

Mainstreaming Gender in Agricultural R&D



Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

ECOSOC (1997)

For over 10 years, the CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation (PRGA Program) has been developing and promoting methods and organizational approaches for gender-sensitive participatory research on plant breeding and on management of crops and natural resources. One of the Program's main aims has been to systematize and mainstream what is being learned worldwide from the integration of gender-sensitive participatory research into agricultural research.

Under international law, gender inequality is a denial of human rights—usually those of women, boys and girls. The PRGA Program is promoting gender mainstreaming from a gender-equity perspective, and guiding and helping organizations through the process.

Gender "Mainstreaming is not about adding a 'woman's component' or even a 'gender equality component' into an existing activity" (International Labor Organization). An organization in which gender has been mainstreamed does not have to "think" about gender issues—rather they

are part and parcel of its policies and the way it does business. Gender analysis is built into each project framework, gender-disaggregated data are collected and analyzed, and any gender differences highlighted in the project outputs.

PRGA Program's involvement in gender mainstreaming

In its first phase (1997–2002), the PRGA Program demonstrated that while participatory research and gender analysis methods were becoming increasingly popular among researchers, the lessons learned from their use were not extending beyond the project cycle and the individuals involved. Meanwhile, numerous studies demonstrated that research and development projects affect men and women differently, and that women continue to be 'invisible' in many research and development (R&D) efforts.

Agricultural R&D needs to be gender-sensitive if its farmer-clients are to be better served. Gender mainstreaming puts gender analysis methods into the hands of agricultural R&D institutions that target farmers.

In its second phase (2003–2007), the Program sought to mainstream gender in CG Centers, national agricultural research systems (NARS) and NGOs through a combination of organizational analysis, awareness-raising and capacity-building, using methods that encompass diagnosis, implementation, and tracking of impact. The Program followed a systematic approach, recognizing that gender mainstreaming requires policy change, accountability mechanisms, appropriate capacity, and change of institutional culture. Thus, the Program's gender-mainstreaming projects—particularly the awareness-raising aspects—targeted all levels of the institutions concerned, from top managers to research assistants.

Taking work with ASARECA† in Eastern and Central Africa as an example, NARS researchers were trained as trainers on many aspects of gender analysis; conducted initial organizational analyses using the organizational assessment framework; established gender-mainstreaming teams; conducted gender awareness and training in their own organizations; conducted fieldwork; and identified best practices for encouraging the institutionalization of gender. The eight NARS also networked among themselves for mutual support.

Since 2003, specific gender-mainstreaming efforts have been made with two CG Centers (CIP and ILRI), 14 NARS (in Eastern and Central Africa, South Asia and Lao PDR) and three NGOs (CARE/Laos, NEN and WOCAN).† All of the participating organizations are continuing the gender-mainstreaming process.

What difference has it made?

As a result of these activities, action-plans and recommendations are in place to drive the mainstreaming process forward in the 14 NARS, CIP, ILRI and CARE/Laos. As an example, the work at CIP involved the publication of gender-mainstreaming case studies from around the world, concepts and ideas around gender mainstreaming, and a toolbox of methods and approaches.

The majority of the organizations with which the Program has worked have seen a significant increase in gender-awareness among their staff at all levels. Participants in the ASARECA project have all conducted gender-awareness seminars in their own institutions. After receiving training from those trained by the project, some staff (previously ignorant of the gender perspective and its importance) reported understanding the need for gender analysis in all their research.

What has been learned during this process?

ASARECA project 'best practices' for gender mainstreaming

- Incentives for including gender issues in reported research and project proposals
- Gender coordination within the institution
- Case studies to demonstrate and document the value of gender analysis
- Gender-focused seminars to enhance capacity-building
- Networking among those with responsibilities to enhance gender capacity, learning from others' experiences, and mutual encouragement
- Ongoing training
- Continuous monitoring and comprehensive evaluation

Gender mainstreaming is a slow process. Awareness-raising, capacity-building, implementing 'best practices' and influencing institutional policy all take time. However, an overarching lesson for mainstreaming is that change often requires a real imperative or driver, such as events that are shaping national discourse. For example, the political transformation in Nepal has generated a discourse of social inclusion, which in turn has created a tremendous 'demand' from civil society groups on national agencies. This demand on the NARS has been instrumental in supporting concrete and workable organizational strategies and

practices to respond to specific 'demands.' In short, organizations want to know how to transform from traditional 'supply-driven' to more efficient and 'demand-driven' suppliers of services and information.

Participants in the PRGA Program's project with WOCAN learned that women can play a crucial role in organizational change processes. They also highlighted a need for innovation in political commitment, technical capacity, accountability and organizational culture. WOCAN and others have also recognized the need for and value of identifying and training change-agents. One key to success has been the close personal and working relationships built between the external resource persons and the change agents 'in situ.' The WOCAN team also noted that a gender-mainstreaming policy at the national level created an enabling environment for organizations to implement gender mainstreaming.

Moving into Phase III

The 2006–07 External Review of the PRGA Program encouraged it to build on its successes in gender mainstreaming, but with a renewed focus on the CG Centers. Consequently, gender mainstreaming was maintained and refocused within the Program's new strategy for its third phase.

The Program is continuing to promote and accelerate the process of gender mainstreaming. The aim is to see organizations adopt gender equity in their policies and activities—that they will come to the point where gender equity is an overarching factor in all their work. Gender analysis methods will be available as research tools, and gender concerns will be addressed throughout the research and development processes.

In particular, the PRGA Program will: (1) establish and support an annual gender research prize for the best work coming out of the CG Centers—to encourage Centers and scientists to use gender tools in their work; (2) develop a series of *Policy Briefs* to share the main lessons

learned; (3) develop a series of short manuals on participatory research and gender analysis for key research areas, so that the material is in the public domain; (4) re-inventory past and ongoing gender research within the CG and draw lessons from it, while also looking at the impact on the research agenda of women scientists; and (5) build advanced capacity in gender analysis in research in selected Centers.

Building blocks

As the Program guides its partners through the process of awareness-raising, capacity-building, organizational analysis and mentoring, each institution will build up a cadre of gender specialists. These in turn will raise the level of awareness of gender issues and drive the process of gender mainstreaming within their institutions. The organizational analyses will demonstrate the status of gender within the organization or research group under study, thereby demonstrating how far the process has to go. By raising the awareness of senior managers, political support should be built for the whole mainstreaming process, including the introduction of gender indicators in project and staff work-plans and appraisals (a major step in the process). Meanwhile, by building capacity in gender analysis, new tools will become available to the researchers.

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

The ultimate beneficiaries will be the poor farmer-clients who will participate in better-targeted R&D with the CG Centers and NARS. Meanwhile, the immediate beneficiaries of the Program's work will be CG researchers *and* gender research prize winners. The next level of beneficiaries will be the broader range of researchers that benefit either from the publications put out by the Program, or from interaction with those trained in gender analysis techniques.



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Partners

Researchers at CIAT† and other Centers that embark on gender mainstreaming will be the principal partners in this work, along with the CG's Gender and Diversity Program. All 15 Centers should be involved in the inventory process.

Sources & further information

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Note:

† ASARECA – Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa; CARE – CARE International; CGIAR (or CG) – Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research; CIAT – International Center for Tropical Agriculture; CIP – International Potato Center; ILRI – International Livestock Research Institute; NEN – North East Network; WOCAN – Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management.

Photographs: Courtesy of Barun Gurung.