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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARI	advanced research institute
AGRF	Africa Green Revolution Forum
AR4D	agricultural research for development
AWARD	African Women in Agricultural Research and Development
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CapDev	capacity development
CAS	CGIAR Advisory Services Secretariat
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CoP	community of practice
CRP	CGIAR Research Program
CSA	climate-smart agriculture
CSO	civil society organization
DC	CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Cereals
EA	evaluability assessment
EGM	evidence gap map
EiB	Excellence in Breeding
FAIR	findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FE	feminist evaluation
FGD	focus group discussion
FISH	CGIAR Research Program on Fish
GARDIAN	Global Agriculture Research Data Innovation Acceleration Network
GDI	gender, diversity, and inclusion
GENDER	Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GODAN	Global Open Data Initiative for Agriculture and Nutrition
GRC	gender research coordinator
GREAT	Gender-responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation
HER+	Harnessing Equality for Resilience in the Agri-food System
IAB	International Advisory Board
IAES	Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services (of CGIAR)
IDO	Intermediate Development Outcome
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEA	CGIAR Independent Evaluation Arrangement
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
KII	key informant interview
ISDC	Independent Science for Development Council
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEL	monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MELIA	monitoring, evaluation, learning, and impact assessment
MOPAN	CGIAR Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NARES	national agricultural research and extension systems
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RHoMIS	Rural Household Multi-Indicator Survey
PCU	project coordination unit
PE	participatory evaluation
PMU	program management unit
QA	quality assurance
QoR4D	quality of research for development
SAC	scientific advisory committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIMEC	Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee
SLO	System-Level Outcome
SME	subject matter expert

SO	CGIAR System Office
SPIA	Standing Panel on Impact Assessment
TDE	theory-driven evaluation
ToR	terms of reference
UFE	utilization-focused evaluation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEAI	Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

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Executive Summary

Background and Context

In 2019 CGIAR issued an open call for a new Gender Equality in Food Systems Research Platform, with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) hosting the Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER) Platform in January 2020. With the One CGIAR transition and the [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) (the 2030 Strategy), the GENDER Platform in 2021 began its [transition](#) and in October 2022 officially relaunched as a CGIAR Impact Platform with an extended mandate focused not only on gender equality but also on youth and social inclusion.

The CGIAR GENDER Platform (GENDER Impact Platform as of October 2022) “synthesizes and amplifies research, fills gaps, builds capacity, and sets directions to enable CGIAR to have maximum impact on gender equality, opportunities for youth, and social inclusion in agriculture and food systems.”¹ The Platform is organized around three modules (Evidence, Methods, and Alliances). The Evidence Module focuses on delivering new evidence, identifying emerging issues, and closing evidence gaps. The Methods Module stimulates critical thinking on gender in agricultural research for development and develops robust methodologies that can support gender equality outcomes. The Alliances Module builds linkages among scientists and engages with external partners to strengthen their gender work and outcomes and includes elements of capacity building.

Evaluation Objectives, Criteria, and Questions

Consistent with [IAES's mandate](#), this independent external evaluation contributes toward institutional learning and provides evidence for steering and accountability for CGIAR to deliver on the Impact Area for Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion. Its scope focuses on the

GENDER Platform’s activities from January 2020 to October 2022, recognizing that the Platform during this time frame has worked toward primary outcomes scheduled for completion by 2028–2030.²

This evaluation also draws insights and cross-cutting linkages from previous evaluations of Platforms, particularly the CGIAR [Excellence in Breeding](#) and [Big Data in Agriculture](#) Platforms. There are three primary evaluation user groups, with specific evaluation needs: the GENDER Impact Platform, the CGIAR System-wide users, and the CGIAR System Council and System Board. Aligned to users, approved evaluation terms of reference (ToR),³ stipulated three main evaluation objectives:

1. Assess the GENDER Platform’s progress (January 2020–October 2022).
2. Provide forward-looking recommendations for the GENDER Impact Platform.
3. Document lessons and best practices that can be used to inform the other four Impact Area Platforms⁴.

Data Collection Methods

The evaluation approach draws on mixed methods of social inquiry and includes three kinds of triangulation: investigator triangulation, data triangulation, and methodological triangulation. The evaluation engaged with outliers, often the voices less heard, and provides an example of the feminist evaluation approach. The evaluation ensured data saturation by capturing multiple perspectives and ensuring triangulation at three levels (evaluator, data, and methodological). The evaluation team used the information gathered to develop three module reports, reviewed by module leads. The reviewed module reports were then

¹ [CGIAR GENDER Platform: About](#), accessed 13 December 2022.

² Results-based management framework in Annex 2 of the [original Platform proposal](#).

³ [Inception Report](#).

⁴ More on [research portfolio](#): Climate adaptation & mitigation; Environmental health & biodiversity; Poverty reduction, livelihoods & jobs; Nutrition, health & food security

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and main questions for the GENDER Platform

Key evaluation questions ⁵ by CGIAR evaluation criteria ⁶
Relevance 1. How did the GENDER Platform support CGIAR’s continued relevance to deliver on gender equality?
Effectiveness 2. To what extent did the GENDER Platform achieve progress toward intended outcomes? 3. Across the GENDER Platform, what strategies, internal and external mechanisms (e.g., processes for allocating resources, overall decision-making structure, frequency of meetings among management team), and factors contributed to, or inhibited, timely and cost-effective achievement of outputs and outcomes, intended and unintended?
Efficiency 4. How did allocation of resources (such as funds, human resources, time, expertise) support the achievement of GENDER Platform outputs and outcomes?
Coherence 5. How has the research, evidence, and capacity agenda of the GENDER Platform complemented and strengthened related gender-focused work in CGIAR, including the new Initiatives? 6. How has the GENDER Platform filled a gap and/or engaged in vital linkages among key external organizations and relevant policy discourses?
Sustainability and learning 7. What learning mechanisms have been built into the GENDER Platform and its strategy to facilitate the potential sustainability of positive gender outcomes?

Source: IAES.

combined and analyzed from a holistic perspective to provide a comprehensive picture of the Platform and constitutes this evaluation report.

Limitations and Mitigation Actions

Any evaluation methodology has limitations; and methods brought their own strengths and weaknesses. Focusing on modules separately held a risk of overlooking coherence and complementarity, and not identifying specific work that led to the Platform’s internal coherence and overarching work. To mitigate that risk, the team held multiple interviews with various Platform leaders and conducted in-depth document reviews. The evaluation approach relied on feminist, participatory, and utilization-focused evaluation theories, necessitated a greater focus on participation and inclusion as well as a recognition that while empirical data provide facts, interpretation of those data may vary (and did) by user group.

Findings and Conclusions

RELEVANCE

Long-standing global challenges to gender research in agriculture are embedded structurally, culturally, and socially in CGIAR, yet these challenges vary across its Centers.⁷ The evaluation evidence suggests that historically, gender and the importance of the roles that women play in agriculture are not always fully understood or appreciated within CGIAR. Considering these statements, the GENDER Platform is relevant and well placed to shift

⁵ See the evaluation matrix in Annex 2 for an elaboration of questions and sub-questions.

⁶ In line with the CGIAR evaluation policy (2022), “decisions on which evaluation criteria are the most appropriate depend on the evaluation objective and the overall context.” Like the other two Platform evaluations, and after extensive consultation with the evaluand, a deliberate decision was made not to use an explicit quality of science (QoS) criterion based on the objectives of the GENDER Platform. Unlike CRPs, the three CGIAR Platforms were not tasked with delivering science per se. Sub-questions on selected dimensions of QoS will be integrated as appropriate. For example, under the Evidence Module, a related inquiry would be made on process and outputs—i.e., what evidence was synthesized in evidence briefs? This approach was framed by final draft of the “[Evaluation Guidelines: Applying the CGIAR Quality of Research for Development Framework to Evaluations](#),” to which the evaluation team was introduced.

⁷ For example, lack of attention and lack of funding.

CGIAR into a stronger leadership position on gender equality (and potentially on youth and social inclusion) related to agriculture in food systems. Yet the evaluative evidence demonstrates that, to date, the GENDER Platform is not always able to realize its potential for several reasons. One key reason is that CGIAR leadership often does not engage the GENDER Impact Platform in key strategic discussions where gender plays a critical role. The Platform builds on its structures and strong networks and actively engages with the CGIAR's Impact Platform vision to address gender equality and, to some extent since the new impact area mandate in 2022, youth and social inclusion.⁸ The Platform's objectives and design respond to the needs, policies, and priorities of stakeholders, in particular CGIAR gender researchers, international organizations and funders, and regional bodies. Some evidence suggests strong relevance in certain countries (e.g., India).

EFFECTIVENESS

The Platform demonstrates significant achievements in a short space of time, as detailed by the work of the three interdependent and interwoven modules, Evidence, Methods, and Alliances, and the Platform's Strategic Leadership and Management Team (SLMT). The evaluation evidence strongly suggests that the GENDER Platform had notable achievements, such as building an extensive resource hub that internal and external key informants identified as filling a critical gap in agriculture research. An enormous volume of evidence on gender and women's empowerment in agri-food systems has been synthesized and/or generated, alliances have been built, gender-specific methods and tools have been refined and made widely available, and gender research and its researchers have been supported to the extent possible in CGIAR. FAO sought out the GENDER Platform to contribute to its critical report, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems* (2023), which highlights both the Platform's relevance and its effectiveness in terms of its ability to meet FAO's request. The Platform successfully contributed as researchers and as partners to frame that strategic FAO report and effectively coordinated contributions from across CGIAR.

EFFICIENCY

The evaluation identified a number of findings related to CGIAR-level funding and administration that affect the work of the Platform. First, the CGIAR funding structure creates uncertainty for all Platforms, CRPs, and now Initiatives in terms of how much money will be allocated each year and when it will be confirmed and disbursed. The annual uncertainty around the funding amounts and expected disbursement timing hinders the GENDER Platform's outputs and outcomes, though the Platform's grant management, flexibility and adaptability, and researcher and staff dedication mitigated many challenges. Second, the move to One CGIAR and changes in administrative and financial structures created significant challenges, delaying the approval of activities, funding, and contracting between CGIAR Centers. Third, CGIAR funding is assigned on a calendar year basis. This one-year timeframe is extremely short for complex research projects, especially those involving the co-learning and co-creation that are often a part of transformative equitable and sustainable food systems work. Fourth, the one-year budget as well as budget delays resulted in human resource challenges such as difficulties hiring and retaining needed and quality staff. Fifth, another human resources challenge was the minimal paid time allocated to CGIAR gender focal points, gender researchers, and gender coordinators, which negatively influences gender outputs and outcomes.⁹ Sixth, some donors' funding cycles created disbursement challenges. Finally, the lack of consistent CGIAR leadership support for gender research reduces the GENDER Platform's efficiency (and effectiveness).

COHERENCE

Internal Coherence

The GENDER Platform's structure and activities suggest that the Platform is wide-reaching in its engagement in CGIAR, though some data suggest that CGIAR leadership fails to invite the GENDER Platform to critical processes (e.g., criteria for initiative proposals, communications, and the response to the food crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine). There is some

⁸ Nearly all evaluation data references gender, with few data mentioning youth and social inclusion.

⁹ See also Annex 5 for related survey results on staff time. ¹⁰ See Annex 6 for executive summaries of three Module reports.

interaction among CGIAR gender researchers in the various CGIAR centers, for example through the GENDER Platform-hosted quarterly townhalls and other meetings, and there is evidence that the Platform formally strengthened these interactions. However, some interview data encourage the Platform to continue to strengthen internal linkages and support among gender researchers and non-gender researchers given the context in which they work, especially for emerging gender researchers. While there are examples of interaction among the GENDER Platform's modules, such as weekly meetings, at times the modules' work appears somewhat siloed, suggesting that despite the close and positive engagement among the Platform SLMT, module synergies are not maximized.¹⁰ Finally, an ongoing challenge has been reaching CGIAR leadership with gender capacity-building efforts (though capacity-building efforts at other levels are highly praised). Interview data suggest that reaching CGIAR leaders and researchers in the biophysical sciences, particularly men, is critical. If these groups are not reached, the GENDER Platform's influence may be curtailed. However, the GENDER Platform needs these groups to be supportive and inviting for the Platform's capacity building and support to be effective. Finally, there is strong evidence of the GENDER Platform engaging with multiple internal partners in various ways.

Internal Coherence with New Mandate

There were mixed findings on how the Platform should engage with youth and social inclusion going forward. While there were limited data¹¹ on how the Platform's work transitioned into the new Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion Impact Area, some evidence was identified. Currently there is a lack of clear direction on how these different aspects are to be addressed in one Platform. Nearly all interviews referred to the Platform as the GENDER Platform and spoke predominantly about gender, though some of the GENDER Platform's events and reports address youth. Interview data suggested mixed reviews about the expanded mandate.

External Coherence

Data suggest strong linkages to external (non-CG) gender experts and donors, but linkages to

regional organizations, governments, NARES, and NGOs varied. Some data suggest that positive linkages are being built or strengthened with various external organizations and stakeholders through training events, workshops, and other engagements that support coherence. Finally, multiple external partners valued the GENDER Platform as a "one-stop shop," suggesting the Platform is filling a gap among key external organizations and supports relevant global gender policy discourses.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEARNING

The GENDER Platform's multipronged approach to achieving outcomes strengthens its potential sustainability. Technical training, leadership training, mentoring, communities of practice (CoPs), the resource hub, meetings, information sharing, inclusion of multiple perspectives through multiple platforms, and open calls for research provide a few examples of how the Platform engages a variety of internal and external audiences (though some data, such as interview and survey data, suggest minimal contact with some key stakeholder groups). This likely suggests an ability to effectively engage with longer-term influences, changes, and impacts. The GENDER Platform itself is likely sustainable as there is a global agenda (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]) backed internally and externally calling for a focus on gender equality in agriculture and food systems, which includes strong donor support. However, identified challenges may weaken the Platform's potentially strong position of sustainability:

1. Funding flows and continued uncertainty around funding amounts and disbursal times affect the Platform's effectiveness and efficiency.
2. Key informant interviews noted the attrition of some of CGIAR's more experienced gender researchers and highlighted how the younger or emerging gender researchers do not bring the experience or clout often needed to effectively engage both internally and externally.
3. There are currently insufficient expertise and resources to cover the GENDER Platform's recently (October 2022)

¹⁰ See Annex 6 for executive summaries of three Module reports.

¹¹ The CGIAR's [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) states that the Platform will "offer rewarding opportunities to 267 million young people who are not in employment, education, or training" (p. 19). The Strategy does not specify a focus, target, or definition, for social inclusion.

expanded mandate on youth and social inclusion.

4. Some data suggest the expanded Platform will stretch resources. There is limited tracking, and therefore limited deep understanding of what

The GENDER Platform team is aware of these limitations.

Recommendations

For action by the GENDER Platform

Recommendation 1: Strengthen partnerships

- 1.1 Continue to engage with key identified partners to identify comparative advantages.
- 1.2 Co-develop transparent criteria to continue to identify evidence, methods, and partnership needs.
- 1.3 Co-identify and prioritize research gaps and activities with key partners, which will likely vary.

Recommendation 2: Improve module coherence

- 2.1 Expand on current engagements to further exploit potential for the whole Platform, including the three Modules, to inform pathways to sustainable, equitable gender outcomes in food systems.
- 2.2 Identify and prioritize additional strategic engagement points for the Platform, and work with the three Modules to achieve them.

Recommendation 3: Track results

- 3.1 Employ an M&E professional. The Platform should employ an experienced M&E person who can support the Platform, and potentially HER+, to develop a strong culture of monitoring and evaluation.
- 3.2 Use outputs and outcome data to reflect and inform day-to-day decision making. An effective M&E person can guide the Platform on how to empirically demonstrate pathways to sustainable, equitable gender outcomes in food

works, and for whom, in terms of uptake of the GENDER Platform's outputs (i.e., there is limited empirical understanding of outcome- and impact-level results).¹²

systems and can support funding requests.

- 3.3 Using empirical data to revisit the ToC, and revise it as needed. The ToC and results framework should consider the new One CGIAR functional areas, as mentioned in the introduction.

Recommendation 4: Clarify the expanded Platform

- 4.1 Make a concrete decision on how the Platform should engage with the expanded mandate on gender, youth, and social inclusion. CGIAR and the Platform should engage with the perspectives above, and others as needed, to gain insight that can inform how to explicitly move forward with the expanded platform mandate.
- 4.2 Adopt a clear position, and make a clear statement on how the Platform engages with gender equality, youth, and social inclusion so that partners, internal and external, understand the Platform's position.

For action by CGIAR Management

Recommendation 5: Extend project timeframes

- 5.1 Provide the Platform with three-year planning and operational timeframes.

Recommendation 6: Reduce budget uncertainty

- 6.1 Identify bottlenecks, solutions, and mechanisms to address the uncertainty surrounding funding cycles and/or disbursement timings.
- 6.2 Make financial decisions transparent and concrete to the Platform.
- 6.3 Provide three-year funding cycles.

¹² For example, there are no CGIAR-level measurement of engagement.

Recommendation 7: Allocate resources for the expanded mandate

- 7.1 Expand the GENDER Platform's budget in line with its expanded thematic mandate (youth and social inclusion) and for the purpose of achieving impact.

Recommendation 8: Use relevant metrics

- 8.1 Use metrics in individual performance assessments that assess for gender knowledge and skills. Ensure that capacity building on gender is valued in general researcher and manager performance assessments, such as gender KPIs. People and Culture/GDI to develop individual level indicators that provide useful management information.
- 8.2 Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to co-develop with GENDER Platform for the research portfolio that can provide useful management information on integrating gender equality into CGIAR research and impact pathways. Engagement indicators per initiative, for example, provide information on stakeholder engagement, which can then be used to inform the Platform's engagement strategies and activities.
- 8.3 Include engagement data in the M&E results framework (e.g., stakeholder analysis in relation to event data input, participation, and event data output.)

Recommendation 9: Recognize and support gender researchers

- 9.1 Invest in career development for gender researchers. Make available a professional, strategic, and well-resourced human resources function to all staff to help mitigate the problems associated with a highly diverse multinational organization where gender needs to be prioritized.
- 9.2 Maximize the value of human resources by developing career streams that separately identify science and management roles, competencies, and skill levels, and within that, equally reward those with excellence in gender knowledge and skills as those with excellence in research outputs.

Recommendation 10: Adopt inclusive decision making

- 10.1 Actively invite and involve the GENDER Platform in CGIAR's strategic decision-

making processes to inform critical decision-making points and engage the Platform in a timely way so that the Platform can adequately inform and/or participate. For example, if gender is to be substantively integrated, gender equality needs to be addressed when projects and programs are conceptualized.

Recommendation 11: Modify the reporting structure

- 11.1 Expand where the GENDER Platform sits on the organogram. Consider having the GENDER Platform report at a higher level and/or have a direct link to the executive management team. The GENDER Platform should engage with all three Science Groups on issues of substance yet remain under a single Science Group for clarity.

Lessons for CGIAR Platforms

This section provides key lessons gleaned from the GENDER Platform that are likely relevant to the other Impact Platforms. The lessons are organized into five key areas.

A. Using the 2030 global roles as an entry point, foster global critical thinking: Bring together CGIAR's community and close partners relevant to the Impact Area to facilitate information exchange, enhance coordination, and foster collaboration toward outcomes and impacts.

- A.1 *Actively engage internal and external partners in co-creation.* A stakeholder analysis should be used to identify the Platform's comparative advantage. Then, use a multistakeholder approach to co-develop a shared theory of change, co-develop a research agenda, and where feasible engage in co-creation of activities. This approach will lead to increased relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and efficiency. Co-creation supports uptake and use of Platform's outputs and outcomes.
- A.2 *Actively facilitate learning based on empirical evidence.* Budget and plan for reflective learning, and use trained facilitators to support the process to revise agendas, focus, or ToC, as needed. Active, planned reflection supports ongoing relevance,

effectiveness, and coherence.

B. Deepen CGIAR and partner capacity.

- B.1 Support science leadership.* Support science leadership by providing guidance based on empirical data that shares a strong narrative to inform strategic thinking and support mobilization efforts.
- B.2 Assess user needs.* Implement capacity and needs assessment to identify knowledge gaps, and use that assessment to inform strategy.
- B.3 Collate and build on existing networks and resources* (e.g., gender research coordinators and resource hub).

C. Amplify external profile and pathways to impact.

- C.1 Identify scientific synthesis and other related outputs that add value to the food and agriculture space.* Work with partners who have a comparative advantage to amplify the Platform's voice and influence. Use scientific synthesis and other similar outputs to actively engage in policy forums.
- C.2 Actively encourage collaboration.* Use competitive open calls for grants on strategic themes to encourage collaboration by CGIAR researchers with researchers from other CGIAR Centers and external organizations.

D. Promote cohesiveness in CGIAR and portfolio-level management and strategy.

- D.1 Senior leadership need to value gender research and understand how the topic is critical to CGIAR, development agendas, and achievement of the SDGs.* Invite

CGIAR leadership to participate in webinars and other events; CGIAR leadership should actively engage with the Platforms. Provide senior leadership with well-constructed, empirically based, focused narratives that succinctly highlight the theme's critical nature to the CDG, SDGs, and development agendas. CGIAR leadership should actively engage the Platforms in policy according to each Platform's niche and thematic area. (See a concrete example of gender-blind response to the food crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine in this report, which resulted from not engaging with the GENDER Platform, p. 14.)

E. Make use of operational learning

- E.1 Clarify structures and protocols on funding mechanisms and timelines.* Until structures are sorted, Platforms need to mitigate challenges with budgeting flow to ensure financial stability. Further, related processes need to be well documented, and templates need to be accessible.
- E.2 To optimize Platform operations, use a three-year planning timeframe that explicitly includes funding amounts and disbursement timing.*
- E.3 Address inter-CGIAR contracting.* The process of contracting research between CGIAR Centers is slow and cumbersome. As a result, it is currently more convenient to engage external partners for such contracts.
- E.4 Establish a strategy to mitigate funding challenges related to hiring challenges.* This could include hiring people to fill positions that address short-term gaps.

1. Introduction

Gender equality and social inclusion are at the forefront of the 2030 global development agenda. One of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) centers on gender equality, and the theme permeates the 169 SDG targets. Furthermore, gender equality is a critical lever and precondition for CGIAR to achieve its current mission to advance the transformation of food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. Closing the gender gap will enable people, especially women, to better nourish their families and access interventions for improved food systems.

It was within this context, and to serve all CGIAR Centers, that in 2019 the CGIAR issued an open call for a new Gender Equality in Food Systems Research Platform, which led to ILRI hosting the Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER) Platform in January 2020. The aim of the GENDER Platform was to effectively collaborate with decision-makers to achieve a new normal: “a world in which gender equality drives a transformation toward equitable, sustainable, productive, and climate-resilient food systems.” The GENDER Platform supports all CGIAR Research Centers and CGIAR Initiatives, and it supported all CGIAR Research Programs and CGIAR Platforms until the end of 2021, when that part of the CGIAR portfolio came to an end. The Platform’s launch coincided with the COVID-19 crisis, which had several implications for the Platform’s establishment.

In light of the One CGIAR transition and the [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) (the 2030 Strategy), the GENDER Platform in 2021 began its own [transition](#) and in October 2022 officially relaunched as a CGIAR Impact Platform. The 2030 Strategy identified five SDG-focused Impact Areas, each supported by a Platform through which CGIAR research and innovations aim to achieve “positive measurable benefits” and “transformative change.” One of these Impact Areas is Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion.¹³ Consequently, the GENDER Platform of 2020–2021 evolved to encompass a larger vision as the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform, working to position CGIAR to achieve its ambitions for the CGIAR Impact Area on Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion, and running from October 2022 to 2030.¹⁴ The collective global targets for this Impact Area are focused on closing the gender gap and enhancing opportunities for youth in food, land, and water systems.

The One CGIAR reform has not only brought opportunities for the Platform but has also introduced numerous changes across the system that have implications for CGIAR’s gender agenda. At the same time, the GENDER Platform has provided technical resources, support, and advice on gender in designing CGIAR Research Initiatives.¹⁵ It also led the development of one of CGIAR’s 33¹⁶ initiatives: [Harnessing Equality for Resilience in the Agrifood System \(HER+\)](#), now called the [Gender Equality Initiative](#). The Platform works closely with all CGIAR Centers and Initiatives.

¹³ These Impact Areas were identified as the avenues through which CGIAR will contribute to collective global targets for the transformation of food, land, and water systems across local, regional, and global levels.

¹⁴ Further information about the Impact Area on Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion is available here: <https://www.cgiar.org/research/cgiar-portfolio/gender-equality-youth-social-inclusion/>.

¹⁵ <https://gender.cgiar.org/publications/annual-report-2021-cgiar-gender-Platform>

¹⁶ As of January 2023.

Table 2: Collective global targets of the CGIAR Impact Area on Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion and the role of the GENDER Impact Platform

<p>Collective global 2030 targets with partners</p>	<p>CGIAR commits with partners to double the assets and incomes of resource-poor small-scale food system workers, farmers, fishers, and livestock keepers, while ensuring that such increased prosperity is delivered through meeting optimal nutrition outcomes, within global planetary boundaries, and sustained under climate change. More specific targets will be developed on a regional basis in recognition of differences in agrifood systems among regions and delivered through strategic and inclusive public and private partnerships. All research and innovation in this Action Area will deliver across the five Impact Areas.</p>
<p>Role of the GENDER Impact Platform</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster global critical thinking, use of evidence, and appropriate metrics around the Impact Area 2. Raise internal capacity across the Action Areas through strengthening and sharing common tools, standards, data sets, cutting-edge science and knowledge management 3. Advise management on the identification and performance management of CGIAR Initiatives 4. Amplify CGIAR’s external profile and voice, by engaging in and shaping global policy discourse, and by leading external communication plans to influence well beyond agriculture and food sectors

Note: Based on the [CGIAR 2030 research and innovation strategy](#). The description of the role of the GENDER Impact Platform is the same as for all Impact Platforms.

1.1 Rationale and Background of the Evaluation

Consistent with [IAES's mandate](#), this independent external evaluation contributes to institutional learning and provides evidence for steering and accountability for CGIAR to deliver on the Impact Area for Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion. Its scope focuses on the GENDER Platform’s activities from January 2020 to October 2022, recognizing that the Platform during this time frame worked toward primary outcomes scheduled for completion by 2028–2030.¹⁷ This evaluation also draws insights and cross-cutting linkages from previous evaluations of Platforms, particularly the CGIAR [Excellence in Breeding](#) and [Big Data in Agriculture](#) Platforms. There are three primary user groups for this evaluation, each of which has specific evaluation needs: the GENDER Impact Platform, the CGIAR System-wide users, and the CGIAR System Council and System Board.

1.2 Structure of the Evaluation Report

The report structure provides a transparent approach to the evaluation’s focus, questions, methods, valuing process, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The report structure aligns with CGIAR guidance and evaluation criteria within the CGIAR evaluation framework.¹⁸ Section 1 provides background information. Section 2 covers the evaluation objectives, criteria, and questions. Section 3 provides the evaluation’s findings. Section 4 provides the conclusions, section 5 gives recommendations, and section 6 focuses on lessons learned for other Impact Platforms.

1.3 Overview of the CGIAR GENDER Platform¹⁹

The CGIAR GENDER Platform (GENDER Impact Platform as of October 2022) “synthesizes and amplifies research, fills gaps, builds capacity, and sets directions to enable CGIAR to have maximum impact on gender equality, opportunities for youth, and social inclusion in agriculture and food systems.”²⁰ The

¹⁷ Results-based management framework in Annex 2 of the [original Platform proposal](#).

¹⁸ [CGIAR’s Evaluation Framework](#).

¹⁹ A more detailed description of the CGIAR GENDER Platform appears in Annexes 1 and 2.

²⁰ [CGIAR GENDER Platform: About](#), accessed 13 December 2022.

Platform's updated mandate (after its transition to a CGIAR Impact Platform) is to advance gender equality, opportunities for youth, and social inclusion. The Platform's strategic leadership and management team consists of a director, Dr Nicoline de Haan; three module leaders (one module is co-led by two scientists); and an implementation team, which consists of a communications specialist, a science manager, a full-time project manager, and a part time administrative staff person.²¹ The module leaders work on a part-time basis ranging from 20% to 65%, as does the director (55%), while implementing HER+. The implementation team are all contracted by ILRI, which hosts the Platform. A part-time specialist in monitoring, evaluation, and learning joined the team in October 2022 to assist with the evaluation and promotion of key achievements highlighted by the evaluation.

The GENDER Impact Platform is organized around three modules (Evidence, Methods, and Alliances) led by module leaders based in three CGIAR Centers. Each CGIAR Center's director general nominates a gender research coordinator to represent it within the Platform, and the CGIAR Initiatives have focal points in the Platform. Altogether, there are 28 gender research coordinators and Initiative focal points.²²

The Platform engages with multiple diverse stakeholders within CGIAR and beyond. Its stakeholders include NARESSs, international organizations, academia, advanced research institutes, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations. A subset of representatives from these organizations, which come together in the Platform's [listserv](#), had about 216 members.²³ (See Annex 4 for further stakeholder information.)

Evidence Module: The Evidence Module focuses on delivering new evidence, identifying emerging issues, and closing evidence gaps to support transformation toward more equitable and inclusive food systems. It aims to position the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform as the go-to source for high-quality evidence and knowledge on equitable and sustainable food systems. The GENDER Impact Platform proposal articulates two objectives:

1. to support the development of a diverse gender research portfolio and contribute to filling evidence gaps, in alignment with the priorities set in the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), by other multilateral bodies, such as the SDGs, and by other regional frameworks, such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s 2025 Framework, and
2. to facilitate the identification and implementation of strategic research on emerging issues to generate evidence on global gender gaps and on the empowerment of women in agriculture, and to develop effective ways of addressing such gaps. It will take a critical look at evidence needed (retrospectively) and develop a robust evidence base and new directions (prospectively) on women's empowerment, identifying solutions and trajectories to reduce gender inequalities (GENDER Platform resubmitted proposal, 2019, p. 44).

The Evidence Module is led by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI, CGIAR Center), namely Dr. Ranjitha Puskur. The module works with the following partners who share mutual interests: researchers from across the different CGIAR Centers as well as development partners, the private sector, advanced research institutes, and think tanks. Key activities led by the Evidence Module include:

- Mapping and synthesizing the gender- and agri-food system-related evidence base and gaps through developing and contracting two [EGMs](#), six systematic reviews, and five scoping studies,
- Designing and contracting five evidence generation projects linked to the evidence syntheses,
- Increasing accessibility of gender and agri-food system evidence by co-developing an ongoing series of plain language [Evidence explainers](#) on recent research papers with their authors,
- Exploration of the [gendered impacts of national COVID-19 policies](#), and subsequently commissioning four COVID-19 related gender and agri-food system projects,
- Developing a [climate-agriculture-gender-inequity hotspots](#) related mapping method followed by targeted needs assessment and testing of gender transformation interventions, and developing a [gender and climate smart agriculture](#) learning agenda and resource library,
- Exploring via a portfolio of seven research projects whether existing big datasets (e.g., RHoMIS, DHS) could be harnessed for providing gender and agri-food system-related data, and

²¹ As of February 2023.

²² As of February 2023.

²³ As of February 2023.

- Partnering with local stakeholders in Odisha state in designing three projects on simple-to-track indicators of women's resilience and empowerment, impacts of male outmigration and participatory foresight analysis around transforming food systems and cultures.

Methods Module: The Methods Module develops robust methodologies that can support gender equality outcomes. The module has two objectives:

1. to stimulate critical thinking and reflexivity on gender in agricultural research for development (AR4D), and
2. to strengthen the integration and value addition of gender analysis in AR4D and reduce transaction costs, through assessment, development, and promotion of good practices, methods, and standards for gender integrated and strategic research.

The Methods Module is co-led by two researchers at the International Food and Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Dr. Hazel Malapit, an economist, coordinates research, training, and technical assistance on implementing the [Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index \(WEAI\)](#) and conducts research on gender, women's empowerment, agriculture, health, and nutrition issues. Dr. Elizabeth Bryan is a senior scientist with experience in mixed-methods research, environment, natural resource management, and climate-smart agriculture. These different skill sets allow for complementary leadership and intentionality in doing mixed-methods work.

The Methods Module identified, in consultation with the CGIAR gender research community, seven key themes for research and tools synthesis: nutrition; value chains, markets, and entrepreneurship; design and dissemination of agricultural technologies; labor and time use; institutions and governance; gender transformative change; and climate change: gender and resilient agriculture. External partners mainly include universities, national agricultural research and extension services (NARESs), funders, and international organizations. Key activities led by the Methods Module include, for example, the Women's Empowerment Measurement Validation Community of Practice (WE-Validate CoP) held forums and webinars for gender researchers to showcase their work on women's empowerment tools and methods.

Alliances Module: The Alliances Module builds linkages among scientists, engages with external partners to strengthen their gender work and outcomes, and includes elements of capacity building. There are two objectives:

1. to explore, facilitate, and develop approaches for interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary synergies between gender researchers and with other scientists within CGIAR, and
2. to catalyze and strengthen capacities on gender integration and institutional change within CGIAR and its partners for improved uptake of gender research in an evolving global food system.

The Alliance Module is led by Marlène Elias, a senior scientist and the gender lead at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. Two notable Alliances Module partnerships are the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Gender-responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation (GREAT). These partnerships offer capacity development, mentoring, and other support to gender and non-gender scientists at CGIAR and at NARESs. The Module also organizes and facilitates annual events for the GENDER Platform, which have brought together both CGIAR scientists and external stakeholders to improve gender outcomes in agricultural research. External partners mainly include universities, NARESs, funders, and international organizations. Key activities led by the Alliances Module include the following:

- [Capacity and needs assessment of gender research in CGIAR](#),
- Annual conferences: [Cultivating Equality](#) in 2021 and the [Science Exchange](#) in 2022,
- CGIAR Gender Researchers' Leadership and Mentoring Program (through AWARD), and
- Level 1 (introductory) and 2 (intermediate) training in gender-responsive food systems research (through GREAT).

2. Evaluation Objectives, Criteria, and Questions

The approved evaluation terms of reference (ToR),²⁴ state the following three main evaluation objectives:

1. Assess the GENDER Platform’s progress (January 2020–October 2022),
2. Document lessons and best practices that can be used to inform the other four Impact Area Platforms, and
3. Provide forward-looking recommendations for the GENDER Impact Platform.

Table 3: Evaluation criteria and main questions for the GENDER Platform

CGIAR evaluation criteria ²⁵	Key evaluation questions ²⁶
Relevance: The extent to which the Platform’s objectives and design respond to the needs, policies, and priorities of users/clients and global, regional, and country partners and institutions and continue to do so if circumstances change. Consistent with the Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) framework, attention is given to the importance, significance, and usefulness of the work implemented in the problem context, associated with CGIAR’s capacity to address the problems.	1. How did the GENDER Platform support CGIAR’s continued relevance to deliver on gender equality?
Effectiveness: The extent to which the intervention achieved, and/or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across subgroups of users/clients. Consistent with the QoR4D framework and in the CGIAR context, this criterion considers the extent to which research is positioned for use and has generated knowledge, products, and services with high potential to address a problem and contribute to innovations, outcomes, and impacts.	2. To what extent did the GENDER Platform achieve progress toward intended outcomes? 3. Across the GENDER Platform, what strategies, internal and external mechanisms (e.g., processes for allocating resources, overall decision-making structure, frequency of meetings among management team), and factors contributed to, or inhibited, timely and cost-effective achievement of outputs and outcomes, intended and unintended?
Efficiency: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economical and timely way—i.e., the overall use of resources. “Economical” refers to the conversion of inputs (such as funds, expertise, natural resources, and time) into outputs, outcomes, and impacts in the most cost-effective way possible compared with feasible alternatives in the context.	4. How did allocation of resources (such as funds, human resources, time, expertise) support the achievement of GENDER Platform outputs and outcomes?
Coherence: The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country or sector or within CGIAR—i.e., its overall fit. Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the	5. How has the research, evidence, and capacity agenda of the GENDER Platform complemented and strengthened related gender-focused work in CGIAR, including the new Initiatives?

²⁴ [Inception Report](#)

²⁵ In line with the CGIAR evaluation policy (2022), “decisions on which evaluation criteria are the most appropriate depend on the evaluation objective and the overall context.” Like the other two Platform evaluations, and after extensive consultation with the evaluand, a deliberate decision was made not to use an explicit quality of science (QoS) criterion based on the objectives of the GENDER Platform. Unlike CRPs, the three CGIAR Platforms were not tasked with delivering science per se. Sub-questions on selected dimensions of QoS will be integrated as appropriate. For example, under the evidence module, a related inquiry would be made on process and outputs—i.e., what evidence was synthesized in evidence briefs. This approach was framed by final draft of the ["Evaluation Guidelines: Applying the CGIAR Quality of Research for Development Framework to Evaluations,"](#) to which the evaluation team was introduced.

²⁶ See the evaluation matrix in Annex 2 for an elaboration of questions and sub-questions.

CGIAR evaluation criteria ²⁵	Key evaluation questions ²⁶
intervention and other interventions carried out within CGIAR.	6. How has the GENDER Platform filled a gap and/or engaged in vital linkages among key external organizations and relevant policy discourses?
Sustainability and learning: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue. This criterion focuses on the continuation of benefits, not on external funding, and highlights the multidimensional nature of sustainability.	7. What learning mechanisms have been built into the GENDER Platform and its strategy to facilitate the potential sustainability of positive gender outcomes?

Source: IAES

2.1 Overall Approach

While the approach to the GENDER Platform’s evaluation is firmly grounded in the 2022 [CGIAR evaluation framework and policy](#)²⁷ (which bring in CGIAR’s values and standards), the evaluation team further tailored the evaluation approach to guide the evaluation valuing processes and to inform the evaluation’s practical implementation. Aligned with the evaluation ToR ([Inception Report](#)), four main evaluation theories guided the evaluation (see Box 2). Annex 1 provides the detailed evaluation approach. The evaluation team gathered and analyzed data to produce three module reports, which were submitted to the module leads for a sense-making and validation review. Validated module reports were then reviewed by external peer reviewers, IAES, and the evaluand and user groups in line with the IAES layered quality assurance process²⁸. The validated module reports were then finalized and synthesized from a “holistic” perspective (the whole is more than the sum of its parts) to provide a comprehensive picture of the Platform. This evaluation report provides that holistic view.

Box 1: Four Guiding Theories for the Platform Evaluation

Four theories guide this evaluation: (1) participatory evaluation ensures that the process is collaborative; (2) feminist evaluation, which overtly engages with power dynamics, ensures that data are gathered in a sensitive, culturally appropriate manner, and emphasizes the need to value findings from multiple viewpoints; (3) utilization-focused evaluation ensures that the evaluation process and findings are useful; and (4) theory-driven evaluation provides an explicit data collection framework rooted in the GENDER Platform’s values.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

The evaluation approach draws on mixed methods of social inquiry to invite multiple mental models (ways of thinking) into the inquiry process, bringing a stronger understanding to the evaluation questions. Qualitative data were collected using two methods. One method obtains data from people (primary data), and the other identifies data in written documents (secondary data). Quantitative data were gathered through an online survey and a desk review of module-level financial data, GENDER Platform indicator data, and annual reports. The data collection explored the three modules, with a subject matter expert leading each module study. The Team Lead conducted interviews to gather general data on the Platform and its strategies.

The evaluation includes three kinds of triangulation: investigator triangulation, data triangulation, and methodological triangulation. The evaluation approach did not ignore outlier information; engaging with outliers, often the voices less heard, is an example of how the feminist evaluation approach influences

²⁷ One of the 15 standards and principles under the CGIAR Evaluation framework is “responsiveness to gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI): Evaluation design and conduct, the commissioning of teams, and the reporting strive to fully address GDI parameters. Evaluations will consider who is engaged in the work and who benefits from it.” Other related principles are “relevance, use, and utility,” “fairness, confidentiality, and no harm,” and “legitimacy and participation.”

²⁸ Executive summaries of the three stand-alone module reports are included in the Annex; and available from IAES upon further request.

the data analysis. Qualitative data collection employed criterion sampling and chain sampling, and the quantitative data relied on survey data and information collected directly from the teams. Finally, the evaluation team identified deep dives that provided additional insight into the Platform. The evaluation ensured data saturation by capturing multiple perspectives and ensuring triangulation at three levels (evaluator, data, and methodological).

The evaluation team used the information gathered to write three module reports for subsequent review by module leads. The reviewed module reports were then combined and analyzed from a holistic perspective (the whole is more than the sum of its parts) and used together with the data gathered on the PMU and Platform to provide a comprehensive picture of the Platform and constitute this evaluation report.

Refer to Annex 1²⁹ for in-depth look at the evaluation methodology.

2.3 Limitations and Mitigation Actions

Any evaluation methodology has limitations. Methods are not infallible, and each brought its own strengths and weaknesses. Focusing on modules separately held a risk of overlooking coherence and complementarity and failing to identify specific work that led to the Platform's internal coherence and overarching work. The team mitigated that risk by holding multiple interviews with various Platform leaders and conducting in-depth document reviews. The selected approach to evaluation, relying on feminist, participatory, and utilization-focused evaluation theories, necessitated a greater focus on participation and inclusion as well as a recognition that while empirical data provide facts, interpretation of those data may vary (and did) by user group. Where there were multiple interpretations, further discussions were used to triangulate with the various findings. Building stakeholder ownership of an evaluation required additional time (e.g., extended consultations and multiple engagements), and this extended process delayed the evaluation report by several months.

Qualitative research methods grant evaluation stakeholders and participants room for agency and expression of their thoughts and priorities. Gathering and analyzing these kinds of data often took time, again extending the evaluation process. Some challenges were related to gaining access to output indicator data for some module activities (e.g., the evidence module identified that "data sources of verification" specified in the Results Framework did not all exist, rendering it difficult to measure progress) and the limited survey response rate.³⁰ To mitigate for these challenges, we used data triangulation and ensured data saturation. (Refer to the [Inception Report](#) for a detailed description of the challenges and suggested mitigation strategies and to annexes 4 and 5 for a representation of respondents by categories.)

3. Findings and Conclusions

Each section addresses a specific evaluation criterion: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and learning. The synthesized, high-level findings provide insights gleaned from strategic analysis and synthesis of data. For detailed in-depth data and evidence, refer to the individual Module report executive summaries (Annex 6).

3.1 Relevance

Key Findings. Long-standing global challenges to gender research in agriculture are structurally, culturally, and socially embedded in CGIAR, and these challenges vary across its centers.³¹ The evaluation evidence suggests that gender and the importance of the roles women play in agriculture have historically not always been fully understood or appreciated within CGIAR. Considering these statements, the GENDER Platform is relevant and well placed to shift CGIAR into a stronger leadership position on gender equality (and potentially on youth and social inclusion) related to agriculture in food systems. Yet

²⁹ See stand-alone Annex document on the IAES evaluation page for GENDER Platform.

³⁰ Based on interview data, a low response rate is common for CGIAR. Further, the low response rate may occur because the Platform is relatively young and respondents may not be entirely familiar with it.

³¹ For example, these challenges include lack of attention and lack of funding.

the evaluative evidence demonstrates that, to date, the GENDER Platform is not always able to realize its potential for several reasons. One key reason is that CGIAR leadership often does not engage the GENDER Impact Platform in key strategic discussions where gender plays a critical role. The Platform builds on its structures and strong networks and actively engages with CGIAR's Impact Platform vision to address gender equality and, to some extent since the new impact area mandate in 2022, youth and social inclusion.³² The Platform's objectives and design respond to the needs, policies, and priorities of stakeholders, in particular CGIAR gender researchers, international organizations and funders, and regional bodies. Some evidence suggests strong relevance in certain countries (e.g., India).

The GENDER Platform engaged several approaches to ensure its relevance. First, at times the Platform used a demand-driven approach (e.g., read about the [Gender and Climate Hotspot Mapping](#)³³). Second, and relatedly, it used a flexible approach that enabled strategic demands to be met, resulting in a plethora of projects and activities. These included developing [evidence gap maps](#) and [aligned studies](#); identifying, strengthening, and making [tools and methods accessible](#); conducting [gender research conferences](#); and supporting other [capacity-building initiatives](#) relevant to internal CGIAR staff, CGIAR centers, external organizations, and other stakeholders. While evidence suggests that for some research or project outputs, direct users were not always distinctly identified, evaluative evidence strongly suggests that the GENDER Platform's work fills identified evidence gaps. The GENDER Platform uses a multifaceted communication strategy to promote the importance of gender and agriculture through various means (e.g., engagement with CGIAR leadership, [evidence explainers](#), a [virtual resource hub](#), the [Science Exchange](#), a listserv, and social media, such as the Platform's [Twitter](#) account, which has more than 7,000 followers³⁴).

Finally, the GENDER Platform's structure, with its networks of CGIAR gender researchers, focal points, and gender research coordinators, provides the Platform with a critical vantage point, enabling it to facilitate links between gender in agriculture and food systems research outputs, needs, demand, and events, both internally and externally. Interview data strongly emphasized the gender coordinators' critical role in keeping the Platform relevant.

The Platform's key approaches to support CGIAR's continued relevance to deliver on gender equality were not without challenges. Some challenges appeared to be rooted in CGIAR's general lack of understanding of gender's practical links and relevance to agricultural science. While the facts show that gender and agriculture are critically linked, that link is not always acknowledged or understood by agricultural scientists within CGIAR or externally, with the result that some Centers and some CGIAR leadership provide only limited support to gender research. The GENDER Platform must then continuously engage with the issue of how much effort should be given to more "advocacy" to raise awareness among stakeholders of their gender-related needs.

Various examples in the module evaluation reports speak positively to the GENDER Platform's response to emerging needs in the global context (e.g., [gendered impacts of COVID-19 related national policies](#), [gendered climate change adaptation opportunities](#), country-level needs), suggesting that CGIAR has relevant contributions to make to gender equality in a dynamic context. While the evaluative evidence suggested that the Platform's efforts to address donor needs created some possible limitations,³⁵ the reality is that CGIAR and the Platform need donor funds to function, and thus the Platform needs to be relevant to donors.

Key Examples. The achievements of the Alliances Module demonstrate the positive gains in capacity development, partnership, coalition building, and visibility of CGIAR gender research and the Platform, all of which contributed to the Platform's relevance. The Platform's convenings, strongly supported by the Alliances Module, provided fora for gender researchers and non-gender researchers to engage both [online](#) and in person. These engagements brought CGIAR and non-CGIAR researchers together to learn, share, explore, and identify their evolving needs on gender and agriculture. One example is the paper "Capacities and Needs Assessment of Gender Research in CGIAR" (Zaremba et al., 2022), which

³² Nearly all evaluation data references gender, with few data mentioning youth and social inclusion.

³³ Often referred to as the climate-agriculture-gender-inequity hotspot mapping.

³⁴ As of April 29, 2023.

³⁵ While the evaluation did not allow a more in-depth exploration, some key internal stakeholders said the GENDER Platform implemented what donors wanted rather than being guided by what was needed more generally in the gender and agriculture space.

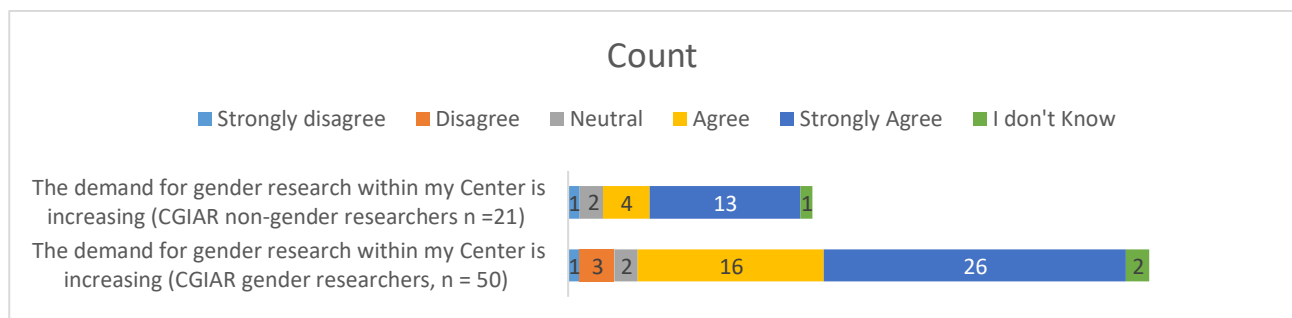
elucidated how and where the Platform could support CGIAR’s capacities to achieve the quality gender research outcomes set forth at the Platform’s genesis. Other key examples include the [Cultivating Equality Conference](#), which had strong registration and attendance figures, and the [Science Exchange](#) reviews. Further, the data suggest that GREAT and [AWARD](#) capacity building have strengthened connections between CGIAR researchers and NARES since the GENDER Platform’s involvement.

Initially the Evidence Module identified needs through internal engagements with gender researchers and partners that culminated in an [evidence gap map \(EGM\)](#). Recognizing that gender research needs to be more accessible, the Evidence Module produced a set of plain language [Evidence Explainers](#), which are now used by various stakeholders for teaching and other purposes. A slight criticism is that the Module’s EGM did not ground the GENDER Platform’s needs assessment with stakeholders in the broader AR4G landscape, thus limiting understanding of the Module.

The Methods Module report provides some examples of the Platform’s continued relevance in terms of delivering on gender equality. Two successful approaches highlight the Module’s work on practical methods and tools: it provides methods and tools that are [accessible online](#), and it supplies methods and tools that are used within and external to CGIAR and its [communities of practice \(COPs\)](#).³⁶ Qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated the COPs’ usefulness, showing that COPs provide vibrant spaces to share up-to-date information and engagement. About 34% of survey respondents (n = 102) were members of at least one of the GENDER Platform’s CoPs. Further, quantitative data showed that the demand for gender research is growing, with about three out of every five CGIAR non-gender respondent and four of every five CGIAR gender researcher respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement (see figure 1).

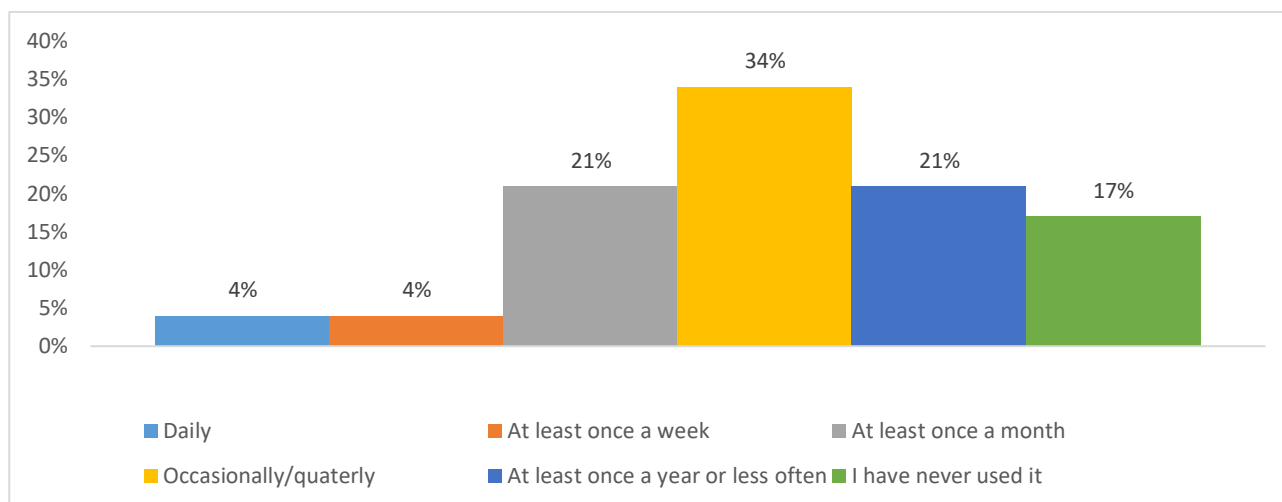
The quantitative data also demonstrated that 76% of the respondents make use of the resource hub monthly, quarterly, or at least once a year (see figure 2). This suggests growing interest in evidence-based gender research as well as a desire to increase capacity for gender research.

Figure 1: Demand for gender research within my Center is increasing



³⁶ To continue to track and understand these results, a clear theory of change is needed to demonstrate how these results contribute to the impact pathway.

Figure 2: How often do you make use of the GENDER Impact Platform’s resource hub (website)? (n= 53)



There are several examples of how the GENDER Platform aimed to be relevant. It sought to meet the needs of donors, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which brought a strong demand for research on gender and climate change, specifically for [Climate Smart Agriculture \(CSA\)](#) and [hotspot mapping](#). The hotspot mapping generated [new](#) demand from national governments such as Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, and international and regional organizations, including the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the African Group of Negotiators Experts (AGNES). To meet country-level demand, for example, one project developed simple women’s resilience indicators with a dashboard for the Odisha government. Further, the GENDER Platform, at FAO’s request, collaborated to review countries’ [gender-responsive policies during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Another example of the Platform’s relevance is its messaging. In response to climate change, for example, the Platform coined the phrase “[A climate change solution that doesn’t work for women is not a climate change solution.](#)” which neatly sums up the critical need to engage with gender in the global climate crisis. That phrase was repeated in multiple settings, including the [COP27 event](#), was supported by [postcards](#) that the GENDER Platform handed out, and repeated by the managing director at the Gates Foundation on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CerrJ/status/1594705325420060672>.

Finally, a short narrative illustrates CGIAR’s critical need for the GENDER Platform.³⁷ When CGIAR first responded to the food crisis due to the conflict in Ukraine, its communication was gender blind. To support a more inclusive CGIAR response, the Platform published [The missing link: Making women part of the response to the global food crisis](#), which outlined four evidence-based recommendations for ensuring equitable responses to the food crisis on the part of CGIAR and its partners. The report was followed by an additional [article](#) and a policy seminar, [Ensuring a Focus on Women and Girls in the Global Food Crisis Response](#), co-organized by the GENDER Platform and several of partners (e.g., USAID, IFPRI, and Feed the Future).

3.2 Effectiveness

Key Findings. The Platform demonstrates significant achievements in a short space of time, as detailed by the work of the three interdependent and interwoven modules—Evidence, Methods, and Alliances—and the Platform’s Strategic Leadership and Management Team (SLMT). The evaluation evidence strongly

³⁷ Alternatively, the example also demonstrates the limited understanding in some parts of CGIAR of the role of gender in agriculture and in food systems.

suggests that the GENDER Platform had notable achievements, such as building an extensive resource hub that internal and external key informants identified as filling a critical gap in agriculture research. An enormous volume of evidence on gender and women's empowerment in agri-food systems has been synthesized and/or generated, alliances have been built, gender-specific methods and tools have been refined and made widely available, and gender research and its researchers have been supported to the extent possible in CGIAR. FAO sought out the GENDER Platform to contribute to its critical report, [Status of Women in Agrifood Systems \(2023\)](#), demonstrating both the Platform's relevance and its effectiveness in terms of its ability to meet FAO's request. The Platform successfully contributed as researchers and as partners to frame that strategic FAO report and effectively coordinated contributions from across CGIAR.

A strong factor that contributed to these achievements in effectiveness is the Platform's design, which consists of three modules and Platform's strategic leadership and management team, the SLMT, each of which addresses research needs and themes that could not be addressed by a single CGIAR Center. The GENDER Platform focused on meeting clear demands and engaging with supportive partners to deliver quick wins, and multiple achievements are highlighted in the [2021 GENDER Platform Report](#). Some data suggest that while the three modules engage with one another, actively strengthening that collaboration would likely increase their impact. The GENDER Platform has proven to be an effective mechanism to fill gaps in gender research that could not be addressed by the CRPs, Initiatives, or Centers. A modular decentralized design is one of platform's strengths.

Several mechanisms and factors supported the Platform's achievement of results. One is the Platform's structure; beyond the three Modules, this includes the SLMT, the gender researchers, the gender coordinators, and the gender focal points for Initiatives. In addition, the Platform fills multiple roles, such as providing grants, reviewing, collaborating with partners (such as FAO) to conduct research and assessments, and being proactive. This work includes, for example, advising on the need to integrate gender into the 33 Initiative proposals and adding a gender impact statement to a template for Proposals for CGIAR Initiatives. Other strengths include the GENDER Platform's integral adaptive management approach, which provides flexibility; its attention to addressing gender evidence gaps and emerging evidence needs of gender researchers; and its partners consisting of international organizations, donors, and national governments (further elaborated in the Relevance section). Further, grants were a useful mechanism to produce multiple outputs (though tracking of outcomes and impacts can be improved).

While the evaluation's effectiveness questions mention funding and efficiency, these two findings are better addressed and detailed in the report's Efficiency section.

The effectiveness question explored the GENDER Platform's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements. The GENDER Platform meets the requirements set out by the CGIAR, such as the Plan of Work and Budget and the annual reporting, where the focus is mainly on outputs and how they demonstrate progress toward longer-term outcomes.^{38,39} One identified challenge is related to the fact that CGIAR indicators do not always provide useful management information to the Platform. A second challenge is that Modules do not always have complete, readily accessible monitoring data, which would allow the teams to check achievements more easily against the results framework.⁴⁰

Additionally, the one-year maximum period for grant implementation (due to One CGIAR programming and budgeting constraints; discussed in the efficiency section) reduces potential effectiveness. The short timeframe can make it difficult to respond to the seasonal nature of agriculture and limit further exploration of themes and questions that are particularly important for qualitative research and that often emerge during a research process and lead to richer findings. Further, the evaluation identified cases

³⁸ Limitations mainly existed around the perception of some key informants that at times the GENDER Platform focused on producing what donors needed rather than generating broader public goods. While donor needs and public goods are not mutually exclusive, the perception that the Platform is donor driven is problematic for some key informants.

³⁹ Previously [SRF 2016-2023](#), and since 2022 [CGIAR's Results Framework 2022-2030](#) have directly aligned with the five Impact Areas and Sustainable Development Goals. All Initiatives and Impact Area Platforms will report against the common framework. Status: This objective has largely been achieved, with all Initiatives and Impact Area Platforms reporting results (pg. 6).

⁴⁰ For example, in several cases, the data sources of verification (e.g., yearly surveys) that are listed in the Results Framework and that would support an evaluation do not exist, rendering it difficult to measure these parameters.

where the grant duration was less than one year owing to truncated funding flows, hindering the successful completion of project activities and jeopardizing the grant scheme's effectiveness.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic is an external factor that influenced the Platform in 2020–2021. Multiple data sources strongly suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the GENDER Platform's implementation and its activities, delaying delivery of some results. While the Platform adapted considerably, the adverse influence of a global pandemic needs to be acknowledged. A few data suggest the pandemic's positive influence: some planned in-person events went online, expanding the Platform's reach.

Further illustrative examples of achievements detailed below support how the Platform moved toward "putting equality and inclusion at the heart of food systems research" and strengthening gender researchers. While the GENDER Platform is more than the sum of its parts, the selected examples identify specific strategies, internal and external mechanisms, and factors that contributed to, or inhibited, timely and cost-effective achievement of those results.⁴¹ For additional, specific details on GENDER Platform achievements, please refer to the individual module reports and the GENDER Platform Annual Reports of [2020](#), [2021](#) and [2022](#)⁴² as well as the [CGIAR results dashboard](#).

Key Examples. About 40 CGIAR researchers across the GENDER Platform have contributed to six [background papers](#) and one scene-setting paper for FAO's recently published 2023 report: *The Status of Rural Women in Agrifood Systems*. FAO background papers, work on [gender transformative change](#), a forthcoming climate compendium, and policy engagement and participation in [events and panels](#) all contributed to fostering global critical thinking and influencing the global agenda.

The Alliances Module focused on building partnerships, strengthening capacities to conduct quality gender research and gender-responsive research, and influencing the positioning of gender within CGIAR and in NARES through the leadership of gender researchers. Conferences, training for non-gender specialists, mentorship, and a training repository all contributed to moving toward intended outcomes.

Two annual⁴³ conferences, "[Cultivating Equality: Advancing Gender Research in Agriculture and Food Systems](#)" (2021) and the "[GENDER Science Exchange](#)" (2022), combined, reached more than 591 people from more than 80 countries in real time. Resources placed on the [GENDER resource hub](#) then allowed further engagement with the material.⁴⁴ Since 2021, the Makerere University and Cornell University Gender-responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation (GREAT) initiative has been housed within the Platform; the initiative provides offers courses within NARES, academia, and CGIAR to targeted agricultural researchers (biophysical and social scientists) to advance gender responsiveness as a standard concern in agricultural research. African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) implemented the CGIAR [Gender Researchers' Leadership and Mentoring program](#). The capacity-building initiative trains CGIAR and NARES gender researchers to their improve leadership and management skills and identify career pathways to advance their influence on agenda setting and their capacity to elevate gender research within their institutions. In addition to the training and capacity-building activities that took place during the [annual conferences](#), the Alliances Module trained a total of 146 people in 2021 and 401 people in 2022, and AWARD and GREAT capacity building reached 200 people.⁴⁵

The Alliances Module established and maintained the GENDER Platform's [repository of relevant online and in-person training](#) on gender, agriculture, and food systems. This repository, which is designed for access by the general public, includes training developed by the GENDER Platform as well as training delivered by other organizations and entities. It is pertinent to both CGIAR researchers and external partners.

The Evidence Module team co-designed, contracted, and provided a total value of over US\$3.36 million in grants for 37 gender and agri-food system evidence-related projects from a wide range of organizations. Some projects were global or covered low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), while others were

⁴¹ While cost-effectiveness is mentioned in EQ1, cost-effectiveness questions are more directly addressed in the efficiency section of the evaluation report.

⁴² The 2022 Annual Report was not yet finalized or provided to the evaluation team during the evaluation timeframe.

⁴³ While these take place every year, they alternate between internal (science exchange) and external (cultivating equality)

⁴⁴ "GENDER Platform Science Exchange 2022," draft conference report.

⁴⁵ [Capacity Development Numbers](#), 2021 and 2022.

specific to a particular geographic location. The Evidence Module’s progress toward Intermediate Outcome 1.1 (planned for 2026)—“utilize the evidence on what works for women’s empowerment in agriculture to inform strategic investments”—was evident through uptake by African governments of the climate-agriculture-gender-inequity hotspots mapping work and the near completion of 37 projects (EGMs, SRs, scoping reviews, and gendered analyses of big data sets). The evidence of outcomes with regard to the EGMs, SRs, and scoping reviews has not yet been tracked. Progress was made toward evidence for gender theory development and testing, with some evidence explainers addressing relevant gender theory, and the hotspots work includes reviews of gender transformative approaches. Outcome tracking needs to be initiated to assess progress toward Intermediate Outcome 1.2 (planned for 2026)—“CRPs, CGIAR centers, and NARES test and evaluate innovations and pro-poor, transformative approaches developed from the evidence base before going to scale.” The progress toward Intermediate Outcome 1.3 (planned for 2026)—“CRPs, CGIAR centers, and NARES improve the quality of gender research evidence generated”—was reflected in the two EGMs and six systematic and four scoping reviews that have been generated by organizations and advisory committees with relevant expertise to synthesize the available evidence. Plain-language [Evidence Explainers](#) have been created on 18 topics to date (outputs 1.3.1), though not in one of the forms intended (policy briefs).

Within the Evidence Module, BMGF funds supported, among other areas, the development of a [gender and climate-smart agriculture \(CSA\)](#) learning agenda and resource library. IDRC funds supported the development of activities related to the [climate-agriculture-gender-inequity hotspots](#). Through a [specific mapping methodology](#) to highlight areas, the EM, Platform Science Officer, and CIMMYT and IFPRI researchers added further dimensions to earlier hotspot mapping work done by CGIAR’s CCAFS⁴⁶ (Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security) CRP. The GENDER Platform’s website also displays the growing series of [Evidence Explainers](#).

Three projects in the Indian state of Odisha were initiated in close partnership with the local government and other local stakeholders. The first project focused on developing simple-to-track indicators of women’s resilience and empowerment along with a dashboard and resource hub in response to requests from the local government for this evidence and related tools. The second study focuses on the gendered impacts of male outmigration, and the third study is a participatory foresight analysis around transforming food systems and cultures. All three projects are projected to finish by the end of 2023.

The Methods Module synthesized and shared existing methods and tools, supported the development of new methods and tools, and incentivized and guided the application of gender research tools and methods within and beyond CGIAR through capacity support and its use of Communities of Practice (COPs). Qualitative data strongly indicated that the Methods Module contributed to capacity strengthening and innovation on gender research tools and methods for CGIAR, NARES, universities, and NGOs to achieve gender equity and equality outcomes.

A key achievement for the Methods Module is supporting the broader use of the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) within CGIAR and its partners. WEAI is suite of quantitative and qualitative tools that explore women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector. Below are two examples of WEAI-based tools supported by the Methods Module:

- [Women’s Empowerment in Livestock Index](#) (WELI) measures empowerment in livestock and crop agriculture and focuses specifically on key areas of livestock production, such as animal health, breeding and feeding, and the use of livestock products, such as animal-source-food processing and marketing (International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), 2023).
- [Women’s Empowerment in Fisheries and Aquaculture Index](#) (WEFI) measures empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in fisheries and aquaculture to identify ways to overcome obstacles and constraints (CGIAR GENDER Platform, 2023).

Further, the Methods Module researched and reviewed tools and methods around [nutrition; value chains, markets, and entrepreneurship; design and dissemination of agricultural technologies; labor and time](#)

⁴⁶ Hotspot mapping under CCAFS includes the following: Chanana-Nag, N., Aggarwal, P.K. (2018) Woman in agriculture, and climate risks: hotspots for development. *Climatic Change*. 158,13–27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-018-2233-z>; and Khatri-Chhetri, A., Aggarwal, P.K., Joshi, P.K., Vyas, S. (2017). Farmers’ prioritization of climate smart agriculture (CSA) technologies. *Agr Syst*. 151, 184–191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2016.10.005>.

[use](#); [institutions and governance](#); and gender and resilient agriculture, all located on the resource hub. Two illustrative examples are provided, one from 2021 and one from 2022.

- [Value chains](#) – This work provides tools and methods for gender research and integration in agricultural value chain, market, and entrepreneurship projects (2021). It delivers tools to understand women’s roles in markets and value chains, and frameworks that can be used to address gender-related barriers to women’s full participation.
- [Nutrition](#) – This work reviews measures and indicators for assessing the relationship between women’s empowerment and nutrition (2022). It seeks to understand the relationship between women’s empowerment, behavior (e.g., diet diversity), and biological outcomes and their causes (e.g., stunting). It stimulates innovation around gaps in how these relationships are assessed and identifies what components of women’s empowerment hold promise for influencing diet and nutrition outcomes.

Further achievements include [the gender and breeding initiative](#), which brings together plant and animal breeders and social scientists to develop a strategy for gender-responsive breeding with supporting methods, tools and practices. The Platform also supported integration of gender into the webinar series “[Climate Change and Plant Health: Impact, Implications and the Role of Research for Adaptation and Mitigation](#)” and into “[Considering Gender in Research: An Ethics and Standards Toolkit](#)” (2022).

Effective and efficient ways of communicating provide natural learning mechanisms for engaging with a broad spectrum of people. The GENDER Platform engages several communication mechanisms, such as Twitter, [newsletters](#), and [virtual discussion groups](#), which provide effective and efficient mechanisms of engaging with a global community that foster learning, and the sharing of learning. Most interview data that discussed communication mentioned newsletters as an effective mechanism for sharing information. Relatedly, the Platform’s virtual resource hub effectively provides access to gender research publications, methods, tools, and insights from CGIAR and beyond and is a central component in the Platform’s [Research Exchange System](#). Between its launch on March 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021, the resource hub had a total of [50,263 visits, exceeding](#) by 151% the visits garnered by the now-retired GENDER website during the same period in 2020. A 2022–23 survey of GENDER resource hub users (n = 69) indicated that 82.6% are non-CGIAR users, 39.1% are development professionals, and 36.2% are researchers. Nearly all respondents (89.9%) scored the resource hub as “highly useful.”

3.3 Efficiency

Key Findings. The evaluation identified a number of findings related to CGIAR-level funding and administration that affect the work of the Platform. First, the CGIAR funding structure creates uncertainty for all Platforms, CRPs, and now Initiatives in terms of how much money will be allocated each year and when it will be confirmed and disbursed. The annual uncertainty around the funding amounts and expected disbursement timing negatively impacts the GENDER Platform’s outputs and outcomes, though the Platform’s grant management, flexibility, adaptability, and researcher and staff dedication mitigated many challenges. Second, the move to One CGIAR and changes in administrative and financial structures created significant challenges, delaying the approval of activities, funding, and contracting between CGIAR Centers. Third, CGIAR funding is assigned on a calendar-year basis. This one-year timeframe is extremely short for complex research projects, especially those involving the co-learning and co-creation that are often a part of transformative equitable and sustainable food systems work. Fourth, the one-year budget, and budget delays, resulted in human resource challenges such as difficulties hiring and retaining needed and quality staff. Fifth, another CGIAR human resources challenge was the minimal paid time allocated to gender focal points, gender researchers, and gender coordinators, which negatively influences gender outputs and outcomes.⁴⁷ Sixth, some donors’ funding cycles created disbursement challenges. Finally, the lack of consistent CGIAR leadership support for gender research negatively affects the GENDER Platform’s efficiency (and effectiveness).

⁴⁷ See also Annex 5 for related survey results on staff time. The [2021 Annual Report](#) also listed external partners in its internal partner section, such as BMGF.

Key Examples. The GENDER Platform experienced funding constraints, and at times confusion, owing to uncertainties about budget amounts and release timing. Budgets are confirmed by CGIAR mid-year, at times following a series of contradictory CGIAR communications on funding amounts. Further, the lack of clarity on funding carryover implied that all funding had to be used within that same calendar year. The funding delays have had enormous negative impacts on the contracting, planning, and implementation of the research projects. Below are quotes that illustrate these findings.

Challenge with the project was that disbursement of the money took long, the project was supposed to start in February, but only got funding in July ... and then had to start putting the team in place (grantee).

It has been a challenge running these grants because of the funding systems and the changing CG and the complexity of how do you work across CG Centers, etc., but I am a fan of encouraging new and innovative research at the frontiers (internal GP respondent).

On a very practical level, the whole budgeting is still a mess and a constraint. We can't invest long term, because we are told we can only invest every year, whereas the GENDER Platform should be able to invest in long-term things (internal CGIAR respondent).

While these examples come from the Evidence Module data, budgeting issues affected all modules and the GENDER Platform in general, making it difficult, for instance, to attract, hire, and/or retain staff (e.g., research assistants). While interview data suggested that CGIAR Initiatives are also reported to face similar uncertainties around budget amounts and release times, their three-year work plans and budgets ease the constraints.

Box 2: Funding Hiccups and Bottlenecks

The challenge with human resources needs to be elaborated. Namely, funding delays created additional challenges in recruiting and retaining staff: when annual budgets are not confirmed or delivered as anticipated, it becomes difficult to hire people. It can be difficult to attract the “right” candidates if contracts are reduced due to funding delays and/or the lack of certainty around budgets across years; these budgeting issues further create challenges around retaining and expanding GENDER Platform capacity. Relatedly, human resources have constrained the GENDER Platform’s outputs and outcomes; the move to One CGIAR has meant CGIAR researchers had to invest significant amounts of time contributing to new research programs (Initiatives). This has limited gender researchers’ availability across CGIAR to participate in Platform activities (including capacity-strengthening activities and alliance building). Further, the data collected through the Methods Module expanded on how the uncertainty around funding makes it hard to retain good researchers, as they often shift to more stable projects. Finally, early-career researchers interviewed stated that they felt targeted, as they are the first to be let go when funds are not available or are limited.

Therefore, the uncertain funding and one-year time periods raised serious challenges for the GENDER Platform. The evaluative evidence suggests that the GENDER Platform tended to use two strategies and/or approaches to mitigate these efficiency challenges. First, primary qualitative data strongly indicated that the GENDER Platform’s management acted efficiently through its strategic decisions and adaptive, flexible grant management. Second, the Platform achieved multiple outputs with singular events. For instance, convenings, trainings, and workshops support multiple Platform objectives: advancing capacity development, partnerships, and coalition building; increasing the visibility of CGIAR gender research and the Platform; and building coherence.

In addition to the pooled CGIAR funding, the GENDER Platform attracted additional bilateral funding in specific work areas—gender dimensions of climate-smart agriculture, and climate inequity hotspot mapping—from two funders, BMGF and IDRC, respectively. However, how and when donors supplied funds raised challenges.

For instance, the CGIAR planning and budget calendar year cycle, and its budget allocation, created an issue for the GENDER Platform and funding from one of its major donors. The donor approved a specific set of activities and outputs starting in November 2020 and ending in March 2023 (i.e., three-year funding). The donor disbursed the funding to the CGIAR for the GENDER Platform’s use. The multiyear amount was credited in the pooled CGIAR buckets that are allocated and managed annually. Therefore, despite the multiyear funding, the GENDER Platform had to work within the CGIAR yearly based system

constraints, and secure annual budget approval. That created challenges for the projects and their human resources (e.g. needing to let go of staff due to the yearly budget, despite the reality that there was three-year funding for them).

Thus, the donor’s three-year funding that intended to support the longer time frames needed by the Platform and its work, was severely hampered by the CGIAR systems.

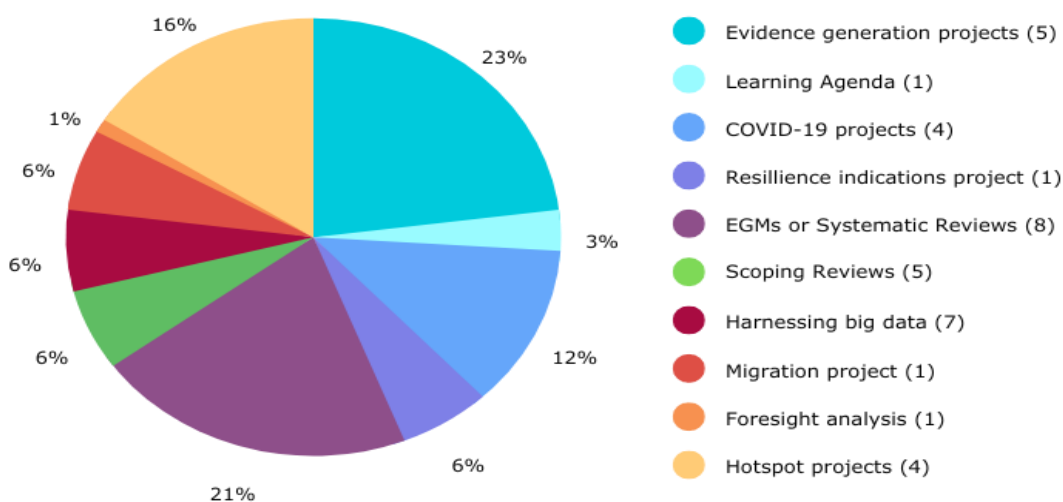
The Alliances Module provides specific examples that resonate with data identified in the other two modules and the larger GENDER Platform. For the Alliances Module, the move to One CGIAR and changes in administrative and financial structures created significant challenges for funding and contractual arrangements with AWARD, GREAT, and the International Potato Center (CIP). This was in part due to a change in the budget approval process and the mechanism for distributing funds to participating Centers. Until 2021, budgets were approved at a Central CGIAR level and then distributed to a host Center (ILRI), which entered into Program Partnership Agreements (PPAs) with partners. In 2022 CGIAR launched a new mechanism under which funds would flow directly from the CGIAR Systems Office (SO) to CGIAR partners without passing through a host institution or Center. The complexity in balancing communications and needs of CGIAR Centers and Initiatives and Platforms led to significant delays in formal approval of funding allocations across the entire system. As the CGIAR program and funding cycle still operates on a strictly annual basis, it is unclear how much funding will be received beyond December 31 of the year. As a result most partners undertake their work in the short space of time between approval of funds (which was mid-year in 2022) and the year’s end. This not only constrains the work but is also a major risk to partnership building in the medium to long term.

Funding delays significantly affected activities and outputs for all individual modules and the GENDER Platform. The Alliances Module provides the specific example of CIP, which had to wait until June 2022 to receive confirmation that they could begin programming activities planned for the 2020–21 timeframe. The annual program cycle in CGIAR and the lack of certainty over whether funds will be approved for a following year also meant that they were rushed into finalizing project activities by the end of 2022 when it would have been more appropriate to continue some activities into 2023.

Similarly, the 2022 Leadership and Mentoring program delivered by AWARD was impacted by delays in confirming annual Platform budgets: the envisaged 18-month timeframe for the training had to be put on hiatus for six months in 2022, thereby significantly reducing the implementation window and interrupting the momentum of the program. The Evidence Module identified challenges with contracting between CGIAR Centers, which they identified as extremely slow, cumbersome, and more difficult than contracting with external partners. This situation seriously impacted on start times, activities, and timeframes.

Despite these budgeting, funding flows, and resource challenges, the Evidence Module, with a grant budget of US\$3.4 million, is responsible for 37 projects being designed, contracted, implemented, and reviewed in a two-year period. Figure 3 provides insight into the breadth of project types covered.

Figure 3. Proportion of Evidence Module grant expenditure by project type, 2020–2022



Data source: Evidence Module lead.

Finally, evidence across modules and the SLMT pointed out that lack of engagement by leadership decreases the Platform's efficiency (and effectiveness). For example, while courses such as AWARD can teach researchers how to position themselves within their institutions and make voices on gender heard, leaders need to see the value in having gender researchers embedded in the work from the outset, opening their scientific areas to gender to feed into overall CGIAR research. When leaders do not integrate a gender lens from inception, projects—in the best-case scenario—depend on gender researchers to step in and provide a gender lens on an ad hoc basis, creating bandwidth issues for already overstretched gender researchers.

As mentioned in the relevance section, the limited understanding of gender in agricultural and food systems also impedes the GENDER Platform's efficiency. For example, the Platform is hampered by the failure of leadership to engage at critical moments (see the Ukrainian example, p. 14). The Platform, not being engaged in the beginning, then had to make a considerable effort to "undo" CGIAR's gender-blind messaging.

3.4 Coherence

3.4.1 Internal Coherence

Key Findings. The GENDER Platform's structure and activities suggest that it is wide-reaching in its engagement in CGIAR, though some data suggest that at times CGIAR leadership fails to invite the Gender Platform to critical processes (e.g., criteria for initiative proposals, communications, and the response to the food crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine). There is some interaction among CGIAR gender researchers in the various CGIAR Centers through, for example, the GENDER Platform-hosted quarterly townhalls and other meetings, and there is evidence that the Platform formally strengthens these interactions. However, some interview data encourage the Platform to continue to strengthen internal linkages among gender researchers, especially emerging gender researchers, and non-gender researchers, given the CGIAR and other contexts. While there are examples of interaction among the GENDER Platform's Modules, such as weekly meetings, at times the Modules' work appears somewhat siloed, suggesting that despite the close and positive engagement among the Platform SLMT members, Module synergies are not maximized. Finally, an ongoing challenge has been reaching CGIAR leadership with gender capacity-building efforts (though capacity-building efforts at other levels are highly praised). Interview data suggest that reaching leaders and researchers in the biophysical sciences, particularly men, in CGIAR, is critical. If these groups are not reached, the GENDER Platform's influence may be curtailed. However, the GENDER Platform needs these groups to be supportive and inviting for the Platform's capacity building and support to be effective. Finally, there is strong evidence of the GENDER Platform engaging with multiple internal partners in various ways.

Examples. The GENDER Platform's three-module design was strategic and provided focus and a realistic approach to the Platform's implementation. The linking of the modules was facilitated through weekly meetings between the SLMT and module leaders to discuss activities and progress. However, strategic coordination and exploitation of the overlaps and synergies between the modules were not maximized. The GENDER Platform identified several examples of module cross-collaboration. They work together on working papers; on activities such as chapters in the FAO's report *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*; on conferences, where the Evidence and Methods Modules have played a role in developing the program; on [The Science Exchange](#); and on policy engagement. The Evidence Explainers are written by researchers from CGIAR and beyond, while the Evidence Module oversees their review.

To build cohesiveness, the Alliances Module conducted a capacity and needs assessment at the outset, identifying the needs and knowledge gaps among researchers, and it addressed these areas through capacity-building activities. The capacity-building agenda organized by the Alliances Module has improved communication, collaboration, and thinking among CGIAR researchers, strengthening gender-focused work in CGIAR. However, some key constraints remain, such as gender researcher bandwidth, and some Centers providing little support or show little enthusiasm for gender programming. AWARD supported activities that led to the formation of an online community that enabled participants to continue to share thoughts, research, and perspectives beyond the formal training. Over 90% of survey participants reported that the Alliances module's activities (e.g., AWARD, GREAT, the Cultivating Equality Conference)

had strengthened capacities to improve the quality of research within CGIAR. Several features of design, inputs, processes, and outputs of the Evidence Module complemented and strengthened gender-focused work in CGIAR, particularly around research collaboration between Centers.

Finally, the GENDER Platform engages with all CGIAR Centers. The 2021 Annual Report provides a rich depth of work examples with AfricaRice, Alliance of Bioversity–CIAT, CIP, CIMMYT, ICARDA, IFPRI, IITA, ILRI, IRRI, IWMI, WorldFish, and ICRISAT among others (pp. 43–46).⁴⁸

3.4.2 Internal Coherence with New Mandate

Key Finding. There were mixed findings on how the Platform should engage with youth and social inclusion going forward. While there were limited data⁴⁹ on how the Platform’s work transitioned into the new Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion Impact Area, some evidence was identified. Currently there is a lack of clear direction on how these different aspects are to be addressed in one Platform. Nearly all interviews referred to the Platform as the GENDER Platform and spoke predominantly about gender, though some of the GENDER Platform’s various events and reports address youth. Interview data suggested mixed reviews of the expanded mandate.

Themes. The findings are grouped into three themes. The first theme is “neutral.” Here, data suggested that gender is about intersectionality (feminist approach) and always involves youth, social inclusion, and other categories. Some of the more neutral responses could be interpreted as positive, as a few people noted that that title calls attention to these areas but changes nothing about the Platform’s focus. The second theme was “concern.” Respondents questioned the Platform’s focus, asking questions such as, how does the title shift focus and funding? Or now that the Platform is divided in three ways, does the Platform need three strategies, funded separately?⁵⁰ How would dividing the platform into three foci dilute a focus on gender? Who conducts the youth and social inclusion research? A different concern was that the mandate signifies CGIAR’s lack of understanding of gender and its significance to agricultural research. A third theme is a negative one. Some respondents noted that this is a gender platform, not a “woman’s platform.” Therefore, it should not be a “youth” platform; youth and social inclusion are categories, whereas gender is about relationships.

Data suggest that there are several gaps in capacity in CGIAR regarding the GENDER Platform provision of support to CGIAR in the new Impact Area, particularly related to intersectionality, social inclusion, and youth and designing for impact. The GENDER Platform has commissioned position papers that aim to assist the Platform’s direction with its new mandate and promote a clarified focus.

3.4.3 External Coherence

Key Findings. Data suggest strong linkages to external (non-CGIAR) gender experts and donors, but linkages to regional organizations, governments, NARES, and NGOs varied. Some data suggest positive linkages are being built or strengthened with various external organizations and stakeholders through training events, workshops, and other engagements that support coherence. Finally, multiple external partners valued the GENDER Platform as a “one-stop shop,” suggesting the Platform is filling a gap among key external organizations that supports relevant global gender policy discourses.

Examples. The Alliance Module, together with Michigan State University, in 2021 undertook a Capacity and Needs Assessment (CNA) to understand how CGIAR and thus the GENDER Platform could improve the capacities needed to achieve the Platform’s goals and CGIAR’s aspirations to have an impact on gender inequality, youth, and social inclusion⁵¹. Trainings such as the Gender-responsive Plant Breeding Courses (via GREAT) launched a research cluster in East and West Africa to encourage participants to convene and share ideas and perspectives on an ongoing basis. AWARD brought together gender

The [2021 Annual Report](#) also listed external partners in its internal partner section, such as BMGF.

⁴⁹ CGIAR’s [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) states that the Platform will “offer rewarding opportunities to 267 million young people who are not in employment, education, or training” (p. 19). The Strategy does not specify a focus, target, or definition for social inclusion.

⁵⁰ Note that the [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) only addresses gender equality and youth; it does not define or set targets for social inclusion.

⁵¹Zaremba, H., Elias, M., Rietveld, A., Marimo, P. and Kropff, W. 2022. Capacities and Needs Assessment of Gender Research in CGIAR. Nairobi, Kenya: CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/121980>

researchers from nine CGIAR Centers and three NARES. Further, the GENDER Platform engaged with a wide list of identified needs. Limited interview data suggest mixed knowledge of the GENDER Platform among NARES.

There is ample evidence that the GENDER Platform engages with some donors (e.g., BMGF, IDRC, GIZ, FCDO) and multilateral organizations (e.g., FAO, ADB) and contributes to relevant policy discourses. For example, the IDRC funded the Evidence Module's work on [climate-agriculture-gender-inequality hotspots](#) mapping analysis, which was followed by ground-truthing projects in Bangladesh and Zambia as well as investigations of what works. BMGF supported gender- and climate-related work, which led to the climate-smart agriculture (CSA) learning agenda projects. AGRA engaged the GENDER Platform to act as the knowledge partner for its Value4Her initiative. Additionally, FAO approached the GENDER Platform to implement a stocktaking exercise of [gender-responsive COVID-19 policies in Africa](#), and more recently to contribute background papers for *Status of Women in Agrifood Systems report*. The GENDER Platform has not made sufficient strategic linkages with continental African umbrella agri-food system organizations such as the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)⁵² and the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS).⁵³ However, the Platform has engaged with AGRA.

In the Evidence Module, linkages were established through awarding grants to ICCDR; the University of California, Davis; Climate Policy Initiative; CARE; Global Knowledge Initiative; LEAD-Krea University; Campbell Collaboration South Asia; Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad; Indian Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research and Education; Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad; and the Foundation for Agrarian Studies. CGIAR gender experts led the COVID-19 project and the evidence generation project, and a mix of CGIAR and external researchers led the big dataset harnessing studies. The Methods Module engages with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders through its emphasis on tools and methods. For example, the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)⁵⁴ has been used by more than 246 organizations across 58 countries⁵⁵. Further, the Methods Module supports three [communities of practice](#) that involve multiple stakeholder groups: Engendering Data (a blog for researchers, policy makers, and development implementers to pose questions, engage in discussions, and share resources about promising tools and methods for gender research related to food systems, agriculture, and food security); Gender Transformative Research Methodologies, and WE-Validate (supports researchers and practitioners to share information and good practices in developing and validating women's empowerment metrics).

3.5 Sustainability and Learning

Key Findings. The GENDER Platform's strategy of a multipronged approach to achieving outcomes strengthens its potential sustainability. Technical training, leadership training, mentoring, CoPs, resource hub, meetings, sharing of information, inclusion of multiple perspectives through multiple platforms, and open calls for research provide a few examples of how the Platform engages a variety of internal and external audiences (though some data, such as interview and survey data, suggest minimal contact with some key stakeholder groups). This likely suggests an ability to effectively engage with longer-term influences, changes, and impacts. The GENDER Platform itself is likely sustainable as there is a global agenda (e.g., SDGs) backed internally and externally calling for a focus on gender equality in agriculture and food systems, which includes strong donor support. However, five identified challenges may weaken the Platform's potentially strong position with regard to sustainability:

5. Funding flows and continued uncertainty around funding amounts and disbursement times affect the Platform's effectiveness and efficiency.

⁵² FARA is the apex continental organization responsible for coordinating and advocating for agricultural research for development (AR4D). FARA serves as the technical arm of the African Union Commission on matters concerning agricultural science, technology, and innovation.

⁵³ AFAAS is a continental platform for mutual learning and innovation among agricultural extension and advisory services providers across Africa. The AFAAS's goal is to enhance use of improved knowledge and innovations for improving productivity oriented toward individual and national development objectives. AFAAS operates through multistakeholder country fora that embrace public and private actors in national agricultural innovation systems.

⁵⁴ The WEAI existed prior to the GENDER Platform; the results identified are not only related to the GENDER Platform.

⁵⁵ USAID Feed the Future, 2023.

6. Key informant interviews noted the attrition of some of CGIAR's more experienced gender researchers and highlighted how younger and emerging gender researchers do not bring the experience or clout often needed to effectively engage both internally and externally.
7. There is currently insufficient expertise and resources to cover the GENDER Platform's recently (October 2022) expanded mandate on youth and social inclusion.
8. Some data suggest the expanded Platform will stretch resources.
9. There is limited tracking, and therefore limited deep understanding of what works, and for whom, in terms of the uptake of the GENDER Platform's outputs (i.e., empirical understanding of outcome- and impact-level results).⁵⁶

The GENDER Platform team is aware of these limitations.

Examples. Universities remain a key external partner, as demonstrated through the 2021 Cultivating Equality Conference, convened with Wageningen University, and the heavy attendance and presentations by academia. By opening the event to external stakeholders, the GENDER Platform introduced a new and expanded audience to its work and activities, as well as exposing CGIAR scientists to broader research. FAO's request for contributions to its 2023 *Status of Women in Agrifood Systems* report, suggests the quality of scientific research coming out of CGIAR and its high standing among multilateral organizations.

Consistent Platform-level reflection and re-strategizing likely help the GENDER Platform remain relevant and contribute to its sustainability, which is at the same time hampered by a lack of specific, informative monitoring and evaluative data tailored to the Platform's needs. The SLMT follows several processes that encourage reflecting and re-strategizing, as appropriate. For example, the SLMT reflects weekly on what is and is not working and identifies needed changes. In 2022 the SLMT had a three-day externally facilitated reflection meeting, which then informed their engagement with a two-day reflection meeting with the Gender research coordinators from across CGIAR. Several members of the SLMT reported using these reflections and experiences to strengthen the GENDER Platform. At the same time, data suggested that module time pressures and workloads resulted in fewer opportunities for strategic reflection with regard to the module portfolios, a struggle to balance the "appropriate" number of activities and other efforts to produce outputs, and other activities that are core to the GENDER Platform (e.g., co-design of evidence activities with key stakeholders).

The Evidence Module started with engagement of select researchers and partner organizations to kick-start the process of identifying evidence gaps and synthesizing evidence using standard methods like Evidence Gap Maps and systematic reviews based on published literature. These projects had advisory committees that guided the process and outputs. The climate-smart agriculture and gender learning agenda was co-created with a diverse set of stakeholders from within and beyond CGIAR, and these would form the basis for subsequent activities. A range of researchers from within and beyond CGIAR were invited to contribute to Evidence Explainers. As evident from the survey and interviews, several stakeholders found the outputs produced so far useful for their work. Communication and systematic engagement plans are being developed to enable achievement of the outcomes in the timeframes set out. As the Evidence Module team learned from experience, it started engaging with stakeholders to understand their evidence needs and respond to their demands.

The three most recently funded Evidence Module grants, which are focused on the Indian state of Odisha (formerly Orissa), are an example. One grant was designed in response to direct demand from the Odisha state government. The government requested the development of "simple-to-operate and track" women's empowerment and resilience indicators and a dashboard. Another grant, a participatory foresight analysis, is being co-designed and co-investigated by wide groups of stakeholders. The third grant was designed in response to the state government's need to better understand the multidimensional impacts of male migration. The government identified huge knowledge gaps with regard to the [gendered impacts of migration](#) when migrant workers returned home just before and after COVID-19 lockdowns. The Evidence Module team, academic researchers leading the study, and local-level state government officials are designing the study and shaping the questions that will be used to gather the needed data.

⁵⁶ For example, there are no CGIAR-level measurement of engagement.

Finally, the Platform is formalizing and institutionalizing opportunities for research exchange, learning, and knowledge sharing, including through its [virtual resource hub](#), its [research exchange system](#), its [newsletters](#), and its [communities of practice](#).

4. Conclusions

The GENDER Impact Platform has been mandated to set directions to enable CGIAR to generate maximum impact on gender equality in agriculture and food systems by providing cutting-edge robust evidence and methods and by setting strategic directions for current and future research efforts. There is scope for the GENDER Platform to consider a number of key areas, such as the two-million-dollar gender financing gap for entrepreneurship in Africa, and the nexus of young girls and agriculture. The evaluation team assessed the GENDER Platform against five criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability to provide an overall assessment of the GENDER Platform. The GENDER Impact Platform is moving toward its mandated goals despite the challenges faced. The Platform is relevant, particularly given that internal and external stakeholders sometimes do not understand the importance of gender; the Platform is effective, though its efficiency is constrained by CGIAR processes related to funding flows and human resources; the Platform is mostly coherent; and finally, the Platform is mostly sustainable, with the funding flows and human resources again being the main challenge. These synthesized findings strongly suggest that the Platform is a critical investment for CGIAR.

Relevance. The Platform's objectives, projects, and results, intended and otherwise, respond to the policies and priorities identified in CGIAR's [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) and are relevant to global (e.g., SDGs), regional, and national stakeholders' contexts. These objectives are particularly relevant given that within CGIAR, while scientific evidence demonstrates the critical link between gender and agriculture, evaluative evidence suggests that gender in agriculture and food systems is not always appreciated or understood and therefore not included in key decision-making points or communications.

The GENDER Platform's structure, with its three modules, SLMT, gender research coordinators, gender focal points, and gender researchers, supports the Platform's relevance as it engages all CGIAR Centers in multiple ways. Further, the GENDER Platform ensured its relevance by adapting to emerging needs in a dynamic context (e.g., gendered impacts of COVID-19-related national policies, gendered climate change adaptation opportunities, country-level needs). The examples in this evaluation report demonstrate a plethora of approaches and results that meet varying needs for gender research and show that the Platform is well placed to lead CGIAR into a stronger position on gender equality (and potentially on youth and social inclusion) in agriculture and food systems.

Effectiveness. The Platform demonstrates significant achievements in a short space of time. The multiple achievements highlighted in its Annual Reports ([2020](#) and [2021](#)) and in the outputs available on the [CGIAR results dashboard](#) highlight how the Platform has moved toward "putting equality and inclusion at the heart of food systems research," and some achievements are planned for the longer term. The evaluation team identified an enormous volume of evidence on gender and women's empowerment in agri-food systems that had been synthesized and/or generated, alliances that were built, and as evident on the resource hub, numerous gender-specific methods and tools that have been refined and made widely available. To carry out these achievements, the Platform met clear demands and engaged with supportive partners to deliver results. The GENDER Platform has demonstrated that it can be a mechanism to fill gaps in gender research that could not be addressed by the Initiatives or the Centers.

Several other mechanisms and factors supported achievement of these results: the Platform's structure; the multiple roles it fills within the spheres of research and services, such as providing grants, reviewing and advising on integrating gender into the 33 Initiative proposals, and collaborating with partners such as FAO to conduct research and assessments; its integral adaptive management approach (flexibility); its continual demonstration of meeting stakeholders' needs (further elaborated in the section on relevance); and the weekly meetings and engagement among the management team. Further, the grants were a useful mechanism to bring about multiple outputs that would not have otherwise been realized. Outputs and progress toward longer-term outcomes were presented in the two annual reports available (2020 and 2021), although some interview data suggest that tracking of outputs and outcomes could be improved. At the same time, a review of all the gathered data suggests that while the three modules engage with one another, further collaboration would support the Platform's efforts.

One challenge facing CGIAR concerns its human resources. Senior gender researchers are reported to be leaving CGIAR, while younger gender researchers face organizational, cultural, and institutional challenges for implementing, and supporting the implementation of, gender research. Further, the minimal time allocated to gender researchers in CGIAR in general, and the limited time provided to gender focal points, makes it difficult to optimally support gender outputs and outcomes.

With regard to monitoring and evaluation, the GENDER Platform adheres to CGIAR's annual reporting requirements. However, evidence gathered during the evaluation suggests that some data collected are not necessarily useful, or used, to assess, reflect, and learn. The reasons vary, though the overwhelming reason appears to be that some data required by CGIAR are not necessarily useful for the Platform's learning and reflection.

Finally, CGIAR's one-year funding and planning timeframe poses a particular challenge for implementing grants, reducing their potential effectiveness. These one-year grants were further hampered by delayed CGIAR funding flows, which, combined with a lack of clarity over whether funds could be carried forward from previous years, meant that one-year projects were expected to produce the same results in, for example, six months. And the impacts of the global pandemic cannot be disregarded.

Efficiency. The GENDER Platform is mostly efficient, though hampered by the identified CGIAR structural inefficiencies, which are nearly all outside the Platform's control. These include one-year budgets, budget delays, unpredictable funding amounts, and/or expected disbursal timing. These challenges resulted in inefficiencies beyond the GENDER Platform's sphere of influence, including challenges with hiring and retaining needed quality staff. When a gender researcher or other person needs to complete a one-year project in a shorter time span, it might suggest efficiency, but it also signifies extreme pressure placed on personnel. The decentralized, modular design of the Platform across several centers appears to be relevant and sustainable and contributes to efficiency.

Coherence (Internal). The GENDER Platform's structure and activities suggest that the Platform is wide-reaching in its engagement in CGIAR. However, coherence is not solely dependent on the GENDER Platform; others need to be willing to engage and invest in the GENDER Platform and its efforts. The difficulty persists in engaging researchers, particularly men, from the biophysical sciences, who need to be reached and be willing to engage. The Platform supports its gender researchers through, among other things, town halls, communities of practice, and regular webinars. However, interview data also suggest that emerging gender researchers require additional and consistent support. Further, the GENDER Platform engages with multiple internal and external partners to conduct a wide variety of projects.

Coherence (Mandate). Nearly all interview data suggest that people refer to the Platform as the GENDER Platform, and interviewees spoke predominantly about gender, indicating coherence with the Platform's mandate up until October 2022, when this evaluation focal period ended. There is currently a lack of crystal-clear direction on how the Platform will engage with gender equality, youth, and social inclusion in one Platform. Internal and external qualitative interview data suggest mixed views on the expanded mandate. However, some of the GENDER Platform's events and reports address the topic of youth.

Coherence (External). Data suggest linkages to external (non-CGIAR) gender experts and donors through multiple mechanisms (e.g., listservs, newsletters, events, workshops, grants), demonstrating varied levels of linkages to regional organizations, governments, NARES, and NGOs. Several key stakeholders identified the GENDER Platform as a "one-stop shop" for external organizations that engage in relevant global policy gender and agriculture discourses. A number of activities demonstrate its external engagement, such as engagement with universities (Cultivating Equality), demand from development partners (FAO's *Status of Women in Agrifood Systems* report), demand from policymakers (AGENS⁵⁷ hotspots), and its resource hub and knowledge management.

Sustainability and learning. The GENDER Platform has a multipronged strategy to achieve its planned outcomes, engages with multiple and varied stakeholders that are both internal and external to CGIAR, and focuses on a topic of recognized global importance. Further, the Platform has demonstrated effective adaptive management when faced with a global pandemic, as well as strategic flexibility when faced with funding disbursement and other budget challenges. All of these factors suggest its potential longer-term

⁵⁷ African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGENS) <https://agnesafrika.org/>

sustainability. Several challenges, however, may impact its sustainability, with CGIAR funding flows being the most immediate. Also influencing the potential sustainability of the Platform's work are human resource challenges across CGIAR, such as fewer experienced gender researchers, a heavier reliance on emerging gender researchers, and a lack of budget support and time for gender researchers. These factors could make it difficult to develop sufficient expertise and resources in CGIAR in youth and social inclusion, posing a challenge to the GENDER Platform given its expanded mandate.

5. Recommendations

A good recommendation is an actionable, informed opinion that provides advice on how to change something. In evaluation, a good recommendation needs to be (1) linked to the evaluation findings, (2) which are connected to the evaluation questions, (3) grounded in local contextual knowledge, social science theory, and/or expert knowledge, and (4) actionable (Podems, 2018⁵⁸). The recommendation section first summarizes the challenges encountered (drawn from the evaluation evidence) and then provides actionable, focused recommendations for the GENDER Platform and CGIAR management.

5.1 For action by the GENDER Platform

Recommendation 1: Strengthen partnerships

Data suggest the need for a broader engagement within the AR4D landscape to ensure the Platform's cohesiveness, effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency, with a specific focus on NARES.

- 1.1 Continue to engage with key identified partners to identify comparative advantages.
- 1.2 Co-develop transparent criteria to continue to identify evidence, methods, and partnership needs.
- 1.3 Co-identify and prioritize research gaps and activities with key partners, which will likely vary. Use stakeholder map results and transparent criteria to identify and prioritize research gaps and activity needs. The GENDER Platform needs to carefully balance broad studies that synthesize evidence from across different LMIC geographies with dive-deep studies co-developed with local stakeholders to meet specific gender evidence needs.

Recommendation 2: Improve module coherence

While Module leads engage with one another, the Modules operate to some degree in silos, which reduces the Platform's potential effectiveness.

- 2.1 Expand on current engagements to further exploit potential for the whole Platform, including the three Modules, to inform pathways to sustainable, equitable gender outcomes in food systems.
- 2.2 Identify and prioritize additional strategic engagement points for the Platform, and work with the three Modules to achieve them.

Recommendation 3: Track results

Findings regarding the use of M&E are mixed. On the one hand, the Platform reports its outputs and progress toward outcomes on an annual basis, in compliance with CGIAR reporting requirements. On the other hand, qualitative data showed that some M&E processes, such as impact assessment and other information needs, are not well covered by the Platform. It may be that information required by CGIAR M&E is not sufficient to fully tell the Platform's story or guide management and planning. The GENDER Platform needs timely empirical evidence to learn, reflect, adapt as needed, and demonstrate their impact (see recommendations on this issue under CGIAR Management). More strategic and practical use of M&E would benefit the GENDER Platform, and in turn CGIAR.

⁵⁸ Podems, Donna R. Being an Evaluator: Your Practical Guide to Evaluation. 2018. Guilford Publications.

3.1 Employ an M&E professional. The Platform should employ an experienced M&E person who can support the Platform, and potentially HER+, to develop a strong culture of monitoring and evaluation.⁵⁹

3.2 Use outputs and outcome data to reflect and inform day-to-day decision making. An effective M&E person can guide the Platform on how to empirically demonstrate pathways to sustainable, equitable gender outcomes in food systems and can support funding requests.

3.3 Using empirical data to revisit the ToC, and revise it as needed. The ToC and results framework should consider the new One CGIAR functional areas, as mentioned in the introduction.

Recommendation 4: Clarify the expanded Platform

The evaluation unearthed diverse perspectives from a broad range of internal and external stakeholders on the Platform's expanded mandate, formally beginning from the final month of the evaluation. The feedback suggests that partners (internal and external) are not entirely clear on the Platform's expanded mandate and points to three distinct perceptions: (1) gender is intersectional and already engages with youth and social inclusion, so there is no need to address those as separate topics; the title change is reasonable; (2) all three areas, or at least two (gender equality and youth inclusion), need separate strategies and budgets; and (3) projects can focus on one, two, or all three areas.

4.1 Make a concrete decision on how the Platform should engage with the expanded mandate on gender, youth, and social inclusion. CGIAR and the Platform should engage with the perspectives above, and others as needed, to gain insight that can inform how to explicitly move forward with the expanded platform mandate.

4.2 Adopt a clear position and make a clear statement on how the Platform engages with gender equality, youth, and social inclusion so that partners, internal and external, understand the Platform's position.

5.2 For action by CGIAR Management

Recommendation 5: Extend project timeframes

One-year planning and research for development project timeframes negatively impact most gender equality projects. The CGIAR Initiatives also operate on an annual planning basis, yet their budgets are based on an approved proposal covering three years.

5.1 Provide the Platform with three-year planning and operational timeframes.

Recommendation 6: Reduce budget uncertainty

Delays in annual funding decisions and disbursements repeatedly lead to shortened time periods, negatively influencing GENDER Platform grants and other activities. These issues arise owing to uncertainties and delays in donors' funding cycles.

6.1 Identify bottlenecks, solutions, and mechanisms to address the uncertainty surrounding funding cycles and/or disbursement timings.

6.2 Make financial decisions transparent and concrete to the Platform.

6.3 Provide three-year funding cycles.

Recommendation 7: Allocate resources for the expanded mandate

The GENDER Platform was given an expanded mandate but not an expanded budget.

7.1 Expand the GENDER Platform's budget in line with its expanded thematic mandate (youth and social inclusion) and for the purpose of achieving impact.

⁵⁹ The 2021 CGIAR Gender Platform report notes that in 2021 recruitment of a MELIA officer was planned. While the Platform had 157 applicants, they did not meet the needed requirements. Recruitment was then planned for 2022.

Recommendation 8: Use relevant metrics

Data suggest that CGIAR Center leadership does not always appreciate or advocate for gender, youth, and social inclusion priorities. Furthermore, CGIAR indicators are not always useful for managing the Platform or to help the Platform reflect and improve.

- 8.1 Use metrics in individual performance assessments that assess for gender knowledge and skills. Ensure that capacity building on gender is valued in general researcher and manager performance assessments, such as gender KPIs. People and Culture/GDI to develop individual level indicators that provide useful management information.
- 8.2 Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to co-develop with GENDER Platform for the research portfolio that can provide useful management information on integrating gender equality into CGIAR research and impact pathways. Engagement indicators per initiative, for example, provide information on stakeholder engagement, which can then be used to inform the Platform's engagement strategies and activities.
- 8.3 Include engagement data in the M&E results framework (e.g., stakeholder analysis in relation to event data input, participation, and event data output.)

Recommendation 9: Recognize and support gender researchers

Gender researchers are not adequately supported in the CGIAR System.

- 9.1 Invest in career development for gender researchers.⁶⁰ Make available a professional, strategic, and well-resourced human resources function to all staff to help mitigate the problems associated with a highly diverse multinational organization where gender needs to be prioritized.
- 9.2 Maximize the value of human resources by developing career streams that separately identify science and management roles, competencies, and skill levels, and within that, equally reward those with excellence in gender knowledge and skills as those with excellence in research outputs.

Recommendation 10: Adopt inclusive decision making

The GENDER Platform is not always invited to take part in strategic decisions or participate in critical processes.

- 10.1 Actively invite and involve the GENDER Platform in CGIAR's strategic decision-making processes to inform critical decision-making points and engage the Platform in a timely way so that the Platform can adequately inform and/or participate. For example, if gender is to be substantively integrated, gender equality needs to be addressed when projects and programs are conceptualized.

Recommendation 11: Modify the reporting structure

This recommendation is related to Recommendation 10. Currently the GENDER Platform reports to Systems Transformation Science Group. However, gender and the GENDER Platform cut across all three CGIAR Science Groups. Further, the GENDER Platform needs to have closer links to the executive management team to inform strategy and policy and to ensure CGIAR stays on the cutting edge in gender and research strategy.

- 11.1 Expand where the GENDER Platform sits on the organogram. Consider having the GENDER Platform report at a higher level and/or have a direct link to the executive management team. The GENDER Platform should engage with all three Science Groups on issues of substance yet remain under a single Science Group for clarity.

⁶⁰ The [Excellence in Breeding Platform](#) evaluation notes, "At the system level, One CGIAR must address issues of 'end-to-end' thinking and ensure that the career development of all staff is well managed" (p. 39). The GENDER Platform evaluation evidence supports this, though is specific to gender researchers. The Breeding Platform evaluation lists three recommendations; only two resonated with the GENDER Platform evaluation and have been slightly adapted.

6. Lessons Learned for CGIAR Platforms

CGIAR is targeting multiple SDG benefits across five Impact Areas. This section provides key recommendations gleaned from the GENDER Platform that are likely relevant to the other Impact Platforms, organized into five key IAs. Lessons learned cut across, while each Platform has its own role and niche within CGIAR; and the Platforms have very different backgrounds and contexts within CGIAR.

A. Using the 2030 global roles as an entry point, foster global critical thinking: Bring together CGIAR's community and close partners relevant to the Impact Area to facilitate information exchange, enhance coordination, and foster collaboration toward outcomes and impacts.

A.1 Actively engage internal and external partners in co-creation. A stakeholder analysis should be used to identify the Platform's comparative advantage. Then, use a multistakeholder approach to co-develop a shared theory of change, co-develop a research agenda, and where feasible engage in co-creation of activities. This approach will lead to increased relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and efficiency. Co-creation supports uptake and use of Platform's outputs and outcomes.

A.2 Actively facilitate learning based on empirical evidence. Budget and plan for reflective learning and use trained facilitators to support the process to revise agendas, focus, or ToC, as needed. Active, planned reflection supports ongoing relevance, effectiveness, and coherence.

B. Deepen CGIAR and partner capacity.

B.1 Support science leadership. Support science leadership by providing guidance based on empirical data that shares a strong narrative to inform strategic thinking and support mobilization efforts.

B.2 Assess user needs. Implement capacity and needs assessment to identify knowledge gaps and use that assessment to inform strategy.

B.3 Collate and build on existing networks and resources (e.g., gender research coordinators and resource hub).

C. Amplify external profile and pathways to impact.

C.1 Identify scientific synthesis and other related outputs that add value to the food and agriculture space. Work with partners who have a comparative advantage to amplify the Platform's voice and influence. Use scientific synthesis and other similar outputs to actively engage in policy forums.

C.2 Actively encourage collaboration. Use competitive open calls for grants on strategic themes to encourage collaboration by CGIAR researchers with researchers from other CGIAR Centers and external organizations.

D. Promote cohesiveness in CGIAR and portfolio-level management and strategy.

D.1 Senior leadership need to value gender research and understand how the topic is critical to CGIAR, development agendas, and achievement of the SDGs. Invite CGIAR leadership to participate in webinars and other events; CGIAR leadership should actively engage with the Platforms. Provide senior leadership with well-constructed, empirically based, focused narratives that succinctly highlight the theme's critical nature to the CDG, SDGs, and development agendas. CGIAR leadership should actively engage the Platforms in policy according to each Platform's niche and thematic area. (See a concrete example of gender-blind response to the food crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine in this report, which resulted from not engaging with the GENDER Platform, p. 14.)

E. Make use of operational learning

E.1 Clarify structures and protocols on funding mechanisms and timelines. Until structures are sorted, Platforms need to mitigate challenges with budgeting flow to ensure financial stability. Further, related processes need to be well documented, and templates need to be accessible.

E.2 To optimize Platform operations, use a three-year planning timeframe that explicitly includes funding amounts and disbursement timing.

E.3 *Address inter-CGIAR contracting.* The process of contracting research between CGIAR Centers is slow and cumbersome. As a result, it is currently more convenient to engage external partners for such contracts.

E.4 *Establish a strategy to mitigate funding challenges related to hiring challenges.* This could include hiring people to fill positions that address short-term gaps.



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