Integrating a gender perspective to help scale Africa RISING technologies and practices: Requirements for proposal development and implementation

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The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three regional projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads the program's monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. http://africa-rising.net/

This short guide provides tips to ensure that your proposal's planning and implementation will demonstrate appropriate attention to gender issues.

Background

The first phase of the Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next generation (Africa RISING) project aimed at testing and validating technologies that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base. Phase II calls for scaling of successful technologies to maximize impact. In this brief, scaling refers to "identifying the best technology or practice, expand its implementation, adapt, institutionalize and sustain it to achieve greater development impact".

Introduction

Gender equality is central to the process of scaling technologies and practices in a sustainable manner. Gender differences affect who does the research, how research is prioritized, how the research is designed and conducted, and how data is interpreted and shared. Similarly, gender norms and gender inequality within the cultural context where scaling is taking place influence uptake of technologies. Failing to take into account gender differences in needs, preferences, roles and responsibilities, access to and control of resources (such as labor, inputs, credit, and land), and power imbalances can limit the reach and scale of Africa RISING's technologies.

Setting goals and objectives

There are degrees of doing gender and it's at the planning phase where the proposal's "temperature" or degree of gender will be set. Your goals and objectives should explicitly demonstrate the contribution of your technologies or practices towards gender equality, women empowerment and poverty reduction. Your goals and objectives have to refer specifically to men and women or smallholder farmers, instead of saying 'farmers' or 'community members'. Next, the goals, objectives and research questions should be stated in a manner that shows gender as a key analytical and explanatory variable. Although not all projects will be gender transformative, at the least they should take a gender accommodative approach by including a gender perspective[1].

- If you decide to focus on making sure your research is gender accommodating, you will be most concerned with setting output-level goals – what the project is going to do in terms of integrating gender dimensions. This means not only looking at the percentage of women and men participating in and benefiting from your technology or practice, but also taking into account gender factors that will influence technology uptake. These can for instance include high labor burdens of women, or their lack of access to cash and credit.
- Developing potentially transformative goals places more emphasis on outcomes –what scaling of the technology/practice or research is going to achieve through integrating a gender dimension such as contributing to changes in unequal access to resources e.g. seeds, credit, water and knowledge among others, or changing division of labor.

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[1] Gender accommodating approaches recognize and respond to the specific needs and realities of men and women based on their existing roles and responsibilities. They focus on integrating women into the existing social and economic context, but do not question the barriers put up by that context. Gender transformative refers to an approach that explicitly engages both women and men to examine, question, and change those institutions and norms that reinforce gender inequalities and, through that process, achieve both economic growth and gender equality objectives (Agri-ProFocus, KIT and IIRR 2012).

The proposal should indicate how you will consider and respond to gender differences either through gender accommodating or through gender transformative approaches. The approaches should at the minimum do no harm to women and at maximum seek to facilitate movement toward a more gender equal society. Proposals whose implementers are not aware of the gender-related issues and how they may affect scaling of technologies/practices are gender blind. Gender blindness may exploit existing gender relations to an extent which may reinforce existing gender inequalities. Thus, gender blind proposals are worst practice and discouraged.

Developing activities and approaches

So now that you have set the gender goals and objectives of your program, how do you intend to develop an understanding of the gender issues which may affect adoption of your technology or practice? Have you conducted a gender analysis of the technologies that you intend to scale out? Have you planned to conduct a gender analysis before scaling to understand the gender relations and dynamics within the target communities –exploring the livelihood options, division of labor, access to and control of resources, and power dynamics? How do you intend to target technologies to meet the specific needs and preferences of men and women farmers? How will you share information about different technologies to both men and women farmers and other stakeholders? How are you going to develop the capacities of men and women farmers to foster technology uptake? Do you have any strategies to challenge the constraining norms and inequalities within the communities? How are your activities going to empower[2] women?

What happens if you do not know the answer to any of these questions? You can consult women's NGOs, gender advisers/focal people, do a literature review on gender, hold a workshop, call a meeting to discuss ideas, review other program indicators and log frames/theory of change for ideas, conduct a gender analysis in the area/sector you will be working, etc. You should aim to adopt a two pronged approach whereby gender is mainstreamed or integrated into everything you do and in addition, specific gender activities are developed to compensate for women's lack of equality. Some of the approaches that have proven successful in addressing gender issues and reaching more women include:

- Capacity development through training both husband and wife and coaching households;
- Organizing women only activities such as field days, meetings and trainings;
- Using men and women farmer champions to inspire others;
- Collective action (women only or mixed men and women groups);
- Sensitizing communities, men and women e.g. through role modelling events and training;
- Facilitate relationships between men and women farmers and credit institutions, input suppliers, output markets and other technology service providers;
- Partnering with NGOs that have experience reaching women;
- Use tested methods such as Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS), household methodologies, Stepping Stones, community conversations.[3]

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[2] Women's Empowerment is about women taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance.
[3] For household methodologies see: https://www.ifad.org/topic/household_methodologies/overview

Beneficiaries

Your proposal should explicitly state who your target beneficiaries are, how they are going to be involved on an equal and fair basis, and how they are going to benefit. State the number of men and women (including women in male-headed households) to participate in and benefit from your technologies, considering other social differences like age, marital status, wealth status and ethnicity). Setting quotas for women farmers who will participate in your activities e.g. 30-50% participation will help you reach reasonable numbers of women. Specify the gendered household types to engage in scaling out technologies i.e. households with male and female adults; households with male adult, no female adult; and households with female adult, no male adult.

Show how gender analysis of the promising technology or practice has informed scaling of the technologies/practices and selection of the beneficiaries vis-a-vis the intended outcomes. Consider gender differences in access to and control over resources in selection of the beneficiaries (e.g. land, credit, water, oxen, labor and information) as this will influence adoption of technologies. Show your plan to overcome gender-based constraints that hinder women participation and benefitting from the technology, and how you intend to tap into the existing opportunities. If the technologies/practices to be scaled have not been evaluated consider conducting a gender analysis to assess the perceptions of men and women farmers about the technologies to be scaled, their outcomes and impact on men and women and other household members.

Gender balanced team and capacity

Put together a gender-balanced team to not only ensure that the technologies to be scaled are gender-responsive but to also provide equal opportunities for women and men to engage in agricultural research and development. Well-managed mixed teams are believed to be more effective as they bring in diverse perspectives which inform decision making. Gender-balanced teams also signal organizational culture that allows both men and women to work together, to participate in decision-making and voice their own needs and aspirations. State the teams' gender capacity development needs to ensure that you all have a basic understanding of gender analysis and strategic planning, gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management, applying gender transformative approaches, and building effective partnerships for advocacy. Identify gender experts in other organizations who will support you in addressing gender issues during scaling.

Monitoring and evaluation

Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation is central to documenting the outcomes of gender-responsive technologies and how these are achieved. In the monitoring and evaluation plan, include gender-specific targets, outputs, outcomes and impacts; sex or gender disaggregated indicators (at individual level), and data collection tools/methods. Ensure that the indicators are aligned with the key gender related impacts stipulated in the Feed the Future's gender M&E framework as well and the project's sustainable intensification indicators. Develop indicators to monitor both the scaling-up process and gender strategies employed. Indicate how you are going to collect sex disaggregated data to facilitate gender analysis and be able to track gender outcomes. Gender analysis explores and highlights the relationships of women and men in society, and the inequalities in those relationships, by asking: who does what? Who has what? Who decides? How? Who gains? Who loses? It looks at how power relations within the household interrelate with those at the

international, state, market, and community level (March et al., 1999). Collect valid data from both men and women.

Consider the research methods to employ when collecting data. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to collect sex-disaggregated data at intra-household and individual level. The methods should help you have a representative sample of men and women, and different household types. Qualitative methods should try to be participatory and include both men and women farmers. Plan whether to use single and/or mixed sex group interviews or focus group discussions. You are encouraged to conduct separate focus group discussions with men and women to provide an environment where women can freely express their ideas without fear. If youth is one of your target beneficiaries, then consider them when sampling. It's also important to have male and female enumerators and depending on the cultural context, male enumerators should interview male farmers and female enumerators should interview women. Data analysis should use gender as an analytical variable.

Partnerships and advocacy

Partner with organizations with the mandate and skills to deliver on gender. Consider women groups, women organizations, ministries, or community leaders that you can work with towards attainment of your gender equality goal. Consider involving women advocacy groups or organizations to influence change within social, economic and political spheres. Describe how these partners are going to be involved in scaling your technologies and what competencies they bring to the team. Indicate the role of the innovation platforms in addressing gender issues during scaling.

Communication to influence change

Communicating your research and technologies in an effective and engaging way for a particular audience – for example decision-makers, the media, practitioners or other researchers – will increase the chances of your research or technologies being accessed, understood and used. So, indicate how you are going to effectively communicate your research and technologies/practices to different audiences and bring about change. Consider communication approaches that will help you showcase gender related findings or the gender responsiveness of the technologies promoted. Have a plan to report back the results to men and women community members in a manner that is easy to comprehend. Indicate how you will feedback to implementing partners and policy makers to encourage learning and change in behavior. Include the gender units, gender focal points and experts within these organizations. Ensure your pictures and terminology is gender sensitive and depicts women in less traditional roles.

Budgeting

When developing your budget, specify the financial and human resources needed for gender-related activities. Specify the gender related activities and outputs, and allocate the financial and human resources required to deliver the activities. Your budget may include costs associated with conducting gender situation analysis, feasibility analysis, focus group discussions with men and women, monitoring and evaluation of the scaling process and impact of the technologies on men, women and children. At least 10 – 30% of your budget should be dedicated to gender specific activities (not including mainstreamed activities).

Additional sources of information

- Agri-ProFocus, KIT and IIRR. 2012 Challenging Chains to Change: gender equity in agricultural value chain development. See: http://agriprofocus.com/challenging-chains-to-change.
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