

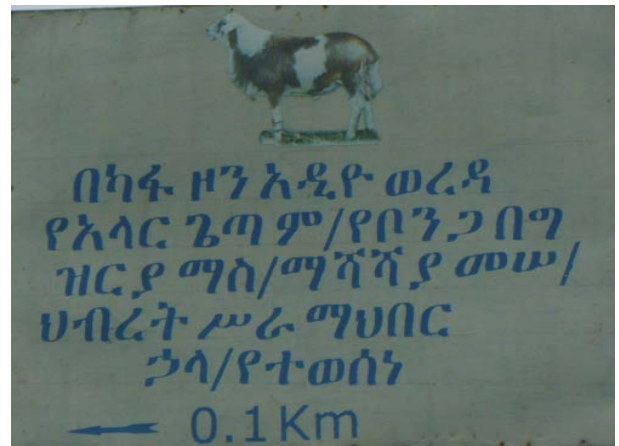
Gender dimensions in strengthening women's participation in breeding cooperatives in Ethiopia

Wole Kinat and Ncoline de Haan

Key messages

- Women can benefit from community-based breeding programs. Most do not benefit due to gender-specific constraints.
- Women in male-headed households struggle the most to overcome obstacles to participation.
- Low levels of awareness of gender issues in households and communities—including in the leaderships of cooperatives and service providers—hinder women's participation in community breeding.
- Capacity development interventions enhancing the quality of participation by both genders in the breeding cooperative need to be considered.

southern and northern Ethiopia—was provided by the CGIAR research programs on Livestock and Fish and on Livestock (Gutu et al. 2015).



Community-based breeding programs in Ethiopia

Small ruminants play an important role in the Ethiopian economy and ensure food security for millions of farmers (Akililu et al. 2014). However, the productivity levels of indigenous breeds under smallholder production systems in Ethiopia is low (FAO 2009). A consortium of partners identified genetic stock as a constraint and implemented community-based sheep breeding projects to sustainably increase productivity levels in Ethiopia's main sheep and goat producing regions.

By 2011, approximately 500 households and 8,000 sheep from four districts—Bonga, Horro, Menz and Afar in southern, northern, north central and southern and northeastern Ethiopia respectively—had enrolled in the projects (Haile et al. 2011). Further support for the most successful breeding programs at Menz, Horro and Bonga plus an additional three programs—in Doyogana and Atsbi, and T/Abergelle districts in

The project put in place innovative institutional arrangements to maintain sustainable breeding improvement interventions at the target sites by:

- supporting the organization of sheep and goat farmers into cooperatives to promote collective action, including more effective breed improvement strategies; and
- improving market participation through strengthened bargaining power (Kidoido 2014).

Sheep breeding cooperatives have been set up in Bonga, Doyogena and Menz, while goat breeding cooperatives operate in T/Abergelle. The number of breeding cooperatives, particularly for sheep, has steadily risen within and beyond the target woredas (districts).

The assessment on gendered participation in breeding cooperatives was undertaken with selected cooperatives in Bonga, Doyogena, Menz and T/Abergelle. In these parts of the country, sheep and goat production has always been an integral part of the traditional subsistence mixed crop–livestock production systems. Sheep in Bonga, Doyogena and Menz, and goat in T/Abergelle, have traditionally been kept to meet basic household needs and supplement crop production.

¹ Funded by the Austrian Development Agency from 2007 to 2011, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the

Whereas the Menz sheep breed is also raised for its coarse wool—used for weaving traditional blankets and carpets—as well as its meat. Goat production in T/Abergelle provides an alternative source of milk for household consumption and resources to purchase more stock.

Why gender in CBBP

Women in Ethiopia are already involved in agriculture and livestock keeping. Moreover, considerable research has highlighted importance of gender integration into agricultural research and development, crucially from social justice, economics, and business perspectives. The social justice perspective suggests that men and women intrinsically possess the same rights and should benefit equally from research and development interventions. Highlighting the link with poverty, the economics perspective sees improved gender equity as essential to higher levels of economic growth and social wellbeing (Weeratunge et al. 2010). The business perspective suggests that gender inequity leads to inefficiencies in the allocation of human resources and consequently to reduced innovation (KIT et al. 2012).



Cooperatives can be mechanisms to help overcome these constraints. Agricultural cooperatives play an important role in economic and social development of both men and women. They offer opportunities to give the participants voice through the development of common goals, individual capacities, enhanced participation in agricultural value chains and protection from unfair pricing practices otherwise unavailable to them as individuals acting alone (World Bank 2009). The authors adopted the quality of participation framework as suggested by Sanginga, Tumwine, and Lilja (2006) to identify the factors facilitating or constraining women's participation in breeding cooperatives and make recommendations to enhance gender equitable interventions. The framework recommends the application of 'building blocks' and management principles as the two main components of participation. The building blocks focus on analytical variables associated with participation, whereas the latter focuses on principles of facilitation, methods, skills and reflection and systematization of learning processes.

Data and methodology

The study data was generated from primary and secondary sources; the latter included a review of program and project documents. The primary data was collected through in-depth group interviews with various

informants. Members from seven of the 32 breeding cooperatives were selected. Twenty-seven members from each cooperative (10 men, 10 women and 7 leadership members) were invited to separate focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs); a total of 170 members and 29 services providers participated. Separate FGDs with men, women and cooperative leadership members were conducted at all the study sites. The data obtained from KIIs were used to complement and verify the accuracy of the FGD data.

Key findings

While the process of establishing the CBBP was participatory in nature, women in male-headed households were not consulted. The selected study sites targeted relevant agro-ecology and farming systems, but the gender context was not given equal weight. Nevertheless, using specific gender equity criteria, gender equity was considered in assessing 'best-bet' interventions and the men and women participants have obtained important economic and social benefits. The study identified a number of constraints hindering the participation of women small ruminant keepers in breeding cooperatives perceptions of gender roles, e.g. making women responsible for time-consuming domestic chores; low levels of women's agency in part due to their restricted mobility; and a lack of women's control over household assets, e.g. livestock, due to unequal power relations. These constraints seriously hinder women's ability to take up roles in community groups, particularly of a leadership nature, and from participating in training. Those women who participated in cooperatives and who derived benefits in terms of increased incomes were all from women-headed households, indicating the potential of breeding cooperatives if gender constraints could be alleviated. Research found that the cooperative leadership and facilitators were often unaware of the values and principles of their organizations in terms of enabling women to become full members. Raising awareness of these underlying principles and values of the cooperatives among members could enhance the position of women and their participation in the target cooperatives. It could also help cooperatives leverage their power in obtaining relevant services for women from other suppliers.

While tackling gender-based constraints can be difficult, our research suggests using the best practices adopted at community as an entry point to promote greater participation of women in breeding cooperatives. But rigorous research is needed to understand the drivers (de)motivating women to participate in sheep/goats breeding cooperatives to help inform the development of a gender strategy for the programs.

Policy recommendations

- **Develop a more gender-sensitive approach** to community breeding programs by understanding and mitigating gender barriers.
- **Ensure investments in capacity development** are complemented by evidence-based gender training. The learning process should be documented and

success stories shared to facilitate the scaling up/out of strategies.

- **Adopt gender transformative approaches** in incorporating the identification of best practices—positive deviant case studies—at community level. This approach could help trigger conversations among community members on harmful gender norms.
- **Consider promoting gender-responsive small ruminant business models** through the engagement of young people. In addition to generating employment for young people in the target areas, the additional activity in the value chain will increase the supply of inputs available to women.
- **Undertake additional research** in key areas including to identify the factors driving women’s motivation to participate in breeding cooperatives to help inform program gender strategies; increase understanding of community perceptions regarding women’s control over resources generated as a result of cooperative membership to help develop targeted interventions.

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CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock provides research-based solutions to help smallholder farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists transition to sustainable, resilient livelihoods and to productive enterprises that will help feed future generations. It aims to increase the productivity and profitability of livestock agri-food systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk and eggs more available and affordable across the developing world. The Program brings together five core partners: the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with a mandate on livestock; the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which works on forages; the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which works on small ruminants and dryland systems; the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) with expertise particularly in animal health and genetics and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) which connects research into development and innovation and scaling processes.

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