears to be largely due to a persistent lack of appropriate leadership and social science expertise or difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff. The proportion assessing that they now exceed requirements on both indicators increased to around 36% on research practice (indicator 1) and 45% on institutional architecture (Indicator 2). Thus, in terms of this self-assessment, progress in 2015 from meeting to exceeding requirements has been steady for just under half of the Programs.

By 2014, progress towards “meets requirements” appears to have stalled in most CRPs. Thus, not all CRPs made the desired progress to “meet requirements” by the end of Phase 1.

- The most marked trend is, as it should be, an improvement in institutional architecture (indicator 2). This suggests progress is being made in putting capacity in place even if the same level of progress is not as evident in research practice (indicator 1).
• The disruptions to CRPs caused by budget uncertainty might be a partial explanation to the degree that this affected gender research staffing. However, only the ‘approaches requirements’ metric in indicator 2 has a direct relationship to staff capacity.

• If a CRP had not put the institutional architecture fully in place to meet requirements by 2013, slow progress in all other elements of performance would inexorably result in 2014. However, there was a leap (from 7% to 20%) in the proportion of CRPs that considered they exceeded requirements in 2014 compared with 2012. A key conclusion therefore, from Figure 1, is that at the portfolio level CGIAR standards of gender mainstreaming have been raised, but CGIAR still manifests a high degree of unevenness among programs in the mainstreaming of gender research as defined by these indicators.

Uneven capacity was flagged as a concern in the assessment conducted by the Consortium Office in 2013. Three years of quintessentially program-level investment in gender research has not noticeably reduced uneven capacity.

Decentralized mainstreaming concentrated at the CRP level was not particularly effective up to 2014, in leveling out performance across the CRPs, so that all programs meet a minimum standard. Some CRPs have instigated a within-program centrally-led approach by giving the Gender Research Coordinator or a committee, input to the CRP management committee. Some CRPs have established a well-staffed expert team with authority over the use of funds not under the team’s direct control, but assigned for gender research in technical areas as well as in some cases, sanctions for under–resourcing gender research.

However, this approach is not yet the norm and this difference exacerbates the unevenness in mainstreaming among CRPs. A contributing factor is that some CRPs simply have not recruited or have been unable to attract or retain the senior level of expertise required for a centrally- led approach. However, not all CRPs confronted with recruitment issues have allowed this to hold back progress on Indicator 1.

Persistent unevenness among programs in gender mainstreaming and capacity for gender research does raise the question why CGIAR insists on pursuing mainstreaming of gender in research on an individual program basis. A relatively small, system-wide gender team implementing a cross-program research portfolio with an investment of perhaps a fraction of the portfolio-level gender budget could provide the leadership needed within a short time, to elevate the capacity of all CRPs still “approaching requirements” by effectively distributing team capacity more equitably across CRPs.