

Practical Notes: Critical elements for integrating gender in agricultural research and development projects and programs

Jemimah Njuki

Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), P O Box 62084-00200 Nairobi, Kenya. E-Mail; ijnjuki@idrc.ca

Introduction

Gender integration has become a common topic within research and development circles. The key question is now not whether to integrate gender in a program, but how. Most people now recognize that agriculture research and development must be gender responsive and must address the needs of both men and women, while recognizing and addressing the unequal access to resources and differential levels of productivity between men and women.

There are several imperatives to integrating gender in agriculture research and development programs. One is the recognition of the different roles that men and women play in agriculture, especially in developing countries, and with these different roles, comes different needs and constraints. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that globally, women provide 43% of the agricultural labor and in some countries in Africa, this can often go to as high as 60%. This is in addition to the roles played by women in care work, which often goes unrecognized (FAO, 2011).

There has been extensive documentation of the inequality in the allocation of, access to and ownership of key productive resources in Agriculture that has an impact on productivity. Reducing the gaps in access to productive resources has been shown to increase agricultural productivity by upto 30% (FAO, 2011). The World Bank however argues that this access to resources by women smallholder farmers must be accompanied by increasing women's voice and agency and addressing social and cultural norms that limit their choices (World Bank, 2014).

As a result, organizations have developed strategies to integrate gender in their work and to ensure they are empowering women. More often than not however, most organizations have struggled to identify what the entry points for gender integration might be and how they can make the process more systematic and the integration more meaningful. Many organizations and programs have as a result ended up with gender policies and strategies that are broad, not clear on actions and therefore not implementable.

Entry points for gender integration

While there is a lot of nuance in how gender should be integrated in different kinds of research programs, based on whether the research is upstream or downstream, the focus of the research

and existing capacities, below are 4 clear entry points that provide guidance to research organizations or research programs looking for a systematic process for gender integration.

1. The focus of the research and expected outcomes

A good understanding of the needs and aspirations of men and women smallholder farmers, fisher folk and livestock keepers and /or consumers can help to guide the focus of the research. A broad gender analysis, as well as inclusive consultations can point to key crops or livestock that men and women have preference for. It also sheds light on the different and multiple objectives that men and women have in agriculture. For example, while beef cattle rearing may be of cultural and economic importance to men, a focus on dairy cattle can meet women's needs for regular income while meeting the multiple objectives of income from sale of milk, nutrition and manure for crop production. This then can lead to the development of a program or programs that meet the needs of both men and women.

Another example is the focus on technology. Understanding labor dynamics within the households or across the seasonal cycle can identify activities that increase drudgery for men and women, leading to a more gender responsive program on mechanization or technology development. Most technology programs have focused on crop production and in key tasks such as land preparation and planting, often ignoring post-harvest processes that are often carried out by women and children. Having technology programs whose expected outcomes are not only increasing productivity of labor or maximizing production, but also reducing drudgery of men, women, girls and boys across the production and post-harvest management processes is critical.

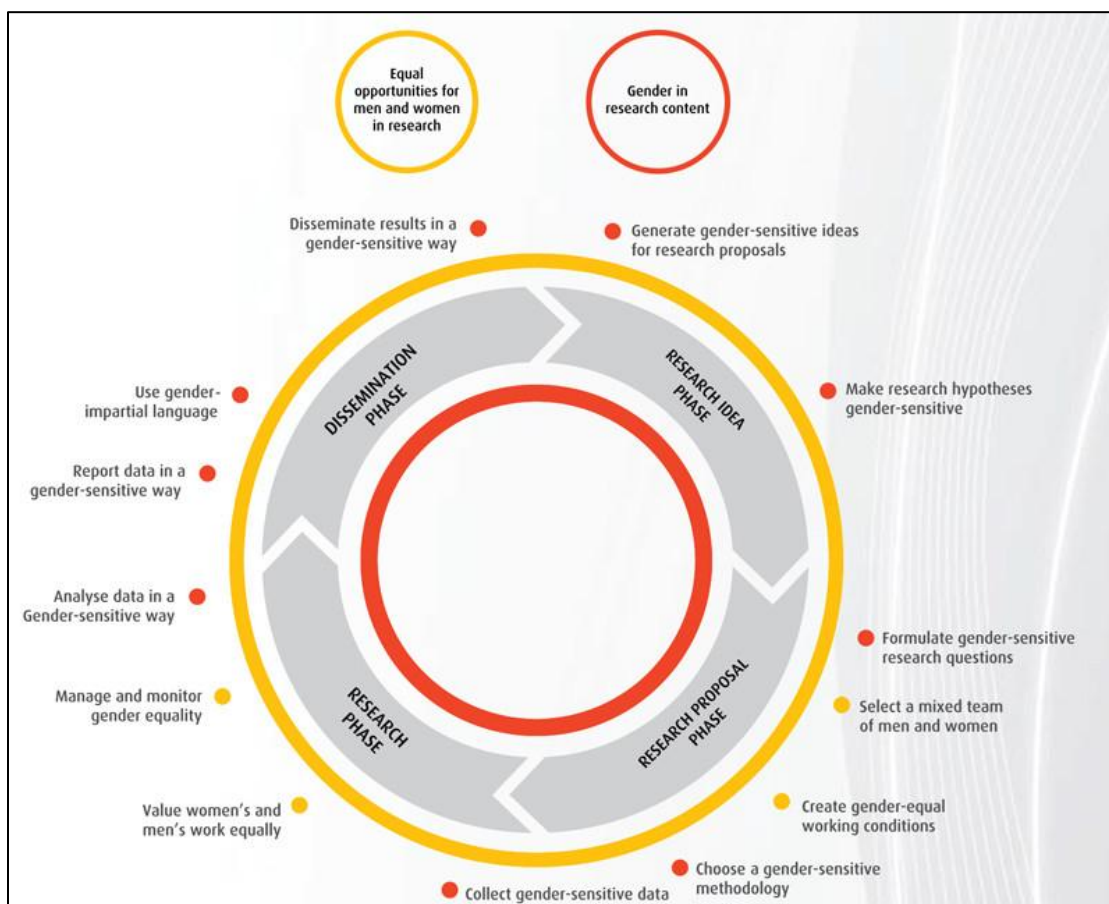
2. Gender sensitive research

In order to ensure that gender equality is fully accounted for throughout the research cycle, the gender dimension in the research approach (in red) as well as aspects related to equal opportunities (in orange) should be addressed simultaneously in the process of conducting research.

It is important to identify key areas, activities and processes within the research cycle and ensure these are gender sensitive. Some of these could include;

- Make research objectives, hypothesis and research questions gender sensitive. If the key objectives of the research are gender blind, it is likely that the methods and activities are going to be gender blind.
- Use gender sensitive research methods, and methods that take into account the needs, opportunities and constraints of men and women.
- Have mixed teams of men and women; ensure equal gender representation at different levels of the organization. It is especially important to include young researchers and women researchers as team leaders.
- Collect sex disaggregated data. There are good practices for collecting and analyzing sex disaggregated data ([Doss and Kieran, 2013](#)). Most often, researchers analyse data by head of household which can often mask important intra-household dynamics.
- Collect data from men and women and ensure the voices of women and young people or other marginalized groups are heard in the research.
- Analyze and present gender data and indicators in reporting

- Value and pay equally for men and women's work and create conditions at work that are conducive for men and women
- Use gender sensitive language



European Commission, Directorate General for Research (2009)

3. Capacity building in gender integration and gender research

Having a good gender strategy is one thing, but getting it implemented is another. While there has been a lot of analysis of factors that influence gender integration in organizations and programs, including such factors as political will, a key factor for the lack of integration of gender is lack of skills and capacities.

These skills and capacities can be categorized into 4:

- **Gender awareness:** Across any program or organization, a general awareness of gender, of what the gender issues are and how they are related to the core work of the organization or program is essential for all staff of the organization. This should not only be restricted to the program teams carrying out the research, but to all levels of the organization including senior managers, program managers, program staff, administration staff and other support staff. Without gender awareness, program managers will not see

the need to allocate budgets to gender or why mixed gender teams are essential in research. Without gender awareness, human resource managers may not see the need for having gender sensitive policies.

- ***Gender integration skills:*** These are skills for program staff carrying out the research or implementing the program. The focus should be on how to identify gender issues in their key areas of research, how to integrate these into the research and implementation process and how to conduct gender sensitive research. This type of training goes deeper into how gender affects the program or the outcomes of the program, what are the key gender research questions teams need to ask, how they address these in the research or implementation process and how they track gender outcomes. Imagine a breeding program;- this would involve training on what are the key issues in crop variety or livestock breeds, how to work with men and women farmers and what tools to use to identify their different objectives, preferences and constraints, how to integrate these objectives and preferences into the breeding program and how to evaluate the resulting breeds or varieties with men and women users.
- ***Gender research methods:*** A third level of capacity building is building skills in gender research methods. Key areas include; what research methods are appropriate for what kinds of gender research questions, research designs and sampling methods, methods for collecting sex and analyzing sex disaggregated data, make sense of sex disaggregated data for policy and programming. Having people in organizations and research programs with gender research methods skills ensures that they support others in using appropriate methods and they can conduct rigorous research on what is working on gender integration.
- ***From integration to transformation:*** A fourth level of gender training is training for transformation. This takes staff through understanding the underlying causes of gender inequalities and working with those affected by these inequalities, such as communities and households, to address these sources of inequalities. This type of training requires fundamental shifts in people's attitudes and facilitation skills that enable program staff to facilitate change processes and to use a variety of participatory tools and processes.

4. Tracking and holding staff accountable for gender outcomes

Are gender outcomes or the empowerment of women and girls part of your goals as a program or an organization? Organizations and programs work towards end goals. It is therefore critical that gender outcomes and the empowerment of women and girls is clear and well-articulated goal for your program or organization. These goals should be accompanied by clear indicators for measuring progress and staff should be held accountable to these goals. So your program is developing agricultural technologies;-is there a goal that these technologies improve the lives of men and women farmers or consumers? Reduce the technology access gap between men and

women? Reduce drudgery for women and girls? Improve men and women's access to important services? Is there a way to measure and report on these goals or indicators?

Researchers and practitioners should however note that all these are not a one off event, but a continuous process that organizations have to invest time and resources to develop and implement.

References

Doss, C and Kieran, C (2014). Standards for collecting sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis: A guide for CGIAR researchers. Policies, Institutions and Markets Program of the CGAIR. IFPRI Washington DC.

European Commission, Directorate General for Research (2009). Toolkit for Gender in EU Funded Research. <http://ki.se/en/research/tools-for-sex-and-gender-analysis-in-health>

FAO (2011). The State of Food and Agriculture. Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development. FAO, Rome Italy

World Bank (2014). Voice and Agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity. World Bank