

A RESOURCE FOR SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCH TEAMS

ENHANCING THE GENDER-RESPONSIVENESS of your project's technical farmer training events

This resource sets out simple suggestions for ensuring that women as well as men feel included in training events, are fully informed about technological options, learn effectively, and have the confidence to implement what they have learned. Over time, if their experience has been successful, they should be able to build

on the training course to innovate by themselves in response to their needs and changes in the wider environment.

Good training events need more than great content. How you train is vitally important. It is essential that women and men – including youth, persons with disabilities, and other

marginalized groups – are able to speak their minds and have opportunities to shape the training event for their own requirements. As future farmers, the needs of young women and men in farming households require special attention in order to encourage those interested to stay in the sector.



Sisters harvest maize cobs in their family's field in Malawi. Photo: Peter Lowe/CIMMYT.

1. Creating a Successful Event

Communities are diverse. Standardized one-size-fits-all training events are unlikely to work. Adapt and contextualize your basic training content to the real women and men, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized people in your target groups. Take a little time

to learn about who does what in the production system, and beyond that, to the market. This will help you tailor your training content to make it relevant to the women and men you are targeting. Make your event fun to attend and focus on participatory learning by doing. Listen to what

your participants say. They will already know a lot about their specific agroecological and market systems. Ensure your training has scope for building on participants' existing knowledge; this will make it easier for them to assimilate new material and will make it more relevant.

The best gender-responsive training events:

- ✓ are fun, motivational, and insightful;
- ✓ have a bold vision but work to change norms from within;
- ✓ work with individuals, with multi-disciplinary teams, and across

community and institutional levels. Engage stakeholders and decision-formers, such as elders, religious authorities, government representatives, husbands, and extended families to secure support for women's participation in training events, and then in implementing what they have learned;

- ✓ use innovative methodologies and different approaches to say the same thing;
- ✓ support men as well as women towards positive change.

1.1. Basics

Think of key words or principles to guide your training event. Some good ones are inclusion, fun, helping people move forward, and walking your talk. Together with your training team and the participants themselves, you may think of more. The tip sheet includes some tried and tested principles.

Make gender-responsive training events fun.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Run discussion workshops, storytelling, role-plays, case studies, collective tasting and cooking events (men should also cook), and other activities. Include energizers, songs, and dance. ● Involve community members who can inspire participants. This helps strengthen buy-in from the community and the participants themselves. ● Facilitators should consider wearing bright colors. This brings energy to the room and the participants. ● Don't put participants on the spot, or as a negative point of reference.
Create leadership and decision-making opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build up women's skills and confidence by asking them to facilitate small group discussions, act as note-takers, or make presentations on behalf of their groups. This applies to people with disabilities, or living with chronic illnesses, and young women and men, too. ● A simple way of creating equality is to create small spaces to hear everyone's voice. People love to see their ideas valued in daily reviews, so give space for each person to speak – for example, one idea each, and acknowledge their input.
Treat women as well as men as scientists and innovators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Find ways to involve, support, and highlight women farmers and young people (alongside men) as co-researchers and as demonstration farmers in field activities. This will help to develop their confidence and boost their standing as people worth listening to and emulating in the community.
Walk your talk!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project and the training event should walk the talk by enlisting women as trainers and having women staff in key decision-making positions. ● Facilitators should be role models for women and marginalized people's participation, representation, and inclusion.

1.2. Great Content

Making sure your course is relevant to both women and men is key. After all, they farm together.

<p>Collect information to make your training relevant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Find out women and men's priorities in relation to the technology. The perspectives of women and men are likely to be different because of their gender and other factors, such as age, caste, class, and ethnicity. They may have different responsibilities in their crop/livestock production systems and are likely to have distinct needs, interests, experiences, and resources. ● Work with the ideas of women and men technology users when designing training events. Conduct focus group discussions with target groups and key informants to develop training content. Pilot your event before rolling it out. ● Find out what members of your target group already know. Respect that knowledge and build on it.
<p>Promote technologies as menus rather than packages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote the ability of participants to select from and adapt a range of technologies. ● Build on women and men's existing expertise whilst helping them to find ways to develop their understanding and their roles in relation to the particular technology. ● Create space for discussion around the trade-offs between technological choices, and how trade-offs – for instance balancing use of residues between crop, livestock, and household requirements – may affect women's and men's work and benefits.
<p>Promote adaptive capacity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move beyond focusing on the technology itself. Discuss its place in wider change processes affecting the community – climate change, urbanization, etc. What are the implications for the technology you are introducing? How do the participants think they could adapt to the technology in the future?



Farmers attend a training in Bangladesh. Photo: S. Mojumder/Drik/CIMMYT.

1.3. Great Training Approaches

Make your training event interactive and provide plenty of opportunities for participants to do, speak, share, think, and have fun.

<p>Ensure the training methodology is right for the participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plenty of practical, hands-on demonstrations work well, particularly in the participants' own fields. Learning by doing using one's own resources helps to promote control over experimental design and encourage experimentation.
<p>Language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use the language spoken by participants rather than a national or international language, if appropriate. Women, in particular, may be less fluent in national languages. ● Don't use forms of language that promote hierarchies of understanding such as "experts" and "trainees."
<p>Check for gender and other stereotypes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check for hidden assumptions about gender and other matters in your training materials. These may make women or other socially marginalized participants feel excluded.
<p>Create a respectful atmosphere.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage people to respect each other's opinions however much they may disagree. ● Agree with everyone that the event is meant to be a safe space for learning and experience sharing. ● Ask participants not to make fun of others' well-intentioned comments or repeat unflattering stories outside the workshop. Confidentiality must be respected.
<p>Where possible, promote flat learning and knowledge-sharing structures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move away from top-down lead farmer models to horizontal ones that promote group sharing and learning processes, both within and between groups. ● Within this, mentoring and peer replication approaches can be developed and supported.
<p>Foster positive interactions in mixed groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If women are unfamiliar with speaking in public, create small safe environments with a maximum of four to six people. ● Make sure that there are at least two to three women in each small mixed group so they can support each other, and encourage them to speak. ● Encourage equal participation through group and pair work discussions, rotating seat assignments, limiting speaking time per participant, and male/female speaking order. ● Role-playing can be fun whilst encouraging debate around potentially sensitive topics, such as marketing. ● Ensure flat power relationships between women and men in a group setting. It is better to have equals in a group rather than boss/workers. ● In some cases, women may prefer to meet separately to formulate their ideas before bringing them (often anonymized) to the larger mixed group.

<p>Use ICTs, film, other media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider multi-media forms of training, such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), mobile phones, radio, and other media during and beyond the training event.
<p>Feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course evaluation criteria should be robust and easy to use. ● Encourage women and men to comment openly on the processes of inclusion in the event and the training methods and content. ● Feedback should be disaggregated by gender. ● Ask participants to commit themselves to one action immediately after the course and to share these with others.

2. Creating a Supportive Community

Including women effectively in training events, and above all enabling them to take risks and implement new ideas and technologies, depends on a conducive environment. Research shows it is much harder for women to take risks and do things differently than for men. Men are often praised for taking a risk, even if they fail. Women who take risks may be laughed at, or marginalized, by other women as well as men.

Engage community members in exploring how existing community structures could be developed to overcome gender barriers. Promote inclusion in training events, and safe learning and experimentation spaces. Ensure that the process is participatory and involves all segments of the community – women, men, youth, socially marginalized people, as well as opinion formers and decision-makers,

at different points. Actively include experts such as agricultural extension workers from target communities.

Help people in your target community and your other partners to identify the costs when women are not included. Get them on board to support women innovators.

<p>Build community appreciation of the benefits to participation by women, youth, and marginalized people.</p>	<p>The training event will only work if people attend it voluntarily. To secure support for women's participation, sensitize the community in advance of the training event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk about women's participation with community leaders and opinion-formers, male household heads, and relatives in extended families (if appropriate, such as parents-in-law). ● Agree right from the start whether women will be trained together with men, or separately. Separate training runs the risk of creating a "them and us" feeling, but in some situations women need their own spaces to learn effectively. ● Identify and work with local gender/women's organizations to help secure participation and tackle problems that may arise. ● Go farm to farm to secure the engagement of women, and be ready to talk to all household members about their questions and concerns. ● Reach women via various social networks – religious, school-related, sports, savings groups, etc. ● Identify mobility, time, and other constraints that might limit women's participation in training activities. Discuss with community members and husbands, as well as with women, how these may be overcome. Usually, events held in the morning exclude women because they have to attend to household chores.
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<p>Acknowledge and work with existing gender norms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop training activities to foster reflection and action around gendered attitudes and practices that may limit a family's ability to adopt new technologies and practices, and build on positive local gender norms that highlight women's knowledge and contributions. ● Use games that will make everybody laugh and then draw some learning related to the gender norms expressed in those games, and build from there. ● Work with young women on their participation and leadership skills and potential. Help them to construct new images of themselves as people with rights, aspirations, and dreams.
<p>Support men and boys.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender-responsive training events can challenge the perceptions of men and boys around who does what, who is responsible, and who benefits. Depending on the type of project, it may be useful to consider ways to support men as they begin to confront and question cultures that shape their identities at home, in their community, at work, and in the media. ● Strengthen men's personal commitment to gender equality and equip them with the knowledge and skills to put that commitment into practice in their own lives. ● In some situations where interventions include long-term transformative change, it may be useful to create men-only groups to help men support each other in changing their behaviors and challenge concepts and practices related to traditional ways of being a man. ● Work with young men through organizing peer-training events.

3. Getting the Right People to Come

Technology adopters are highly diverse in any community. People live in many forms of household, including child-headed, polygamous, male and female-headed, and so on. There may be different ethnic and religious groups, people with

disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS. Getting young women and men on board and excited about farming is important. It is vital to target women in male-headed households, and women heads of household. Remember that targeting

is not just about getting a specific number of selected groups into a training course. Understanding the gender-related constraints that limit women's participation and the type of support they require is important.

3.1. Women in male-headed households

Link women's participation in the training event to the wider goals of the whole family. Frame the development of women's knowledge and skills within broader goals centering on achieving the goals the family considers important (e.g., health, nutrition, and education).

Ensure that direct links between women's contributions and entitlements are made. Build direct associations between women's improved capacity to contribute to the household economy (income generation, household food, and nutrition security) and their right to secure benefits in terms of more equitable food distribution and voice in cross-cutting expenditure decisions (e.g., investments in businesses, children's education, and other important goals). It is essential that the dreams and aspirations of the women, for themselves, are included in this.



Farmers learn in Bangladesh. Photo: S. Mojumder/Drik/CIMMYT.



Farmers learn about drought tolerant maize at field school. Photo: Anne Wangalachi/CIMMYT.

3.2. Women-headed households

Women heads of household are frequently hard to reach. Evidence shows they are often early adopters and innovators. However, they may need special assistance to continue with their innovations. Whilst some women benefit from remittances, others struggle with a lack of adult (often male) labor, weak access to productive resources, and low social capital. A special effort needs to be made to reach and support such women in training events, and to ensure the content is relevant to them. In some cases, supporting initiatives to develop the productive resources of such households may be important if they are to implement the new technologies effectively.

<p>Set targets for women's participation in training events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In some cases, women-only training events may be best. ● Set straightforward targets – for example, at least 30% women's participation in the training event. The national government may set minimum quotas that should be taken as a starting point for building on (but should not define the limits to ambition!). ● Set a target for young people as well – for instance, 30% youth with 50:50 participation between female and male youth. This sets a cultural expectation which, even when the original participants move on, can be replicated in subsequent training events.
<p>Get technology users and decision-makers to come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heads of household are often invited to training events, although they may not be responsible for actual technology implementation. It is best to ensure that both heads of household and their spouses participate. ● Ensure women heads of households are invited and supported to participate actively.
<p>Use the training event to start people thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use the training course as an opportunity to address gender and social inequalities in the community. If the training is longer than a day, give participants homework on things to reflect on with their families or on their own. Ask them to share their reflections the next day. ● Make sure you have identified the needs of socially marginalized women and men for the technology addressed in the training and ensure you engage them successfully. Meet them prior to the training, if possible, to reassure them that their participation is important and encourage them to come. Marginalized people feel empowered when they come to the training event and are warmly welcomed by the facilitator. This builds their sense of self-worth. ● If possible, make individual visits to the marginalized population's homes to see how they are implementing the technologies and give on-the-spot advice. This promotes their standing in the community.

4. Making Sure the Right People Can Come

Women and men often have different daily and seasonal schedules. Time training sessions around those schedules, and ensure that training sessions are not too long and easily accessible to women and persons with disabilities.

<p>Get the timing right.</p>	<p>Consider seasonality with respect to both women’s and men’s work both on their own farms, and potentially as hired labor. Hold training courses when the demands of work are less. Ask the participants the best times and best venues for holding training events, bearing in mind women’s daily activities, such as preparing food and hauling water. Don’t make courses too long – one to two hours is probably just right, but check with the participants about what best suits them.</p>
<p>Get the budget right.</p>	<p>Addressing gender and social inequalities can cost money. This must be budgeted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training events should, wherever possible, be located within villages or within easy reach of women’s homes. ● Childcare may need to be provided (remember that family and friends are not always able to take on this responsibility). ● Should childcare not be possible or welcomed, make it clear that breast-feeding mothers, as well as toddlers, are welcome to attend the training. This will ensure that young mothers come. ● In some societies, chaperones may need to be transported, housed, and fed if the training takes place in a central location. ● Adequate sanitation facilities are particularly crucial to the participation of women and of participants with disabilities. ● Provide light refreshments to keep up energy levels and encourage group building. If lunch is required, pay local women to provide it. Consider encouraging men/male youth to cook and serve. Make sure that women and men queue together rather than separately. Lunch can become a fun way of rethinking the gender norms that everyone carries with them.



Women inspect maize seed in Zambia. Photo: P. Setimela/CIMMYT.

5. Getting Great Facilitators

Facilitators need experience in facilitating participatory, bottom-up development processes. They need to be enthusiastic and believe in the ability of people to change. They should be committed to open dialogue and learning based on respect and understanding for members of the community. Male facilitators must be able to walk the talk and reject the benefits conferred upon them by virtue of their gender. Female facilitators must also be able to listen to and challenge men constructively.

Field and training staff need to understand more than basic gender

terminology; they need to be able to diagnose gender-related issues, facilitate women's participation in training activities, and help to ensure that women are able to implement technologies and to innovate.

Ideally, trainers should have plenty of gender fieldwork experience – where possible in the targeted production systems – and a good understanding of gender equality concepts. If a team of trainers is being deployed, one should be a gender specialist.

- In some cultural settings either women or men trainers may be more effective. Otherwise, aim for

a gender balance in trainers. Male-female teams help segregated communities overcome some of their fears and taboos about women and men working together.

- Where possible, work with NGOs and women's groups and men's groups that focus on gender transformation to develop empowering training methodologies.
- Ensure diverse representation of social groups as peer trainers, mobilizers, and facilitators.

<p>Get great facilitators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a cohort of excellent women and men facilitators to help women to participate actively. Aim towards at least 50% women trainers. If this is not possible, consider ways to build up the number of women in your training team. ● Pair less experienced facilitators with more seasoned facilitators with a good understanding of gender issues to share experiences and techniques. ● Train facilitators in techniques to help women speak. Encourage men to respect women's views and give them space to talk.
<p>Women can do technology too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pair women and men staff to lead community introductions and trainings. ● Recruit women technical staff to teach on traditionally male-dominated topics, such as pesticide applications, mechanization, etc. Set a benchmark (e.g., 30% moving towards at least 50% for women field staff in key roles).
<p>Go local.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop the skills of women in the community to conduct training. In the beginning, they can shadow experienced trainers in training events and be given responsibility for specific tasks.
<p>Develop women facilitators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women participants may feel more open with a woman trainer, be more willing to ask and answer questions and to admit knowledge gaps. Men may prefer their wives to have a female trainer. In such cases, it is important to ensure that women facilitators train women-only groups.
<p>Support women facilitators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women facilitators may need specific support in the field and their work more broadly, including onsite childcare if they have young children. ● Ensure accommodation is safe with adequate sanitation. ● Encourage and support women to discuss their training experiences and any problems they may face which hamper their ability to work well.

6. Afterwards: It's Not Over Yet!

The training is just the beginning. The key thing is participants adopt and work with the new ideas and technologies. Training should not be a one-off, but a process.

<p>Provide refresher courses at set time periods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As part of the technical refresher, ask your participants how they have been adopting and adapting to the technologies you trained them on. Have there been any special issues facing women, youth, and other target groups? What can be done about them? ● Building in interactive discussions on these processes will help improve your own training events and make them even more technologically and socially relevant.
<p>Develop mentoring programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognized community-level experts such as older women may be trained to mentor/coach younger women – for example, on the technologies.
<p>Keep updating your training event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop case studies or life stories of the adoption process to build into future training courses. Make sure these are anonymized.

6.1. Replicating and scaling the training event

Contribute to a community of learning. Share good practice within CIMMYT, with your partners, and with other stakeholders. Submit posts to online forums, including CIMMYT's and other forums, about knowledge management in development. Write and contribute to peer-reviewed papers. Talk about your most effective training events and explain why you think they worked well. Be confident enough to share your most dismal failures to help understand what went wrong.

Set up multi-stakeholder learning platforms on gender and technology to share lessons learned on gender-responsive and gender-transformative methodologies. This will support

scaling up and scaling out of successful approaches as part of standard practice. Learning platforms should include actors within and outside the sector to ensure that innovative technological approaches being piloted and deployed by other agencies are not missed, that innovative methodological approaches are shared, and that cross-cutting associations between gender issues are made (such as how gender-based violence may affect participation in training programs and implementation of technologies).

Ensure reports and recommendations reflect on the gender issues raised by the training event.



A Vietnamese farmer applies fertilizer. Photo: Mike Listman/CIMMYT.



Training farmers in Bangladesh. Photo: S. Mojumder/Drik/CIMMYT.

Sources for this guidance note include:

1. Farnworth, C.R., Sultana, N., Kantor, P., and Choudhury, A. (2015). Gender integration in aquaculture research and technology adoption processes: Lessons learned in Bangladesh. WorldFish. <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/ippm/programme/ffs-approach/en/>.
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For more on the GENNOVATE research initiative on the interlinkages between gender norms and innovation in agriculture and natural resources management, see

<http://gender.cgiar.org/themes/gennovate/>

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To learn more visit:
gender.cgiar.org/collaborative-research/gennovate/

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