

Report on Gender and Breeding

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Eileen Bogweh Nchanji, Gender Specialist

International Centre for Tropical Agriculture - CIAT

THE HISTORY OF GENDER AND PLANT BREEDING IN CIAT/PABRA: WHERE ARE WE? AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?



Women Bean Experts have had a Long Relationship with Breeders in Africa, But Transforming Bean Sector Needs More Work Done

For more than two decades CIAT/PABRA has gradually integrated one form of gender or another in all its agricultural projects or programs especially in breeding. Alliances made with national and international partners in over 29 African countries have influenced policies and the wider development agenda in Africa and the world. In early 1970's and 80's agricultural projects did not really focus on gender inequalities' but more on the needs of farmers in project designs and implementations.

In Breeding, farmers were invited to contribute to on-farm evaluations of crops as they were more knowledgeable on the different agro-ecological systems and soils they cultivated on. The introduction of farmers into the breeding cycle was because the process of getting scientist understand what farmers already knew of their local conditions were expensive and it made sense to get the farmers who were knowledgeable involved so the process becomes cheaper. Thus, farmers were

now considered as experts and their indigenous knowledge considered important in achieving better science.

In the later part of the 1980's to the early 90's, women were identified as bean experts in Rwanda to work with breeders for better cultivars that suit their local and social reality (Louise Sperling and Peggy Berkowitz, 1994). This was a revolutionary move in a patriarchal society and institution, which was mainly dominated by men. This move was later influenced by funding from the multiple donors from - Australia Canada Ford Foundation, International Development Research Centre, Canada, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom and the United States to the just created CGIAR Gender Program in 1991. The objective of the gender program was to "assist the international agricultural research centers (IARCS) in addressing gender issues by (i) strengthening the use of gender analysis in research

aimed at technology development and (ii) improving the conditions and mechanisms within the Centers for promoting recruitment, productivity): advancement and retention of highly qualified women scientists and professionals” (Louise Sperling and Peggy Berkowitz, 1994: 1) so scientist can understand the need for gender analysis in research. Even though women experts worked with breeders, this collaboration remained very much research-oriented.

In the late 1990’s women were selected depending on the socio-political positions, knowledge and power of their male sidekicks, which was considered to be imputed on them. “For instance, one community was represented by the government agronomist’s sister and the sector head’s wife” (Louise Sperling and Urs Scheidegger, 2001: 5). Participatory approaches to breeding spread from Rwanda to other Africa countries like Ethiopia, Tanzania and Malawi (PABRA millennial workshop, 2001).

This was because of the 40% increase in seed adoption and 21 varieties suited a wide range of growing niche over eight to nine years in the Rwandan case over a period of eight to nine years. This meant the science of breeding became cheaper and took less years than before and seeds released met the socio-ecological reality of the people.

Moving to the 21st century, the breeding strategy evolved. Breeders were not only breeding for farmers but consumers as well. Breeding activities were decentralized and this took a regional focus (Figure 1). This new era was meant to strengthen the capacities of national agricultural institutes and other partners to provide universal bean cultivars with a wider, domestic, regional and international market appeal. The greater goal was reducing poverty and food insecurity by providing food and generating income for farmer.

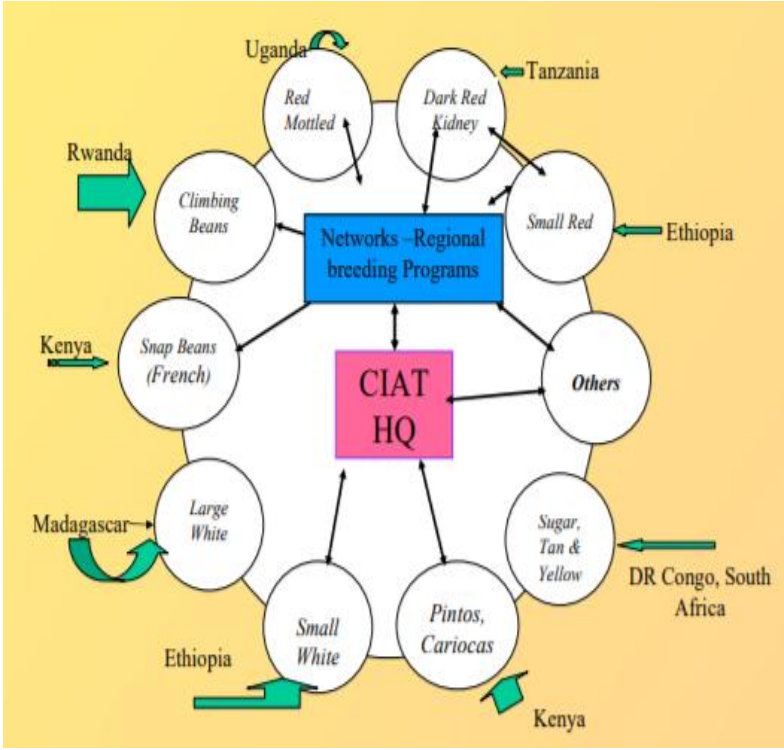


Figure 1: CIAT regional breeding strategy in PABRA region (Paul Kimani et al. 2000)

While farmers - women and men continued being invited by breeders during variety selection processes to state their traits preferences. A visible shift was seen in the increase participation of farmers and consumers at early stages of the breeding cycle to reduce time spent on on-farm field trails. Collaborations between farmers and breeders was now both research and development-oriented.

The recent call for agricultural transformation through mechanization and trade, opened space for a new phase of breeding known as demand – led breeding, where the needs of more actors (aggregators, processors and other actors along the bean value chain) are being integrated into the breeding cycle. This also comes at a time when gender integration is key in development work. Researchers are advised to go beyond sex disaggregation and add other social categories like age, religion, ethnicity, wealth status, education) between and amongst men, women and youths.

Integrating gender in breeding for a long time meant involving men and women in the participatory varietal selection process. As we move forward the question is, do we need to do more or not? as gender inequality still exist not only between

men and women but even amongst them. This calls for an intersectionality lens in demand led breeding <http://www.pabra-africa.org/transforming-african-agricultural/>, which takes into consideration the science of plant breeding. A comprehensive book has been written on the business of plant breeding and there Shimelis Hussien (2017) gives a guide on integrating demand led variety designs into plant breeding, where product profiling and trait prioritization will be translated to breeding objective.

"I am developing a guideline on how to integrate gender into the breeding cycle especially as demand led breeding is being introduced in the different countries we work in."