



Gender and Livestock: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Jemimah Njuki and Pascal Sanginga

Of the 600 million poor livestock keepers, two-thirds are rural women. However, little research has been conducted on rural women's roles in livestock keeping and the opportunities livestock-related interventions could offer them.

Women are major contributors in the agricultural economy, but face various constraints that limit them from achieving optimal livestock production and agricultural development. These constraints include:

- Limited access to productive resources, including land, water and credit.
- Limited access to market information and market prices.
- Limited decision-making powers because of unequal power relations within the household and the community.

A report by FAO argues that if women were to have access to the same level of resources as men, agricultural productivity would increase by up to 30%, agricultural output by up to 4%, and the number of poor people would reduce by up to 17%.

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)



Betsi Delphine feeds one of her family's pigs

Questions

- What is the importance of livestock as an asset for women?
- What livestock, livestock products and markets have the greatest benefits for women?
- How do patterns of market participation influence income management by women?
- How do livestock improve household food security?
- Does who owns the livestock have an influence on food security?
- What approaches are needed for better, gender-responsive livestock research?

has developed a conceptual framework on livestock as a pathway out of poverty. Using a gender lens, there are at least three strategies for livestock research to benefit women and the poor:

- Securing current and future assets.
- Sustaining and improving the productivity of agricultural systems in which livestock are important.
- Facilitating greater participation of the poor in livestock-related markets.

Asset ownership

Livestock are an asset that women can more easily own. It is generally easier for women in developing countries to acquire livestock assets, whether through inheritance, markets or collective action processes, than it is for them to purchase land or other physical or financial assets. The relative informality of livestock property rights can, however,

be disadvantageous to women when their ownership of animals is challenged.

Putting assets in the hands of women increases their bargaining power, their role in household decision-making and household spending on children's education and health. Interventions that increase women's access and rights to livestock, and then safeguard the women from dispossession and their stock from theft or untimely death, help women move out of poverty.

To gain a better understanding of gender inequalities, it is important to look at whether women own or don't own livestock, the numbers and value of what they own and the gap between what women and men own. It is also important to understand the extent of joint ownership and decision-making powers over livestock and livestock products.

Livestock value chains

Women's participation at each level of the value chain is influenced by a number of factors, including: their access to capital; their skills, capacities and ability to organise; and constraints on their mobility. Women lack secure rights to land, labour and capital and are less likely than men to be served by formal financial institutions. They also face higher transaction costs while marketing. And, as livestock production becomes more commercialised, women may not be able to compete with men or derive the same benefits.



Najiemba Haaiye sells eggs and chickens to shops in her village

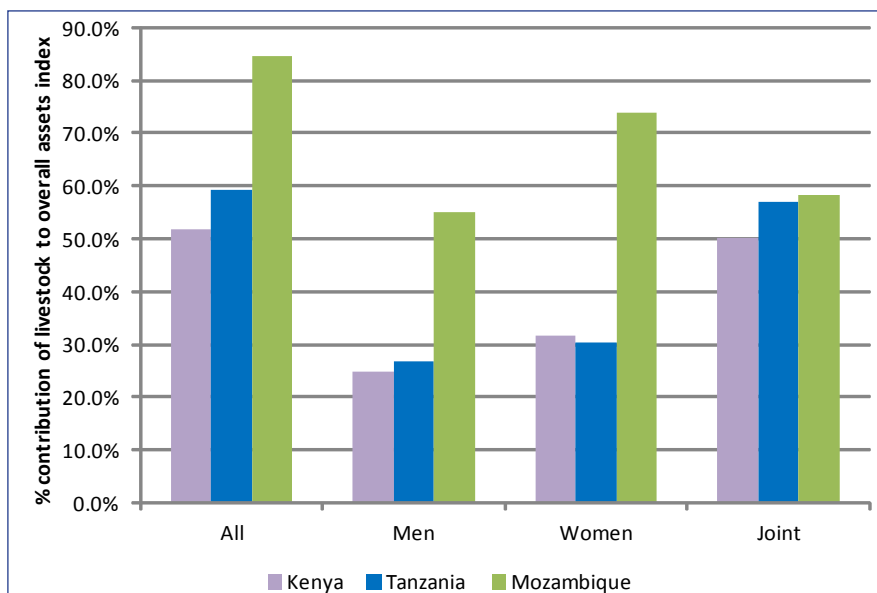


Figure 1. Contribution of livestock to the asset portfolio of households, men and women

Generally, they have far more rights over livestock products (milk, butter, cheese, ghee, hides and skins) than they do over the live animals themselves. In some countries, women are more involved in sale of small livestock compared to large livestock. Understanding how and why women participate in markets can help identify intervention areas that optimise women's participation and their benefits.

Income management

Women's ability to manage their income is vital to the survival of many households. Studies have shown that women spend close to 90% of their income on their family while men spend 30-40%, even when the overall income is not sufficient to meet family needs. Income under the management of women can increase their bargaining power, reduce domestic violence and improve the nutritional status of their children.

There is a common perception that women are more likely to own, and therefore benefit more from small stock rather than larger animals. However, studies have shown that women do sometimes manage income from the sale of livestock products even when they do not own the livestock. In Tanzania, for example, women manage 49% of income from the sale of chickens, compared to 24% from the sale of cattle, but manage 50% of the income from milk sales (Figure 2).

Women's management of income is influenced by the types of markets where livestock and livestock

products are sold and who buys them. When livestock and livestock products are sold at the farm gate to other farmers, women manage a significantly higher proportion of income compared to when livestock and products are sold in village markets or delivered to traders. Where women are unable to transport livestock and livestock products to market, men generally make the financial transactions and retain the income. Women's roles therefore tend to diminish as formal markets expand, unless strategies ensure they participate in these markets.

Thus, commercialisation of production can erode income management. This is an increasing concern, with rising demand for livestock and livestock products, particularly among urban consumers, changing markets and marketing systems. How this affects the management and control of income by women - especially income earned from livestock products such as milk and eggs - needs more attention.

Food security

Animal source foods, such as milk, meat and eggs, are rich in energy and also provide a good source of proteins, vitamins and minerals. Ownership of livestock by women increases the probability that households, especially children, will benefit from the consumption of livestock products or from food bought using income derived from livestock.

In seeking ways to improve household food security

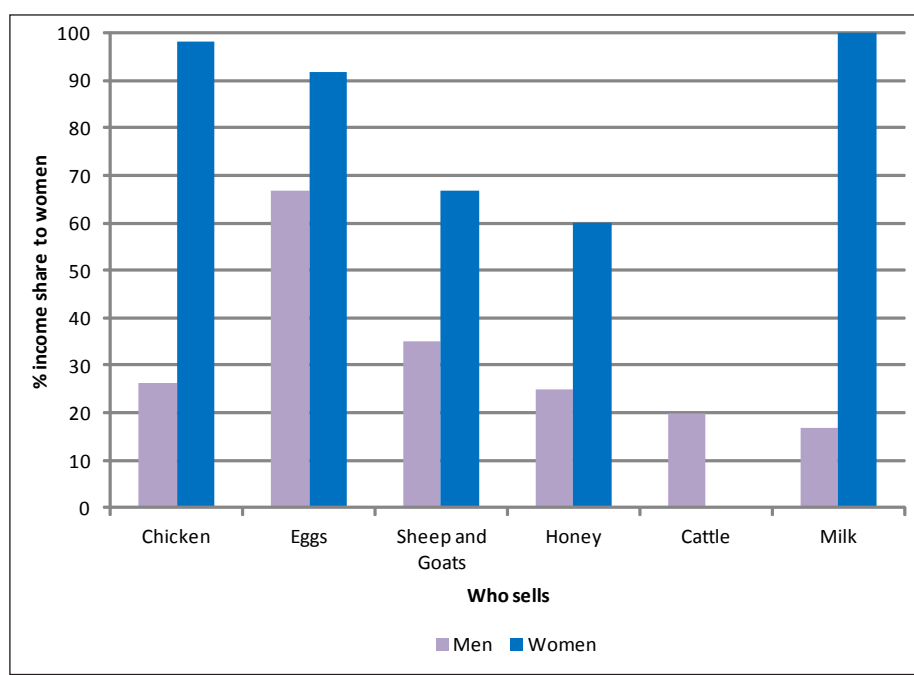


Figure 2. Percentage income share to women, depending on who sold livestock in Tanzania



In Senegal, Kady Sarr is eager for the chance to make enough money to have savings and plenty to eat

in Africa, it is important to intervene in ways that benefit women, such as improving their ownership of assets and enhancing their decision-making abilities, while being careful not to increase women's burden of production and household food provisioning. Engagement of men in programmes aimed at empowering women and increasing their access to resources and decision-making is also important if these programmes are to have impacts on household welfare.

Livestock research

Livestock development programmes offer an opportunity to reduce gender disparities, especially in ownership of assets and market participation. Using gender-transformative approaches and integrating gender in a systematic way in livestock research and development programmes can lead to more equitable development outcomes for men, women, their households and communities. Beyond livestock-specific activities, livestock programmes must also address social inequalities in access to resources and household decision-making and seek to reform structures,

including social structures, that perpetuate gender inequalities.

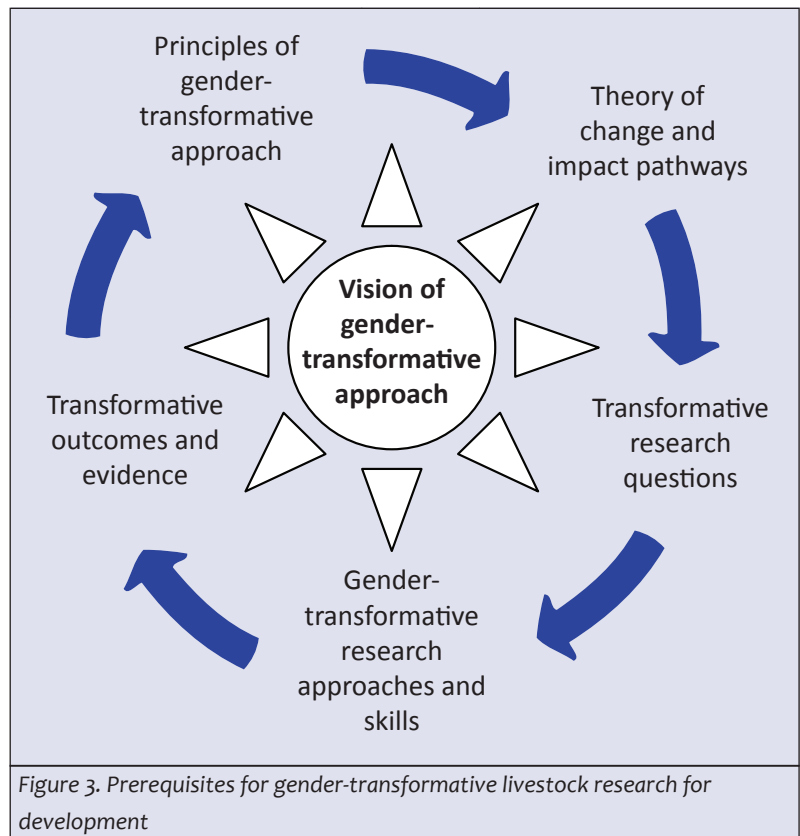
Gender should be systematically and practically included in operational plans in the form of concrete activities and relevant indicators. Making objectives or research questions gender-responsive goes beyond adding ‘including women’ or ‘especially women’ at the end. Budgets within gender activities for staffing, implementation and capacity building should be clearly specified and allocated. This ensures that gender is not an add-on activity for which no budget is allocated.

A transformative approach

Gender integration in livestock research and development should consider how to improve the position of women and influence strategic gender relations, and not just use gender as an instrument to achieve project objectives, or accommodate gender as a simple variable in a research project. Research and development organisations need to sharpen how beneficiary groups are defined and targeted - getting away from the generic use of ‘the poor’, ‘community’, ‘women’ and ‘men’ - and establish how to partner with transformative development programmes that enable women to benefit from agricultural innovations. Gender-transformative approaches (Figure 3) go beyond gender analysis to address some of the social norms, attitudes and behaviours, power relations and social systems that underline and entrench gender inequalities. These approaches engage with the political dimensions of women’s empowerment. They acknowledge that intensive efforts and resources will be required to achieve change.



Rebecca Majueta and her son fill a bucket with fresh chopped grass to feed to their family’s cows



This brief is an excerpt from the book ‘Bridging the Gender Gap: Women, Livestock Ownership and Markets in Eastern and Southern Africa’, produced by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with funding from Canada’s International Development Research Centre (www.idrc.ca). The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ILRI or IDRC. This is one of a series of six briefs on livestock and gender, designed and produced by WRENmedia (www.wrenmedia.co.uk) for IDRC.