Building Coalitions, Creating Change: An Agenda for Gender Transformative Research in Agricultural Development

RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
Aquatic Agricultural Systems

CGIAR

Building Coalitions, Creating Change: An Agenda for Gender Transformative Research in Agricultural Development

Ranjitha Puskur
Senior Scientist, WorldFish, Penang, Malaysia

Christine Okali
 Sociologist, Independent Consultant, UK

Jacqueline Ashby
Senior Advisor on Gender Research, CGIAR Consortium Office, Montpellier, France

Rekha Mehra
Director of Economic Development, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Washington D.C., USA

Emily Hillenbrand
Regional Coordinator for Gender and Program Design, Helen Keller International (HKI), Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Jane Brown
Africa Team Leader, Center for Communication Programs, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

Frederick Mubiru, Rebekan Lundgren, Melissa K. Adams
Gender Roles Equality and Transformations (GREAT) Project, Gulu, Northern Uganda

Ruth Meinzen-Dick
Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington D.C., USA

Anne Marie Golla
Economist and Evaluation Specialist, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Washington D.C., USA

Nitya Rao
Professor of Gender and Development, School of International Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

Andrea Rodericks
Executive Director for Program Quality and Learning, CARE India, Delhi, India

Rieky Stuart
Senior Associate, Gender at Work, Toronto, Canada

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Ranjitha Puskur
Senior Scientist, WorldFish, Penang, Malaysia

The challenges of poverty and hunger continue to haunt us despite significant investments in agricultural research and development. Agricultural research paradigms have shifted over the years in response to demands to make research and development more efficient and effective. It has been widely recognized and acknowledged that closing the gender gap in access to productive resources, technologies and markets is critical to tackling these sticky challenges. Projects and programs have made efforts to "integrate" or "mainstream" gender into agricultural research and development practice. However, the gender disparities and the related discourse since the 1970s continue to persist. Clearly, what we are doing is not working, and we are not able to achieve the results we aspire to. This failure calls for changing the way we have approached this issue. We need transformational change that is profound, fundamental, enduring and irreversible to have deep and lasting impact. This demands radical breakthroughs in paradigms, beliefs and behaviors at various levels.

Significant conceptual developments have been made in the field of Gender and Development (GAD) that draw attention to the fact that addressing the symptoms of gender inequality without addressing the underlying causes that lead to those symptoms is not effective in achieving sustainable impact. These causes include the power relations underpinning gender roles and norms, human behaviors and practices, and social systems and structures. However, agricultural research and development practice has not adequately engaged with these causes and continues to design piecemeal interventions that only address material constraints. These interventions are necessary but not sufficient for achieving real and sustained change.

For example, an outcome that CGIAR is aiming to achieve through its suite of new programs is improved health and nutrition. Nutrition outcomes are strongly gendered. Nutrition security is a function of a caregiver's time and workload, intra-household decision making regarding what to produce or how to allocate food, and buying/selling of food and income use, among other factors. Often caregivers are women who are overburdened by their gendered roles and responsibilities in the household and on the farm. Transformation of gender roles and norms can go a long way in addressing nutrition issues.

This working paper
The CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS) has developed its Gender Research in Development Strategy centered on a transformative approach. Translating this strategy into actual research and development practice poses a considerable challenge, as not much (documented) experience exists in the agricultural sector to draw on, and significant innovation is required.

A process of transformative change requires reflecting on multiple facets and dimensions simultaneously. This working paper is a collation of think pieces, structured around broad the mes and topics, reflecting on what works (and what does not) in the application of gender transformative approaches in agriculture and other sectors, and seeking to stimulate a discussion on the way forward for CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) and other programs to build organizational capacities and partnerships.

Transforming gender research in agriculture
There is a need to transform the gender research agenda in agriculture to integrate efforts to redress gender disparities in resources, markets and technologies with complementary

actions to address underlying social norms and power relations. Research and development efforts need to combine technical and transformative interventions that address economic success and agency in the short term and aim to change power relations and structures in the medium to long term. If successful, these efforts are expected to result in expansion of the range and quality of life choices available for men and women, including changes in their roles and responsibilities within households and communities, leading to shared decision making. No tested and proven recipes or formulae exist to achieve this. Innovating, experimenting and learning are fundamental.

During the workshop we will reflect on **trends in thinking about GAD and agricultural development and seek to understand the gap between conceptual development and practice and the underlying reasons for this gap.**

Gender transformative practice
There is a need to synthesize evidence from initiatives that have pursued gender transformational change in agriculture and other sectors (especially health) in both rural and urban settings and to distill the practices/strategies that have worked in various contexts. This provides an opportunity for **cross- sectoral learning and collaboration regarding the challenges and prospects in pursuing a gender transformative agenda and the principles that can be adopted in agricultural research and development practice.**

Transforming research approaches and methods
Gender analysis cannot be reduced to collecting sex-disaggregated statistics or understanding women outside of their social context. Rigorous gender analysis is needed to understand complex social contexts and identify promising ways to change gender norms, attitudes and practices, integrating actions geared to gender norm change with technical and institutional interventions; sequencing these interventions carefully is critical. We need to **take stock of the current sets of tools and methods used in gender research in agriculture, assess whether they are adequate or appropriate for pursuing gender transformative research agendas, and identify opportunities for developing new tools.**

Transforming monitoring and learning
Significant advances have been made in thinking through and developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, indicators, methods, and tools to measure women's empowerment. However, these are complex, context specific and carry different interpretations for different people/organizations. While a focus on defining and measuring women's empowerment is important, understanding the pathways that lead to this outcome are more important. And we have still to get a good grip on this.

This challenge will be compounded when we embrace the transformative research agenda. Social change is emergent, with largely indeterminate outcomes that cannot be accurately predicted. **What would transformative social change look like? How do we know when change happens? How can we distinguish between transformative and non-transformative outcomes—what are the most appropriate indicators? How do we need to transform our understanding of impact and success to be cognizant of the multiple stakeholders involved in a gender transformative approach and the multiple levels at which change needs to happen? What kind of tools and methods do we need to measure changes? How can we efficiently monitor the processes and outcomes so we are able to learn and distill principles that will help us replicate and scale up?**

Transforming organizational cultures
For us to achieve the goals of transformation, we need to start looking at ourselves and our organizational cultures. We need to go beyond conventional efforts of gender mainstreaming to

change organizational culture and policies to facilitate the pursuit of transformative practice. We need a change in discourse about the social change agenda and widespread understanding, appreciation and buy-in across an organization to pursue this transformation. This agenda has to appeal to people's hearts and minds. Gender transformative practice in the health sector has shown that while knowledge and behaviors change due to interventions, attitudes are much more resistant, and these have the potential to reverse changes once programs end. This is also true for people in research and development (R&D) organizations. Gender transformative practice has to become part of the "organizational DNA" and become the routine way of doing things. The responsibility to integrate does not lie with a gender specialist or a "focal point," but with everyone. We need to get a handle on organizational strategies that will help us achieve this shared responsibility. **How can we effect change in mindsets, behaviors and capabilities across settings (e.g., policy makers, development organization/research staff, in communities) to make gender equality an integral outcome of agricultural development research and practice?**

Transformative approaches call for a different set of interventions and different skill sets in research and development organizations. A critical reflection on historical gender capacity-building efforts in research for development (R4D) programs show that one-off gender trainings to increase awareness and impart necessary skills have not been very effective. **How should the content and approaches for capacity building be revamped to make them relevant for agricultural R4D programs aiming for gender transformative change?**

Another way to support efforts to change ourselves and our organizations may be to transform our networks. We need to look beyond the conventional partnerships and seek unusual cross-sectoral partnerships to exploit synergies and complementarities to address transformative challenges. Health and education sectors, communication experts, and media are obvious choices, but who beyond these? **What kind of partnerships, collaborations and relationships are necessary, and how do we nurture and manage them to bring about transformative change? What types of coalitions drive community- level change in gender norms? What strategies are effective in mobilizing and sustaining diverse groups? How can private sector involvement/contributions be mobilized?**

Transforming policy
Presence of effective sectoral policies related to gender and development are limited. Even in cases where they exist, their implementation is fraught with challenges. Resources allocated to translating these policies into programs/actions, awareness and capacity in ministries at various levels to integrate gender are limited. Engagement and communication are key to influencing policy and practice— strategies need to be worked out to achieve these goals. **What is the transformative change needed for us to reposition gender on the policy agenda to support real impact at scale? And how do we need to rethink how we move from the policy agenda to real action and implementation?**

SECTION I: TRANSFORMING GENDER RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURE

1. Researching Gender in Agricultural Research

Christine Okali
Sociologist, Independent Consultant, UK

Introduction

This paper reflects on persistent obstacles and challenges faced by agricultural research in contributing to the achievement of transformative change in women's status and position in society. The paper focuses on men and women working in agriculture, including fisheries and livestock, and on production, post-harvest and marketing activities. It makes two points on how to move forward with the objective of transformative change: (1) change the way in which gender, gender issues and gender relations in rural societies are framed, and (2) adopt a social-relational approach that involves placing both women and men in their wider social setting even if interventions are designed to support the empowerment of individual women or groups of women. Underpinning these two points is the understanding that if research is to contribute to achieving sustainable, transformative change in gender relations where these are seen to be problematic, the analytical approach long associated with gender analysis in agricultural research and development needs to be revised. The paper concludes with a number of practical recommendations for future research that fit with such a research objective. These recommendations do not point to a clear linear process or single pathway for achieving this level of social change, nor do they present a fixed set of criteria for assessing the success of specific evidence- based/research interventions. They do call for agricultural research to position itself at the interrogative end of the current dominant policy, practice and research scenario.

The paper begins by briefly examining the links between rural development and agricultural policy, practice and research, and the way formal agricultural research is positioned or has positioned itself within these. I argue that these links have implications for gender research and now pose a significant challenge for the future of the CGIAR gender in agricultural research program. I then turn to the way gender analysis is undertaken and how gender issues and gender relations in rural societies are framed, emphasizing the need for research to problematize and re-examine established understandings about gender relations that appear to have permeated not only policy and practice, but also research itself. I then turn to social relations approaches and argue that these are not only more suitable for research than other approaches, but are also a way forward for enabling gender research within agricultural research organizations to contribute to the project of transforming gender relations. I also argue that they are the most suitable approaches for understanding the way in which men and women together and separately change their livelihood strategies and possibly the way they relate to one another in the face of new technology. This kind of knowledge contributes to the core agenda of the CGIAR.

Gender in policy, practice and formal agricultural research

Formal agricultural research for development—and research on women in agriculture—has been carried out over four decades within a research agenda focused on technology development. This research has taken place in the context of a large and influential movement supported by international agencies and donors, calling first for women's significant role in agriculture to be acknowledged, and second for the resource disadvantage of women to be detailed and disparities or gaps between women and men to be closed. While much of the early effort made to achieve these objectives was characterized as focused on women

in development, and a call for a shift to a focus on gender and development (GAD) was made in the mid-1990s, the gender focus and purpose of agricultural research for development has largely remained unchanged. Nevertheless, as is the case for other development sectors, agricultural research has been substantially shaped by three powerful policy agendas of participation, poverty reduction and food security. Formal agricultural research has also had its own influential agenda of natural resource sustainability.

These agendas developed strong cross-cutting links that contributed to their influence. The same cannot be said of connections made between gender in agricultural research and social science research situated elsewhere. In some situations, social scientists working within the agricultural research system, but also within development practice, might even be referred to as "too academic." However, the achievements of early and ongoing gender analysis by these social scientists are many, even if these achievements have not always been used to guide development practice, policy or even research undertaken within CGIAR. Some of the achievements of early gender analysis are detailed by C. Jackson[1] and center on the deconstruction of core assumptions around the meaning of terms like household, household head and breadwinner. New understandings developed out of this work include the following:

- Households are not unitary institutions in the sense of a group of individuals with no separate production and consumption interests.
- Intra-household inequality is recognized as common but also complex when examined in the context of the social exchanges between closely linked individuals.
- Intra-household relations are both dynamic and contested.
- Boundaries between households are permeable and inter-household exchanges are common.
- The assumption that senior males are breadwinners was an ethnocentric perception, since women clearly make a major contribution to household livelihoods.

Such insights as these are not automatically revealed by a direct reading from sex-differentiated household data on roles, access and control over a fixed set of resources and decision making around these. Nevertheless, each contests established narratives about households and gender relations within households that are used in gender policy and practice. The established narratives have been used to support a focus on women as poor, vulnerable and unable to exercise agency with asset needs equivalent to those held by men, who are presented as operating as individuals who do what they want with all the resources available. If we look closely enough we can see some of these narratives in use within agricultural research. This paper argues that these narratives, and the data on which many of them are based, have not resulted in gender transformative changes[2] that are viewed as necessary for achieving improvements in production and productivity in the agricultural sector, apart from anything else.

One way to challenge these narratives is to move away from research focused on individuals to a focus on the interconnected activities of men and women, and how the independent natural-resource-based incomes/resources and roles identified (e.g., through the Harvard Framework) cannot be presumed to take place outside of these relations of interdependence. A second is to reflect more on the gender identities of men and women and on the investment that various actors have in the way these play out, especially at the level of households. For example, although it can be shown that there are apparent conflicts of interest between household members and members of other linked institutions, perhaps what is less evident or less reported is that there are also substantial levels of cooperation

---

[1] C. Jackson, 2000, "Men at Work," The European Journal of Development Research, 12(2): 1–22.
[2] Although it is not possible to categorically conclude that such changes have not occurred.

and shared interest between husbands and wives. As Jackson argues, "it is not a good idea to ... imagine that preferences and risk behavior of male household heads can be taken to reflect that of all members within the household, [or] to separate out women from the context of household relations and suggest they are reliably risk averse and oriented to subsistence and food security in a narrow sense of food production: A husband may be food security personified."[3] Decision making in the short term has to be examined in the context of the need for long-term food security and the role of heads of households in ensuring this.[4] I would also argue that it is time to re-examine the connections between household members and wider kin groups, both in the present and also in the long term, with a view to revealing at least the ways these impact on male and female decision making. These connections are frequently presented as negative for women, even though in some societies it is these very connections that support women as individuals in need. Research also needs to interrogate the levels of villainy attributed to men, on the one hand, and the virtue attributed to women, on the other, since these attributions are used to guide gender in development practice and have strongly influenced gender policy.

Changing the way gender, gender issues and gender relations in rural societies are framed in policy and practice, as well as in agricultural research, requires us also to examine the structured and formulaic process of gender analysis inherent in gender frameworks—and especially the Harvard Framework that has been the standard tool for gender analysis in much agricultural research and practice since the mid- 1980s. These frameworks have been closely associated with the construction of a particular view of women in agriculture,[5] and one that appears to support the neoliberal project of individualized resource control and market-driven production. These frameworks are based on and reinforce orthodox understandings about households as bounded units and about their farming activities and the way work, assets and income are allocated among household members and managed overall. The resulting comparisons between men and women are understood as "gender analysis" but provide a static view of intra-household relations, one that privileges women in the sense of highlighting their disadvantage by focusing on time inputs, assets—especially land, on which credit continues to be largely conditional— and their caring roles that deliver household food security and well-being for all household members. This gender analytical tool has served the gender project as promoted through the International Women's meetings and the various international agreements, as well as the women in agriculture project, and enabled a range of researchers and practitioners working in agriculture to respond to the call to mainstream gender, but it is now time for us to address this tool's limitations.

We must also problematize masculine privilege. Work on men and masculinities in development has not engaged with core equity issues such as equal pay, representation in politics, domestic work, etc., in spite of the fact that men as problem and women as victim is the dominant discourse in the women and development literature.[6] Nevertheless, the potential benefits of involving men are many, and acting as if men are irrelevant can impose demands on women that are impossible to fulfill (and vice versa?). Women and men rarely operate as autonomous individuals in their communities and daily lives, even in projects designed for women. In addition, in practice it is entirely possible for men to be allies who support women's demands for additional resources. Levy[7] and Porter, Smyth and Sweetman,[8] reflecting on the fact that activities focused around women have produced a weak, marginalized and often underfunded development and research sector, argue that it is necessary to make men more responsible for change: Encouraging men to invest time and energy in changing the gender status quo is likely to be a critical factor in the quest for gender equity. In addition, there are challenges such as the negative labeling of men, which fixes them in oppositional sexed categories; the obstacles caused by male hostility to "women only" projects; and the importance of addressing the male side of joint responsibilities such as sexual health and family nutrition, as well as their own caring responsibilities[9] that are likely to look different than those of women.[10]

Bearing all this in mind, we cannot simply assume that the outcome of any perceived conflict of interest between women and men will be women losing out in all circumstances and use this assumption to frame gender issues and our actions to address these issues. Outcomes such as women taking on additional workloads "for men," giving up any existing rights they may have to men such that they appear to lose their ability to fulfill their responsibilities, and husbands and other men not acting to protect or support the needs and interests of their wives and other women need to be investigated rather than taken for granted. We must not automatically assume that all men actively seek to block their wives, sisters, mothers and other women and are not troubled by their inability to support their families.[11] I would argue that the task of agricultural research for development is to also challenge these assumptions and even to examine the kinds of changes that have already taken place or are in the process of occurring as a result of, say, agricultural development, commercialization and even new value chains. Our interest in doing so should not simply be to demonstrate the value of agricultural innovations, for example, but also to examine the change processes and the way in which the men and women involved have been able to use these changes in their own interests or even play a role in the change process itself. Surely any or each of these might reveal ongoing transformative changes in gender relations that otherwise are ignored. In making all these points, I am not suggesting that women (even many women) are not disadvantaged in households or in other institutional settings but that these assumptions need to be investigated, perhaps especially in light of the dominant roles that women perform in many locations in food processing and marketing.

3   C. Jackson, 2007, "Resolving Risk? Marriage and Creative Conjugality," Development and Change, 38(1): 110–111.

4   Ann Whitehead, 2002, "Tracking Livelihood Change: Theoretical, Methodological and Empirical Perspectives from North-East Ghana," Journal of Southern African Studies, 28(3): 575–598.

5   C. Locke and C. Okali, 1999, "Analysing Changing Gender Relations: Methodological Challenges for Gender Analysis," Development in Practice, 9(3): 274–286; C. Okali, 2011, "Achieving Transformative Change for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment," Paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on "Enabling Rural Women's Economic Empowerment: Institutions, Opportunities and Participation," 20–23 September, Accra, Ghana: UN Women.

6   E. Esplen and A. Greig, 2008, Politicising Masculinities: Beyond the Personal. Sussex, England: Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

7   C. Levy, 1992, "Gender and the Environment: The Challenge of Cross-Cutting Issues in Development Policy and Planning," Environment and Urbanization, 4(1): 134–149.

8   F. Porter, I. Smyth and C. Sweetman, 1999, "Introduction," in F. Porter, I. Smyth & C. Sweetman (eds.), Gender Works, Oxfam Experience in Policy and Practice, pp. 1–13, Oxford: Oxfam.

9   A. Cornwall and S.C. White, 2000, "Men, Masculinities and Development: Politics, Policy and Practice," IDS Bulletin, 31(2): 1–6.

10 Jackson, "Men at Work."

11 C. Locke, Nguyen Thi Thanh Tam and Nguyen Thi Nga Hoa, 2010, "Trying to 'Make Money,' 'Lead a Good Life' and 'Keep the Family Together': Low-Income Migrant Men as Husbands and Fathers in Vietnam," Paper presented at The Nexus of Migration and Masculinity in the Asian Context Conference, 15–16 July, Singapore.

In addition, I am supporting an alternative beginning point for gender analysis that starts by examining the character of households in specific settings, both current and historical,[12] how they operate in terms of income earning and meeting responsibilities, and the implications for individual decision making and household livelihoods of what are often interlocking projects of individual household members (and even other kinsmen) that extend over time and over a wide range of activities. Such an approach should lead to a different set of research questions, different data, and certainly data on men and gender relations as opposed to simply sex-segregated role data. Such a shift from an analysis that isolates women and men from their social environment and takes sex-differentiated data as the end point of research might also result in the design of more sustainable approaches to addressing disadvantage and thus support gender transformative outcomes.

Reframing gender relations in rural society: a social relations approach

This paper calls for the adoption of a social-relational approach that involves placing both women and men in their wider social setting, even if interventions are designed to support the empowerment of individual women or specific groups of women, and also focuses on processes of change in gender relations rather than on a static comparison between women and men to identify what are interpreted as gender issues. Such an analytical stance is better suited to capturing the complexities of rural societies and to revealing more about the impact of, say, technical change or increased commercialization, for example, than simply "adoption," increased incomes or increased food security. A relational approach to gender analysis takes into account the multiple identities of men and women and their specific lives in their wider social, political and economic environments; this, along with a more critical assessment of the value of data generated, will result in more nuanced and realistic analyses that are not focused on determining who wins and who loses.

The call to adopt a social-relational approach points to the need to

- resist framing the rural population as a collection of isolated, atomized individuals with only individual and separate interests, and place them within their wider social contexts of gender, age, class and other identities that influence their relations with others;
- remember that gender relations are not always fraught and cannot be simply read off from sex-differentiated data;
- focus on identifying how women and men experience and value ongoing changes, and use this information to both meet their own interests and address concerns about short- and long-term household survival;
- focus on processes of change, identifying the circumstances that allow structures to limit or support access to opportunities, and learning more about the kinds of support both women and men will need if they are to benefit from or adapt to change (in policy, technology, markets, climate, etc.); and
- avoid privileging an individualistic and production-oriented view of development over a relational and well-being-oriented one.

Operating principles such as these should lead to a different set of research and policy questions that reflect the specifics of particular locations and situations of different categories of rural women, the relevance of social structures, and the fact that women are active social agents and not simply poor beneficiaries who need help.[13]

What are the understandings that we need to use to undertake this research?

1. Without a broader recognition of structural relations of power, within which we all become who we are, there is a real danger that efforts to involve men will fail to effectively confront and transform inequitable relations. Achieving gender transformative change will require more than making space within GAD for male participation. Rather, it requires us to refocus concern on positions and relations of power that produce and sustain inequity, seeking through this a way of moving beyond static frameworks and stereotypes to support genuine transformative practice.
2. Criteria that demonstrate sustainable change in women's status need to reflect not only shifts in the circumstances of the women themselves (such as increased incomes and autonomy in income use), but also changes in the attitudes of those around them (within households, wider family units, communities and markets), which influence individual circumstances. Focusing assessment on women themselves is not sufficient for documenting processes of sustainable social and economic change.
3. In a development environment valuing predictability and results, we need to be clear that seeking precise and predictable social outcomes suggests that we already know the particular pathway for achieving these, and that those outcomes that we are seeking are valued by rural men and women themselves. Such expectations may indeed only serve to close the discussion down before any attempt has been made to learn. Success in the complex process of social change may be best demonstrated through assessing the combinations of *program characteristics, targeting strategies, contexts and opportunities* that are associated with evidence of sustainable change (or indications of positive moves in a desired direction).
4. Sufficient resources need to be available, and for long enough, to be able to provide the environment within which the kind of desired social changes might be achieved.

Concluding comments: finding the way

We need to be very clear where agricultural research has gone and the context within which it is taking place today. We are now talking about research in the context of multiple policy agendas, and where the way these agendas frame gender (i.e., in terms of women, and especially women who are vulnerable and without agency), the policy and the understanding of gender and gender relations more broadly reflect this framing instead of women's own aspirations.

The main argument pursued in this paper is that it is time to move beyond a focus on women as a bounded group if the objective of achieving sustainable transformative change for women is to be achieved. This is not to deny the value of focusing on individuals in certain circumstances, especially when household structures are complex and membership fluctuates. However, even when individual women are the target for interventions, it is necessary to take into account the fact that decisions made are likely to reflect the decisions/interests and needs of their interdependent others. Similarly, the call made for a focus on the relations between women and men—to "bring men in"—is not simply about repeating the work already done on women, as is suggested by the common responses of disaggregation (that focuses on the separate characteristics of men and women) and simplistic dualisms starting with roles, access and control

[12] B. O'Laughlin, 1998, "Missing Men? The Debate Over Rural Poverty and Women-Headed Households in Southern Africa," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 25(2): 1–48.
[13] C. Okali, 2012, "Gender Analysis: Engaging with Rural Development and Agricultural Policy Processes," FAC

comparisons between men and women that readily lead to interventions designed to "close the gaps."

While stylized constructions of social relations have their place in allowing intervention to move forward, they can oversimplify complex and dynamic relationships and suggest isolation or separation where there is in fact significant interaction and mutual dependence, and they can deflect attention from filling gaps in knowledge. The policy and research concerns of the paper include the persistence of narratives that constrain innovative approaches to the analysis of social relations, including gender relations in various institutional settings, and of social and cultural change more broadly. Equally, although the gender roles framework has definitely enabled gender mainstreaming, it is a lack of understanding of gender and of how gender works that makes this framework, or guide to "gender analysis," a weak analytical tool, even if it is readily understandable and easy to implement. Gender capacity, then, is a key constraint to achieving the level of nuanced gender analysis that a transformative approach requires. Equally, while major contributions like the Gender and Agriculture Sourcebook make arguments about patriarchal systems being the major constraint on women's access to the necessary assets for them to enter the economic mainstream and control any benefits arising, there is little attention given beyond this focus to addressing the privileged position of men, to needed shifts in social structure or even to deconstructing any problems, beyond closing asset gaps.

No one is suggesting that these are straightforward issues that can be addressed by some bureaucratic procedure or technical adjustment.[14] In fact, it is being argued here that the assumption that these gaps are technical problems, resolvable through individual action and the creation of successful women, has probably hindered the transformative process. Equally, limiting policy/practice to solutions that strengthen women in their existing roles, which may be defined by gender inequalities and may not reflect women's individual choices, is risky: It "runs the risk of entrenching existing inequalities" and "engrain[ing] low status, low return work as women's work."[15] Any change that contributes to increasing the value of women's work—in the eyes of women themselves as well as in the eyes of others—will make a substantial contribution to addressing gender inequalities and has to be seen as a way forward to achieving wider changes. The question remains, however, of what the role of gender in agricultural research is in all of this.

---

[14] T. Skard, 2009, "Gender in the Malestream – Acceptance of Women and Gender Equality in Different United Nations Organizations," Forum for Development Studies, 36(1): 155–191; A-M. Goetz and S. Hassim (eds), 2003, No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making, London and New York: Zed Books.
[15] C. Locke, 1999, "Constructing a Gender Policy for Joint Forest Management in India," Development and Change, 30: 278–280.

2. Agricultural Research for Equity and Impact: Transforming Research on Gender in the CGIAR

Jacqueline Ashby
Senior Advisor on Gender Research,
CGIAR Consortium Office, Montpellier, France

Introduction

Broad consensus exists that gender equality is critical for achieving economic growth and reducing poverty. The issues of equity and impact in agricultural research can no longer be addressed without tackling power relations that place women smallholders on an unequal playing field compared to men in terms of access to markets, extension, land, water, credit and other resources. Action to change these structural inequalities is approached as a question of women's empowerment.

Development agencies agree that proven measures exist for empowering women smallholders (summarized in Box 1). Although improving gender equity is recognized in the CGIAR's strategic result framework as necessary for its impact, just how its research will engage with women's empowerment is far from clear. This brief overview of past objectives, approaches and outcomes of gender research in CGIAR is intended to inform workshop discussion of a new strategy for gender in agriculture, in particular the new CGIAR gender strategy and the way forward.

Box 1. Proven Approaches for Empowering Women Smallholders

1. Organize collective action to strengthen bargaining power (e.g., producer organizations, farmer field schools, community-managed savings and credit groups, enterprise and marketing cooperatives, water sharing committees).
2. Secure rights of stable access to productive resources, including land, water, forests and fisheries.
3. Develop appropriate innovations through research and extension services specifically targeted towards women, changing discriminatory policies and practices.
4. Improve use of market information and business development services, as well as more gender-equitable share of benefits from important value chains.
5. Include a nutrition dimension in productivity-enhancing interventions.
6. Ensure women exercise political voice and representation, changing discriminatory cultural norms, practices and policies that prevent participation.

Source: ActionAid International & DFID.[16]

History

In 1986, the need for CGIAR research to address gender inequities comprehensively was first raised in a special report commissioned by an external review of the CGIAR's impact. The basis for the study stated a now-familiar argument, that the CGIAR's goals of reducing malnutrition and hunger cannot be achieved if women's roles in production and food systems are ignored. Its conclusions foreshadowed current thinking, arguing that social relationships governing intra-household allocation of resources and responsibilities are the key to understanding welfare effects of technical change in agriculture.[17] More than twenty-five years later, the reformed CGIAR approved its first comprehensive Consortium Level Gender Strategy (April, 2012), committing all CGIAR Research Programs to deliver research outputs that bring demonstrable and measurable benefits to women farmers in target areas within four years of inception.

The lapse of more than twenty-five years between recognition of and action to remedy the negative effects of gender inequality on agricultural development is not unique to the CGIAR but has its own special tendencies. These can be summarized in terms of the following three characteristics of past process that hampered use of gender analysis and, more broadly, the CGIAR's social impact:

- an emphasis on research efficiency as the rationale for attention to gender
- reliance on technology-driven (as opposed to social) targets for setting research priorities
- measuring progress in terms of organizational growth as opposed to organizational learning to achieve impact

Research efficiency (not equity of outcomes) has been the main rationale for attention to gender in the CGIAR. This led gender differences to be presented as hindrances to adoption so that remedial action focused on adapting the existing supply of technology to women's constraints. With the objective of gender analysis defined as "fixing" the technology, the gender research task then became providing gender analysis tools for this purpose. Gender-related impact could then be addressed by head-counting men and women beneficiaries of the supply of CGIAR technology.

The efficiency perspective banished the idea that demand from socially defined beneficiary groups like poor rural women might require a re-think of CGIAR research priorities. CGIAR targets continued to be defined primarily in relation to mandate crops (ranked by actual and predicted area), production and potential economic contribution to food security in different world regions. Initiatives like the International Rice Research Institute's Women and Rice Farming Systems Program that specifically aimed to design technology useful to poor women were the exception rather than the rule. Gender mainstreaming orthodoxy that opposed programs designed "for women" exacerbated the aversion to targeting.

No incentives existed for CGIAR managers to adjust research priorities, despite a steady stream of evidence throughout the 1990s that gender-blind agricultural innovation exacerbates gender inequalities. The efficiency rationale allowed technology-driven programs to define success in terms of growth in annual budgets and global reach and to ignore their limited success in delivering benefits to women among the rural poor.

In the 1990s, social scientists in the CGIAR argued that social inequity meant research priorities needed to change. They pursued this agenda by developing and popularizing methods for participatory evaluation of technology to demonstrate the divergence between demand and supply, showing that men's and women's priorities not only diverge from those of researchers but differ from each other. Participatory evaluation became well accepted in the CGIAR as a research method that provides feedback to researchers about farmers' preferences, with the justification that it improves research efficiency.

However, the efficiency rationale that facilitated acceptance of participatory methods also de-linked these methods from demand analysis and social targeting. Participatory methods cannot reliably detect social or gender differences without prior selection of participants informed by social and gender analysis, and this remains a weakness in their application. Today, participatory tools and methods are deployed in the CGIAR principally to provide farmer feedback on a predetermined supply of technology and

---

[16] ActionAid International and Department for International Development (DFID), 2012, What Works for Women. Proven Approaches for Empowering Women Smallholders and Achieving Food Security, London, UK.
[17] J. Jiggins, 1986, "Gender Related Impacts and the Work of the International Agricultural Research Centers," CGIAR Study Paper Number 17.

other innovations, often without the social analysis needed to explain just who this feedback is coming from.

The predominance of tool-based approaches to gender analysis and participatory research in the CGIAR were symptoms of a broader problem—the relegation of non-economic social sciences to a marginal role. In the 1980s, the CGIAR was gently introduced to economics by the Rockefeller Foundation Post- Doctoral Fellowship Program, and it took over a decade for these economists to establish their legitimacy in the CGIAR. By 2008, a comprehensive review noted that other social scientists (sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists) remained marginal, relegated to soft money, junior positions, short-term contracts and inferior credibility.[18] The response of social scientists in the CGIAR to the low status of their disciplines was to seek acceptance by simplifying, diluting and popularizing their content into methods and toolkits.

The result of this "tool-kitting" was that the CGIAR simply stopped learning from gender and social analysis. The idea, dominant since the 1980s, that integration of social and gender analysis into other CGIAR research areas requires its decentralization and fragmentation, encouraged small-scale research initiatives on tools and methods while preventing the development of a unified research agenda investigating the underlying causes and impacts of gender inequality. In the absence of a substantive research role other than at one International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) center, the only international public good considered feasible for social scientists in most international argricultural research centers (IARCs) was a methodology (a.k.a. toolkit). This reflected the belief, widespread among biological scientists, that the social sciences lack explanatory power because of variant cultural settings. This thinking, which overlooks equivalent issues of extrapolation in the biological sciences, positioned social and gender analysis in most IARCs as a sideline in tool development funded by "soft money." The premium placed on tools and methods led to much duplication of small-scale effort. "Tool-kitting" also made much social science in the CGIAR tangential to influential developments in mainstream social theory that have shaped current strategies for changing structural causes of the gender gap in agriculture.

Lessons and future challenges
This brief history suggests a few lessons with relevance for the future, as follows:
1. Justifying gender analysis in terms of improving the delivery of technology distracts this research from other aspects of gender inequality that affect the impact of technology on women's welfare.
2. Tool-driven, head-counting approaches to gender analysis that are not grounded in social analysis of target groups and their demand for agricultural innovation cannot help the CGIAR to address the gender gap in agricultural productivity.
3. Gender analysis that does not inform and catalyze organizational learning will remain irrelevant.
4. Social analysis that is oriented primarily to method and tool development and a strategy for integration that creates multiple, small-scale initiatives cannot play strategic and necessary roles in shaping research priorities.

These lessons translate into some corresponding challenges for transforming gender research in the CGIAR, as follows:
1. Given that the CGIAR has defined delivery of benefits for rural women as a measure of success, its innovations need to originate from the definition of benefits to be achieved for gender differentiated, social target groups, based on understanding of their demand. Programs that treat social (beneficiary) targeting as an afterthought will have great difficulty in delivering benefits to rural women.
2. Rigorous social and gender analysis grounded in the accepted theory and methods of a discipline, the alternative to tool-driven gender analysis, is required to inform target group definition and demand identification. This is a strategic role that cannot be performed if capacity for social and gender analysis is fragmented and scattered across multiple topic areas or geographical locations on the presumption that fragmentation equals integration (or "mainstreaming"). Integration of gender analysis should be defined as providing strategic inputs to other research areas. This needs coordination for identification of broadly relevant target groups and for monitoring trends in gender-differentiated demand.
3. Research strategies are needed that maximize opportunities for learning from social and gender analysis and admit realignment of research priorities based on this learning. Such approaches may include but should not be limited to participatory action research approaches.
4. If agricultural technology that benefits rural women cannot be developed in isolation from changes in structural inequalities that cause the gender gap in agricultural productivity, then the challenge for agricultural research is to co-develop technology in close interaction with development partners undertaking complementary structural change (such as land titling, micro-credit or cooperative organization). Co-development of gender-responsive innovations requires a fundamental change in the way the CGIAR conceives, organizes and participates in innovation processes and partnerships.

---

[18] STRIPE Review of Social Sciences in the CGIAR, 2008.

3. Meeting the Challenge of Improving Small-Scale Agriculture: Research, Practice and Gender Transformative Change

Rekha Mehra
Director of Economic Development,
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW),
Washington D.C., USA

The renewed interest in strengthening agricultural development is driven by the urgent need to reduce hunger, strengthen food security and reduce poverty. It has prompted the development community to consider new and more effective ways to improve small-scale agriculture. It is not business as usual. Agricultural research institutions are exploring ways to connect better with farmers and rural communities and to be more responsive to their needs. In addition to their science research, they are engaging more with social issues. Increasingly, they recognize that both women and men actively engage in agriculture, though in disparate ways and with unequal returns and differing incentives, factors that limit economic success and social transformation. Overall, research institutions are attempting to better link research with practice. They are, therefore, also attempting to build partnerships with project-implementing organizations, a process that requires, among other things, defining and clarifying the respective roles of researchers and practitioners and ways of working together to be more effective.

This brief explores the technical and social issues involved in linking research and practice in undertaking gender transformative agricultural development and, based on available lessons learned, identifies ways forward taking account of gaps, potential pitfalls and opportunities for success.

Gender transformative change
At least since the first UN Conference on Women in 1975, researchers and practitioners have noted that effective development requires the full integration of women along with men in development projects. As both women and men engage in economic work, researchers and practitioners offered evidence that neglecting women's roles could result in project failures. Later, they showed that integrating women could improve project results and development impacts. Notably, researchers demonstrated that income in women's hands had beneficial effects on women themselves and on families, as women invested in better nutrition, more education and health care.

As research showed that gender inequality resulted in limiting women's access to productive resources and development services such as land, capital, information and technology, gender-integrative development projects increasingly sought to redress these imbalances. Social change and greater gender equality were expected to follow. But feminist scholars objected to this instrumental approach and asserted women's agency, while others argued that unequal power relations required direct action (in addition to development) to promote equality and empower women. They asserted that sustainable development requires fundamental change in unequal social structures, norms and behaviors. In other words, addressing gender inequality requires gender transformative approaches that marry economic and social change. These methods must address not just scientific and technical issues such as productivity, profitability and unequal access to resources, but also must seek to transform gender norms and behaviors.

The term "gender transformative change" is more commonly used in the health sector with respect to changing social norms, especially as they pertain to health-seeking behavior. It is less common in other sectors and used variously. In this brief, it is used to capture a broad range of changes needed to address unequal power relations, the desired outcomes being to reduce gender disparities and promote gender equality and more sustainable agricultural development.

In the technical dimension, transformative change involves reducing poverty and improving food security through research, innovation and improved development practice. In the social and gender dimensions, transformative change requires not only transforming gender relations but also empowering women. Given unequal power in gender relations, the two must go hand-in-hand so women's agency, or ability to act on their own behalf, is strengthened through development. Women can thus play a growing role in their own empowerment as, with development, their spheres of power, control and choices grow in the marketplace, at home and in society. Finally, transformative change requires the needed social changes to occur at various levels—at the individual and personal level, at the level of the household, in communities, and at the institutional levels of the state and market. The technical changes also involve these levels but through different actors, namely, researchers and practitioners and their respective institutions.

In the context of the gender transformative framework sketched above, the next sections examine evidence and lessons learned in two critical areas: technology and innovation, which are the bailiwick of research; and practice through collective or group action, one of the more promising strategies for outreach, action and empowerment in poor communities and among women. Each section examines the question of what needs to be done to bring about gender transformative change in agricultural research and practice.

Research, technology and innovation
The focus of agricultural research is to innovate—to develop technology and conduct social and economic research that can help farmers improve productivity; processing; storage and marketing of crops, livestock and fish; and overall profitability. The goal is to develop better technologies such as, for example, more productive, more nutritious, better-adapted and more disease-resistant seed varieties, and deliver them to farmers to use. Both sound technology and farmer adoption are needed for society to realize the benefits of research. This has not always been a straightforward connection. It can be difficult either because small farmers, for very good reasons, are reluctant to adopt the new technologies offered to them because of risk, cost or other factors or because researchers did not understand and take account of farmer needs in these or other dimensions.

The pathway to success, therefore, lies not just in technological advance (which is critically necessary) but also in the link between researchers and farmers, so that researchers understand and take account of farmer needs and constraints and farmers have the opportunity to communicate them. This requires interdisciplinary and participatory research. Researchers need to reach out to farmers early on, determine what they need and want, and be responsive—building farmer requirements, along with other characteristics, into the technology being developed. In addition, technologies have to be affordable or measures have to be put into place to make them affordable, such as setting up credit facilities. In promoting input sales mainly of new seed varieties, for example, agro-dealers in Kenya are more effective in rural areas in increasing sales if they set up groups in which farmers save regularly to have funds available to buy seeds at planting time. Access to their own savings or credit is even more important for women, whose financial situation is often worse than that of men.

From a gender perspective, women's needs and demands may differ in fundamental ways from men's, and women are even less likely to be consulted than men about their needs and preferences. Evidence shows that, if consulted, women and men identify different characteristics as being important to them. In

the case of seeds or crop varieties, for example, women express greater interest than men in taste, nutrition and also whether or not a new variety will take long to cook—a reflection of their multiple responsibilities that pose different—often tighter—time constraints for them than for men. On the adoption side, besides cost, acceptability, risk and other reasons for non-adoption that women and men farmers share, women may have additional constraints, such as being unable to access information about product availability because they receive information in different ways than men, or extension agents do not reach out to them or take account of their different schedules. Further, women may have mobility constraints, or if they have access to markets, they may prefer or be able only to purchase in smaller amounts. Research in Kenya showed that women bought seeds more frequently than men, and in smaller amounts.[19]

Taking gender differences into account in designing new technologies will require consulting both women and men and taking account of considerations such as understanding the types of products they need and value and how they use and access them. For instance, because of the roles women play in a particular farming context, would women place more value on improvements in seeds or better harvest technologies, or would they be equally interested in both? Because of unequal power relations, it would also mean taking account of gender differences in decision making within the household, including the extent to which women make independent or joint decisions about farming and input purchase and use. It may also require taking account of pitfalls such as "male capture." The literature documents cases in which men displace women or take over a practice once women have demonstrated the success of an innovation or new technology.[20]

Finally, a big gap that is only just beginning to be filled is the need to know much more about the potential for technology and innovation to empower women. We know, for example, that big breakthroughs in technology such as the birth control pill have empowered women and fundamentally altered gender relations on a huge scale. While all technologies may not be so powerfully transformative, we need to know what types of new technologies could empower women more than others. We also need to understand the potential for empowerment in existing technologies and tap them creatively. For instance, we are just beginning to understand the possibilities of mobile phones for extending women's reach into farm markets as they use them to obtain price information. Similarly, mobile banking can offer women greater control over their earnings as they create and remotely manage their own bank accounts. We should be poised through sound research to capture such emerging opportunities to empower women.

Promising practices: collective action, empowerment and gender norm change
In development practice, collective action and other group-based strategies show promise in engaging poor communities and women in livelihood development. They are also viewed favorably in enabling women to act on their own behalf, whether to assert their rights or engage in activities that would otherwise be difficult for them in places where social norms confine them to less public roles. Thus, collective action can be empowering for poor people and women because there is strength in numbers, a collective voice can have greater impact than an individual alone, and group members can support and learn from each other and have opportunities to be self-reliant. In addition, from a development practice perspective, groups offer other advantages; for instance, they can act as entry points and venues for interventions, and offer greater potential for scale and efficiency versus reaching out to clients individually.

Although groups have had an uneven history in development practice[21] and building and sustaining groups requires investments of time, labor and specialized techniques, recent experiences with group-based methodologies in microfinance demonstrate that they can be successfully employed, and the lessons learned can be replicated in other contexts. Women's self-help groups (SHGs) in India illustrate the potential for groups as vehicles for development and women's empowerment. SHGs consist mainly of groups of low-income women constituted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or microfinance institutions (MFIs) who provide training in group building, governance, the key principles of microfinance, and bookkeeping and financial management. Initially, women are required to save and make loans to each other, both to learn the process and to demonstrate their credit worthiness. The goal is to enable members to access larger loans from associated MFIs and potentially from commercial banks through a nationwide SHG-Bank Linkage Program that seeks to widen access to financial services among the poor.

Since the early 1990s when the program started, the numbers and sophistication of MFIs and SHGs have grown substantially; in 2009, SHGs had 68 million members, mostly women; commercial banks had become more interested in the poor as viable customers.[22] In addition, many NGOs sought to leverage both the groups and microfinance for other development purposes, such as improvements in rural livelihoods (farm productivity, market linkages, crop and livestock commercialization, etc.), enterprise development, rural retail networks, and civic and political engagement. Group methodologies are now widely used and successful vehicles for microfinance and a broad range of rural development activities in many developing countries. In many cases, microfinance is the glue that holds the group together and is the essential building block for other layered activities, often termed credit plus. It is important to note, however, that forming and sustaining groups in any context are deliberate tasks that require application of specific though varied methodologies.

In India as elsewhere, practitioners believe that microfinance and groups are empowering for women (and the poor). Researchers cite as evidence women's improved access to and control of funds and asset growth; ability to manage money; group self-governance and decision making; access to and engagement in diversified economic activities including retail sales; and greater self-confidence demonstrated by running the groups and, sometimes, for office in local politics and engaging with authorities to demand better services. A growing number of studies document such empowerment effects.[23] However, both the poverty reduction and empowerment effects of microfinance are vigorously contested, with some studies actually showing disempowerment effects due to male loan co-option and increased violence against women.[24] Still other studies have found that violence declines over time.

[19] B. Okello, S. Paruzzolo, R. Mehra, A. Shetty and E. Weiss, 2012 (forthcoming), "Agrodealers in Western Kenya: How Promising for Development and Women?" International Center for Research on Women and AGMARK.

[20] A. Quisumbing and L. Pandofelli, 2010, "Promising Approaches to Address the Needs of Poor Female Farmers: Resources, Constraints and Interventions," World Development, 38(4).

[21] Problems include politicization, "free ridership," and others.

[22] J.P. Maes and L. Reed, 2012, "State of the Microcredit Summit Campaign Report, 2012," Microcredit Summit Campaign, Washington, DC

[23] International Center for Research on Women, 2009, "Do Self-Help Groups Facilitate Women's Empowerment: An Analysis of SHGs in Bihar," prepared for Lutheran World Relief; R. Bali Swain, 2007, "Can Microfinance Empower Women? Self-Help Groups in India," ADA Dialogue, 37; S. Galab and N. Chandrasekhara Rao, 2003, "Women, Self-Help Groups, Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment," Economic and Political Weekly, 38(12–13): 1274–1283.

[24] A.M. Goetz and R.S. Gupta, 1996, "Who Takes the Credit? Gender, Power, and Control Over Loan Use in Rural Credit Programmes in Bangladesh," World Development, 24(1).

An important concern for some is that some empowerment effects seem to occur even without deliberate interventions to induce them. Others argue that money in women's hands and opportunities to engage outside the home that women did not previously have, along with the social support and learning opportunities offered by groups, are empowering. N. Kabeer and H. Noponen, for example, found that participation of poor rural women SHG members in PRADAN's microfinance alone had less empowering effects than when income-generating or livelihood programs were added.[25] The combined programs had stronger impacts on women's agency than microfinance alone. Still, Kabeer and Noponen favor direct interventions for empowerment.

Little guidance is currently available on the specific content of direct interventions to empower women through project activities. Yet researchers and practitioners alike are calling for deliberate measures to induce gender transformative change. Practitioners, in particular, point to men's concerns about exclusion and their perception that women are being favored, especially when these factors impede project implementation. There is a critical need to devise ways to induce both women's empowerment and social norm change through projects and, more widely, throughout society. In the project context, the process may involve individuals; gender relations between men and women in households; depending on context, other related individuals such as mothers-in-law and co-wives; and various types and levels of community leaders. Importantly, it may also involve project staff and leaders who may need to be convinced of the importance of transforming gender relations and/or need to learn how to do it.

Experiments with social norm change are beginning to show the way across a range of development sectors, especially in health and education. However, the areas of both women's empowerment and social norm change are wide open and fertile ground for future research and practice—for defining, developing, implementing and evaluating ways to do them effectively in agricultural communities.

Conclusions and next steps

We are only just beginning to understand what works and what does not in gender transformative agriculture. The development community is eager for lessons learned and good practices. As described above, there is considerable scope for intensifying efforts to adopt and implement good practices and avoid pitfalls that we know about in integrating women into agricultural development projects and empowering them through engagement in development processes, especially those that increase their access to control over income and assets. We must continue to fill gaps, including, for example, determining the pathways through which women's empowerment occurs in group-based microfinance and livelihood development. We must also search for better and more targeted strategies to empower women and change gender norms and behaviors.

These gaps can be filled by researchers and practitioners working together to develop and test technical and social innovations in an iterative process that has learning at its core and feeds information back into development processes. This will involve deliberate steps to obtain sex-disaggregated data and improve their quality and availability; design and implement gender transformative projects in multiple geographic and social contexts; build capacity in gender transformative processes at many levels in development institutions and communities; and generate and widely disseminate contextualized knowledge and lessons learned. As we do this, we will learn more about how to initiate and sustain gender transformative change in agriculture even as we better meet the needs of poor communities for food security, poverty reduction and gender equality.

[25] N. Kabeer and H. Noponen, 2005, "Social and Economic Impacts of PRADAN's Self-Help Group Microfinance and Livelihoods Promotion: Analysis from Jharkhand, India," Impact Working Paper 11, Brighton, IDS, http://www2.ids.ac.uk/impact/publications/working_papers.html.

SECTION II: GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

1. Gender Transformative Approaches to Nutrition and Agriculture

Emily Hillenbrand
Regional Coordinator for Gender and Program Design,
Helen Keller International, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Introduction: new opportunities for gender change
Both the World Bank's World Development Report in 2012 and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) report in 2011 are dedicated to the issue of closing the gender gap in development and agriculture, respectively. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has mandated that all Feed the Future-funded projects use its multi-dimensional Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (measuring women's agency, intra-household asset ownership and community leadership) as one impact indicator.[26] The movement for mainstreaming gender in development has absorbed its critiques and come so far that even the World Bank acknowledges women's agency to be an important policy goal and states that closing the gender gap is not only "good economic sense," but also a development goal worth pursuing in its own right.[27] These are significant and high-profile achievements, and they provide momentum for this timely discussion on transformative approaches to gender.

At the same time, the SOFA report shows that the fundamental gender gap in asset ownership (particularly ownership of land, the most important asset for productivity) has changed little, and women remain "time-constrained by domestic and care-giving tasks" that affect their overall productivity.[28]

The challenge in implementing a transformational gender approach to agriculture is that transformation is not about pulling technical levers; it means applying a lens of social justice to the sector, taking a political stance and fundamentally reevaluating the value systems on which the sector of agriculture is institutionally constructed.

The current paradigm of agriculture for development is built on the strict segregation of the productive and reproductive realms, and on the familiar subordination of the reproductive (feminine) sphere to the productive. Agriculture research has been viewed primarily as a "hard" and therefore masculine science, while agriculture is measured as a commodity and often divorced from the social meanings and systems in which products are produced and traded. Incentives for technology development are focused on production and marketing tools, and not on the technologies that would bring efficiency to the reproductive drudgery and post-harvest tasks that take up so much of women's time and that could significantly improve women's position in the sector.

Trying to insert or mainstream gender into this masculine paradigm is challenging at best. One opportune approach to transforming the way the agriculture sector is defined is to view it through the lens of nutrition, which has also reemerged as an important development goal. Measuring agricultural success in terms of its nutritional outcomes (at project, sectoral and national levels) revalues food as a means to well-being and health, as well as a commodity and engine for growth. Focusing on agriculture as a vehicle for nutrition can incentivize the diversification of national agriculture production strategies, which can give visibility to smaller farmers (including women) and create

incentives to develop local and regional food systems. It can revalue women's multiple contributions (caring, feeding, farming) and possibly increase investment in undervalued subsistence activities, such as home gardening. In other words, it brings to the forefront many of the gender gaps and inequalities (women's time poverty, women's multiple roles) for which advocates for gender equality in agriculture have been struggling to gain recognition.

However, nutrition itself is a gendered sector, and many approaches to nutrition reproduce gender dichotomies and inequalities. If agriculture is viewed as a male science, nutrition is viewed as a feminine calling and as an unquestioned female responsibility. Challenging the androcentric assumptions in the agriculture sector also means questioning gendered notions around care and nutrition, so that men's caring roles, in both the production and utilization of nutritious food, are recognized and supported.

Too often, however, gender strategies and trainings are mainstreamed out of budgets and considered "everyone's issue, but no one's responsibility." Shifting dominant ideas and beliefs about gender dichotomies is a slow and deliberate process. Just as changing nutrition behaviors requires investing resources in a comprehensive, multidimensional communication strategy, so too does investing in gender beliefs. A transformational approach means re-politicizing gender to tackle the overt and covert barriers to women's agency and advancement. It entails making connections with the sectors that are rarely linked to productivity, including democracy governance programs and those working on gender-based violence (GBV). The following reflections discuss some of Helen Keller International (HKI)'s recent efforts to enact transformative gender changes around nutrition and agriculture.[29]

Making the political personal: making staff accountable for gender actions
"Transformational change" calls up the somewhat outmoded idea of consciousness raising. From HKI's experience, the consciousness of implementing staff and managers is the first target for transformation. HKI has seen progressive gender proposals become distorted in implementation under the direction of Chief of Parties (COPs) or project managers who see gender as a distraction from their "real" goals and busy work-plans. Making gender matter means making it personal. It's important for staff to see gender equality not as an abstraction or a checkbox or a one-off training, but as a core development value. HKI starts with a reflexive staff training process that pushes staff and managers out of their comfort zones, away from gender jargon and into critical reflection that makes the issues personally relevant.

It is important to start incorporating the goals that reflect the deepest level of gender disparities: Measuring low birth weight in a nutrition program, for example, reflects underlying gender disparities such as early marriage. The very fact of measuring such goals is a way of making them visible and politically meaningful.

Defining the gender norms and actions at the outset
One of the challenges of mainstreaming gender is that there are no accepted WHO guidelines for gender transformative change. Unless the "awareness" is followed with actions for which staff are accountable, the momentum of a good training will be lost. Implementing staff are primarily looking for a work-plan to follow; they can only be effective agents of change when they have clear, measureable actions to follow and a personal understanding of their relevance. Successfully implementing a transformative

[26] Feed the Future, 2012, Feed the Future. [Online] USG. [Cited: August 10, 2012.]
http://feedthefuture.gov/article/release-womens-empowerment-agriculture-index.
[27] World Bank, 2012, World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development. Washington, DC: World Bank.
[28] FAO, 2011, State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011: Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap in Development. Rome: FAO.
[29] Helen Keller International Bangladesh, 2012, Nobo Jibon Gender Attitudes and Practices Survey, Dhaka: Save the Children International.

approach to gender—whether at a project level, an organizational level or a program level—means instituting and budgeting for a consistent process to identify the targeted harmful norms that should be questioned throughout the project, institution or program. This can be followed by a process for defining the specific actions, messages and activities that will be used to question or controvert those norms, until a new habit is formed.

In the Nobo Jibon project in Bangladesh, for example, HKI carried out a baseline "gender attitudes and practices" survey, showing baseline gender beliefs in the project area, and also the differences in beliefs among members of a same household. This survey helped identify those beliefs that seem culturally untouchable and those beliefs where there is significant intra-household disagreement or conflict.

Also at the project outset, HKI implemented a reflexive training with all mid-level managers, during which the participants themselves identified the four key gender inequalities or norms that they thought were most important to challenge. They then applied these norms to a review of the existing work-plan to identify a) activities where these gender issues were already being addressed and b) areas where they should be addressed within the project. Then the draft ideas were taken to a smaller gender sub-committee to translate into specific activities and messages.

The pragmatic challenge in this approach is budgeting for a fluid process, since the precise activities cannot be identified in the project design stage. Another challenge is making sure that all project staff members are held accountable to the subsequent activities. In practice, there was a tendency throughout this process for participants to see gender as a nutrition-relevant activity only. In addition, although the trainees recognized that historical gender inequities affected hiring patterns, any practical suggestion

to provide supplemental support to female staff was seen as "bias." This type of affirmative action and/or some kind of quota may need to be built into organizational policies and structures, so that they become automatic in a given project.

Reexamining men's domestic roles
The gender and agriculture literature recognizes that women's domestic and reproductive tasks impede their agricultural productivity, while the nutrition community worries that increasing women's involvement in agriculture or income generation may impede their breastfeeding and childcare. Neither sector, however, seems to question existing gender assignments for childcare and reproductive labor. Gender roles in agriculture and caring are very strictly assigned, and it is often assumed that they are immutable. However, HKI's experience in Bangladesh suggests that these assumptions themselves may be preventing us from demanding and creating change. In a survey about gender norms, attitudes and practices in Bangladesh,[30] for example, there is clearly willingness among men to be involved in caring— which can free up women's time for production activities. The nutrition strategy for this project included activities to help men and mothers-in-law set goals to share mothers' workload activities during the first six months after delivery, to improve breastfeeding success.

Similarly, in a project called Making Markets Work for Women, women were asked to identify the reproductive tasks with which they wanted more family support. Project staff then worked these goals into gender trainings with beneficiaries and their spouses. One year into the project, monitoring data showed significant improvements in practices of workload sharing between couples. It seems that the challenge, then, is recognizing that it is possible to leverage men's involvement, and then being sure to provide guidelines, incentives and measures of men's support.
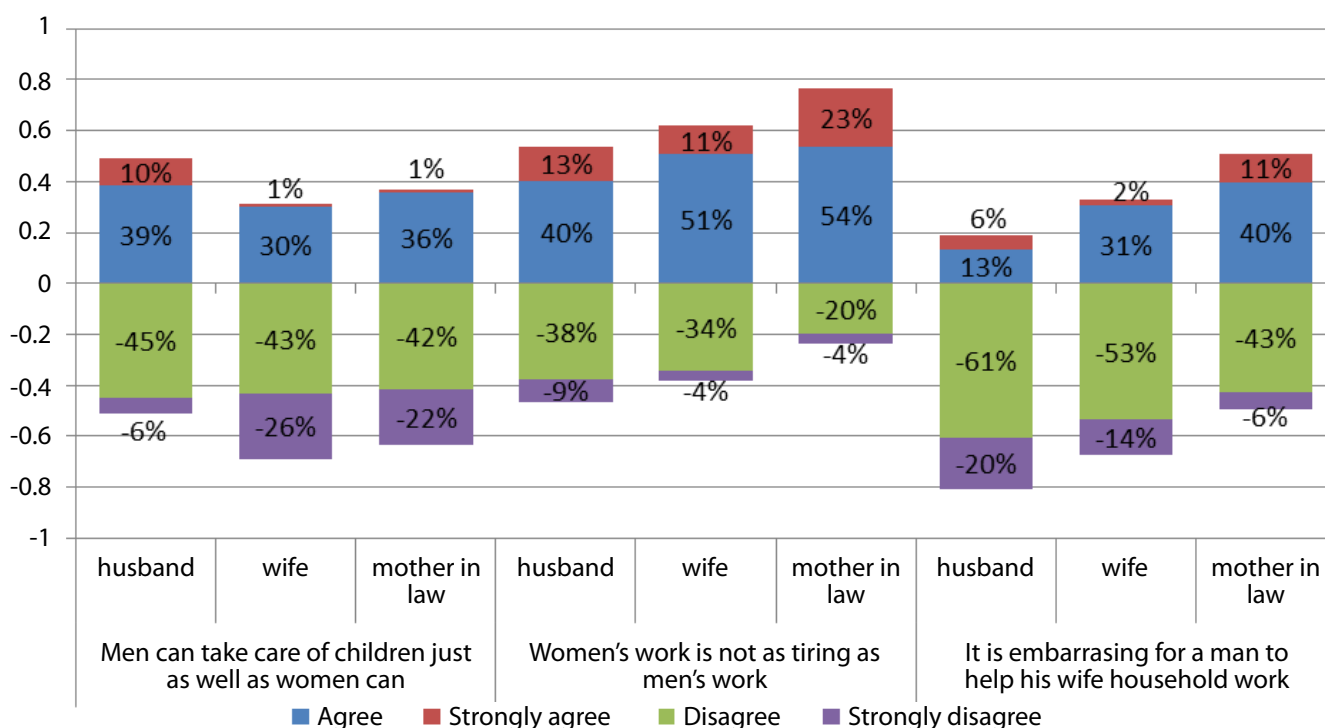

Figure 1. Nobo Jibon Gender Attitudes and Practices Survey, HKI Bangladesh, 2012(4)

30 The Gender Attitudes and Practices Survey was administered at the baseline of the Nobo Jibon Project, which is a five-year, Title II Food Security Project implemented by Save the Children International. HKI is the technical partner for nutrition and gender.

In an HKI agriculture project in Indonesia, the communications strategy around nutrition explicitly builds a strategic behavioral objective around more equitable sharing of household and agriculture workloads, particularly during the harvest season, when women's workloads can triple. While the goal is ostensibly to promote exclusive breastfeeding of infants, the strategy is targeted at all women and men in the project, not just those with <6-month-old infants. The project uses the existing neighborhood system for dividing up harvest-period work tasks, treating child feeding and infant care as household responsibilities. To reposition and reward the gender behavior change, the strategy includes an end-of- harvest celebration, in which women themselves compete to nominate the "most helpful husband," who is in turn publicly recognized by the community and religious leaders. This contest (and similar activities, such as celebrating nutritious recipes created with locally produced foods during farmer field days) can be "scaled up" to the district and regional levels, thus actively promoting a different cultural view and appreciation of nutrition and domestic workload sharing.

Measuring and addressing barriers to agency
The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) provides a multidimensional measure of women's relative benefits from different agriculture interventions. However, one dimension that is not captured is the fact of potential barriers to women's agency—particularly, violence against women. In South Asia, in particular, the threat of violence is an instrument of disempowerment, curtailing women's agency within the household and in the community. It is important to make linkages with and draw lessons from the approaches that successfully address GBV (especially those that engage men) that are most often seen in the sectors that address HIV, sexuality and reproductive health.

There is a growing literature in the nutrition and health fields linking multidimensional definitions of women's autonomy to better child nutrition and health outcomes. This evidence can be presented and built upon as a motivation to directly address the strategic question of gender-based violence in the agriculture and nutrition sectors.

As part of a measure of the overall achievements of the Nobo Jibon food security project in Bangladesh, HKI established a community-level indicator measuring changes in attitudes toward violence against women, which reflects societal attitudes about women's secondary status. The baseline data showed that gender-based violence is an internalized and accepted part of women's daily lives; qualitative data from similar projects show that the threat of violence and abuse prevents women from taking self-care or child-care actions. The survey, repeated at end-line, will be able to show links between attitudes toward violence and nutrition and agriculture productivity outcomes.

In an HKI project in northern Bangladesh, where marriage age is extremely young, an integrated gender- nutrition curriculum was developed (drawing from approaches used in the reproductive health and HIV/AIDS sector) that directly discusses intra-household power issues and allows family members to build constructive communication skills. The overall goal of the project is focused on improving women's ability to participate effectively in agriculture markets; currently, women's capacity to negotiate and compete is curtailed by mobility restrictions, limited negotiation skills and thin networks. In this project, the capacity building starts at the household and community levels, by building the enabling environment for women to negotiate and gain confidence in their own decision-making skills.

Programming against gender-based violence, which is often funded through reproductive health or emergency or post-conflict settings, has many effective tools and processes for working with men and changing gender relations. Recognizing gender-based violence as a deterrent to women's agency, agriculture and nutrition programs can build transformative partnerships and linkages with such programs.

Taking gender equity to scale
One of the main challenges for mainstreaming transformational gender strategies is the push to take projects "to scale." HKI's experience is that effective behavior change—whether around nutrition or gender—requires intensive, community-level work and an appropriate commitment of time, capacity building, and resources. It also means budgeting for the monetary incentives and extra costs that may be required to encourage staff to take up non-typical gender positions, for example, or to provide a transportation allowance to enable women to participate in meetings, or to help women get joint titles on property or assets.

Can intensive, targeted community-level behavior-change actions have the same effect when they are scaled up and watered down? The lack of serious funding for instituting gender-focused change and the short project cycle (three to five years) is counterproductive to shifting behavioral norms. Over the past three years, for example, HKI Bangladesh competed for several US-funded calls for innovative, gender focused agriculture projects. The meager funding made available to these calls, however, ($5 million globally) undercuts the message that gender is an important investment.

However, intensive local actions can be balanced with the "at-scale" policy issues required to change the gender balance in the sector. To achieve the strategic changes that can have a true impact at scale (for instance, women's land ownership and women's equal representation at all levels in the agriculture sector), it is important to partner with the democracy and governance sectors, which invest in women's political participation and awareness of their rights. The media are also instrumental in perpetuating dominant gender norms at scale. In the U.S., there is growing awareness about how the sexualization of and limited representation of women in the media correlate with women's underrepresentation in positions of power and influence (see, for example, www.missrepresentation.org). If gender transformation is to be taken to scale, advocates for an expanded view of women and men in agriculture and nutrition need to learn to work with media as instruments for change at large scale.

Through such strategic partnerships, agriculture programming can help expand women's strategic choices and political representation, as it simultaneously strengthens women's material and economic base.

Taking transformation forward: questions for reflection
How can we systematically link agriculture with reproductive health and democracy and governance sectors for greater impact? Many agriculture interventions improve the material base of women, which can narrow the gap between men and women within the same household. In contrast, sectors such as reproductive health or democracy and governance draw attention to women's rights yet do little to improve the material base that ultimately gives women the bargaining power to claim their rights. A gender-transformative approach means uniting rights-based and livelihood actors and making the symbolic, as well as material, gender disparities visible so that they can be challenged.

How can we engage, not alienate, men in the struggle for equitable gender relations in agriculture?
Reevaluating agriculture in gender-transformative terms calls for expanding limited views of masculinity. It calls for partnerships, rather than hierarchies. Men must be involved in establishing new rules of engagement that allow men—as well as women— expanded agency and participation in the sector in the broader struggles for food sovereignty, nutrition security and sustainable food systems.

How do we create a gender-in-agriculture movement that reaches across sectors and achieves scale?
Shifting societal gender norms is a massive undertaking, which requires investment in time-intensive capacity building, training and dialogue activities. Many donors have progressive gender goals and expectations, but how can these goals be achieved within the framework of a three- or five-year project?

The nutrition sector has taken a social movement approach to "Scaling Up Nutrition" (SUN) and ensuring that nutrition goals are taken seriously and are funded. It has the backing of multiple donors, reaches across all relevant sectors, including the agriculture sector, and has a clear platform of action. The gender in agriculture community has the broad momentum to shape a similar movement—one that addresses political equality and corrects the limited representation of women at all levels of agriculture.

2. Transforming Gender and Enhancing Equity

Jane Brown
Africa Team Leader, Center for Communication Programs,
John Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

The change was about money … because my husband used to sell land by force even when I had refused and the money could just be wasted but recently we … bought a big piece of land where we grow food crops. You see that now we share ideas. I am the one who brought up the idea of buying land in the village. (Married Female Participant)

Yes it changed me because after seeing the clips, I also had some jobs I regarded as feminine just like any other man …. And on seeing Ssalongo, I won't lie to you, if my wife goes to the farm and has left food cooking, I watch it and if she goes to the rivers, if I see a log, I go and take it home … now we associate very well. Before the training, I would think my wife was disrespecting me, how dare she ask me to cook, but after the training all that ceased to be. (Married Male Participant)

Gender disparities and the underlying gender norms and constructs that fuel them play a critical—often negative—role in the well-being of women, men and families and the development of communities. Consequences of gender inequity include poor health outcomes, restrained economic growth, low literacy and stalled poverty reduction efforts. It is only when women and men have equitable access to resources and education, participate fully in decision making, and share responsibilities—in and outside the home—that societies will truly be able to thrive.

Efforts to "re-set" the balance of existing gender power dynamics include empowering (economically, educationally, etc.) women and girls, working with men to reframe traditional concepts of "masculinity," and dialogic approaches that engage women and men together to explore how gender norms and expectations influence their lives and that take action to make changes that are mutually beneficial. While these different tactics have proven successful in reaching their goals, it is suggested that transformative approaches focusing on the interdependence of women and men are likely to yield the greatest impact. Gender-specific initiatives can have an important role in bringing about change, especially when addressing health issues, but they can also cause resentment among those who are not invited to participate and feel their needs are being shortchanged. Bringing men and women together provides an opportunity to explore and internalize how sharing power and resources leads to a gain for both and not a loss for either. An example of a successful dialogic approach is African Transformation™ (AT™).

African Transformation™ is a gender tool designed to promote participatory development, gender equity and human agency. Adapted from Arab Women Speak Out™ (AWSO), the first of a series of programs to highlight and capitalize on the interdependence of men and women, the approach has since evolved to Tchova Tchova Historias de Vida, Moving Forward: Life Stories (TTHV).[31] It is predicated on the following ideas: that gender, or the social differentiation between men and women, is temporally and culturally constructed and transmutable; that gender norms are deeply rooted and typically resistant to change; and that changes in gender norms will be appropriate and

sustainable only if constructed or reconstructed through a participatory process.[32]

The methodology involves bringing women and men together for facilitated discussions; the centerpiece of each session is a video profile of a woman, man or couple of "humble means" who overcomes gender-related barriers to accomplish goals. The use of real-life role models inspires participants to consider alternatives and try out new behaviors. During the sessions, participants begin to rethink their assumptions, explore the implications of the stories for their own lives and discuss their options with other group members. They examine the relationship between gender norms and health outcomes as they begin to produce, maintain, repair and in some cases transform gender constructs as they see fit. The sessions are not prescriptive; there is no attempt to direct participants to adopt specific gender norms. Rather, the goal is to spark discussions about gender constructs so as to enable participants to interrogate gender norms, preserving those they find beneficial and reconstructing those they consider harmful.[33]

Effective social and behavior change programs are based on research and grounded in theory. In this case, the approach was inspired by Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization, Albert Bandura's social learning theory and James Carey's notion of ritualistic communication.[34]

Formative research is essential to explore not only the results of gender inequity (e.g., disparities in access, income, etc.) but the underlying attitudes, norms, perceptions and expectations that lead to those inequities, so the root causes can be addressed. It can also reveal tensions between traditional and ideal notions of gender which, when understood, can be used to facilitate change. In Mozambique, both men and women indicated they favor views of more equitable roles (harmony and understanding, dialogue, sharing workload at home) and share disapproval for men's risky sexual behaviors and traditions that are harmful to women and the family. However, their desire for change competed with fears that acting differently would elicit criticism from peers and relatives. Knowing that people tend to remain silent when they feel that their views will be questioned, TTHV supported a complementary mass media program centered around the idea of "breaking the spiral of silence" that addressed harmful gender-related attitudes and practices that fuel Mozambique's high rate of HIV.

Impact evaluations provide insight into the effectiveness of the transformational process and the dynamics at work. Given the complexity of what is at stake, a variety of approaches are needed. In the case of AT™, respondents were asked a series of questions to determine how participation affected normative understandings of gender (by looking at everyday tasks and whether they were the responsibility of men, women or both) and whether respondents said their respect for a man or woman who undertook roles traditionally assigned to the other gender would decrease; also, an adapted version of the "gender equitable masculinity" scale was used.[35] To assess agency, the participants were asked if they had undertaken various activities since the workshop. The combination of approaches indicated that AT™ was very successful, and important insights were gained into the processes at work—but methods to evaluate if and how gender transformative processes take place call for continued refinement

[31] Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs, 2012, "Community- Based & Mass Media Communication Change HIV/AIDS-Related Social Norms & Sexual Behaviors in Mozambique," Communication Impact, 27.

[32] Carol Underwood and Bushra Jabre, 2008, "Enabling Women's Agency: Arab Women Speak Out," Journal of Communication and Social Change 2(2): 12–32; Carol Underwood, Jane Brown, Donna Sherard, Basil Tushabe and Afeefa Abdur-Rahman, 2011, "Reconstructing Gender Norms Through Ritual Communication: A Study of African Transformation," Journal of Communication 61: 197–218.

[33] Underwood et al., "Reconstructing Gender Norms."

[34] Ibid.

[35] J. Pulerwitz and G. Barker, 2008, "Measuring Attitudes Toward Gender Norms Among Young Men in Brazil: Development and Psychometric Evaluation of the GEM Scale," Men and Masculinities 10(3): 322–338.

of research methodologies, including those that can more clearly identify the pathways from gender normative change to better health and development outcomes, as well as a commitment to rigorously evaluate programs designed to enhance gender equity.

The survey results for AT™ and TTHV indicated participation had a positive impact on notions of gender equity, including what are considered appropriate roles for women and men in and outside the home. Qualitative findings demonstrated increased communication among partners around household decision making, including income generation and household expenditures. These all have important implications for women's (and men's) roles in the workforce and the home. Women's traditional role as family caretakers limits their economic opportunities. As more men accept and participate in household tasks, opportunities for women's economic advancement and contribution to household income will increase, as will men's engagement with their families. In agricultural production, many tasks are "feminized" despite evidence of the ability of men to perform these tasks equally well. The reverse also holds, and generally men run equipment and handle tools, jobs that usually require training and elicit higher wages.[36] As perceptions change around appropriate gender roles on the job, notions of women's work being of less value can also change, as well as lead to improved opportunities for women to take on higher-paid jobs.

Perhaps equally important is the economic decision making within the household. Too often women's wages are appropriated by men, or women have little to no say in how the family's income is spent. As more value is placed on the sharing of these decisions, women, men and their families will all benefit.

Sustained normative gender change requires dialogue and action at all levels of society—individual actions are influenced by (and influence) family, community, and the larger socioeconomic and political sphere. To extend the reach of the dialogic approach, mass media are essential for reaching large numbers of people and stimulating widespread dialogue. (Under TTHV, the approach was expanded to include a complementary radio campaign featuring spots, interactive radio, and a nationwide radio debate on gender and HIV.) To deepen the penetration and sustain the momentum, communities need to invest in supporting gender normative change. In Mozambique, "champions," identified through ongoing monitoring, set up local action groups to continue making changes related to harmful gender norms and pursue gender equity.

Gender norms can evolve as men and women have the opportunity to decide for themselves how they will operate in their lives and make changes based on those decisions. The interdependent approach of African Transformation™ has also evolved, from its roots in an intervention that foregrounded the interdependence of men and women but involved women only (AWSO™), to gender-mixed community discussions (AT™), to the addition of a complementary mass media campaign and sustained community action groups (TTHV). Evaluation results from each program[1,2] indicate that they are having an impact on transforming gender norms to improve the lives of women and men. To date, this approach has been tested in the Near East and in African settings,[2] primarily in the arena of health. There are strong indications that the model can be applied to any context and arena where gender norms and constructs are limiting the full participation of both sexes in society. With global economic uncertainty, the influence of climate change on food production and the industrialization of agriculture—all of which will have an impact on gender relations—the need to build lasting equitable partnerships between men and women has perhaps never been greater.

Lessons learned
- Presenting real-life examples of role models who were able to overcome gender barriers played a significant part in changing perceptions of gender norms, enabling people to take the risk of practicing new behaviors and strengthen their self-efficacy to make changes in their homes and communities.
- Broadcasting the profiles and conducting a complementary mass media campaign contributed to setting the public agenda and sparking discussions that are essential for creating an enabling environment that inspires and legitimates change.

Challenges and recommendations
- Taking it to scale: While mass media play an important role in transforming gender attitudes, norms and behaviors, this gender transformative approach has proven to work in small discussion settings where women and men have the time and space to explore and reconstruct gender norms. For widespread societal change, participation needs to take place on a larger scale. To date, the approach has only been used in projects concerned with health-related outcomes; this should be expanded across all sectors.
- Long-lasting gender normative change must happen at all levels to be sustained; this includes implementing gender equitable policies and laws in the workplace, nationally and through community bylaws, among others. Further exploration is needed to determine how the approach can be used to strengthen advocacy efforts at the highest levels.
- Gender transformative approaches should be adapted[37] and tested with adolescent boys and girls, as gender norms are formed early.

For further consideration
- The evaluations of AWSO™, AT™ and TTHV were carried out within 3–18 months after participation; additional long-term research is needed to determine whether and how the change can be further normalized and sustained, and if additional interventions are needed.
- Conducting research among community members who did not participate in the program but were impacted by it can yield valuable insights into how change was sparked within communities, the role played by "change agents" and how the ideas were diffused.
- Studies should also be conducted with the adolescent children of participants to assess the extent to which there is a "ripple effect" among family members of participants.
- Formative research should be conducted to better understand the gender dynamics at work in the agricultural context. The gender-based division of labor and profit taking could be examined at each stage of the production and commercialization chain (work load, "feminized" tasks, wages, gendered child labor, "casual" work, sexual harassment, access to health care services, etc.) so that appropriate interventions are designed, implemented and evaluated.

---

[36] Economic and Social Development Department, 2009, Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank.
[37] AT™ has been implemented with young people in the Ivory Coast addressing gender-related HIV and AIDS issues.

3. Moving Gender Transformative Research into Practice

Frederick Mubiru, Rebekan Lundgren and Melissa K. Adams
Gender Roles Equality and Transformations Project, Gulu, Northen Uganda

Introduction

Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) received funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement the Gender Roles, Equality and Transformations (GREAT) Project in northern Uganda. The five-year project (September 2010–October 2015), implemented in partnership with Save the Children and Pathfinder International, aims to improve gender equality and reproductive health in northern Uganda. This will be achieved by facilitating the formation of gender equitable norms and the adoption of attitudes and behaviors that positively influence health outcomes among boys and girls aged 10–19. GREAT is designed to encompass four key principles: It is informed by research and evidence based, designed for scale, tailored to adolescent life stages, and cognizant of the need to be ecological in approach.

Adolescence—early adolescence in particular—represents a window of opportunity to promote positive attitudes and behaviors: It is during these early years that gender norms and identities begin to coalesce, laying a foundation for adult relationships and sexual and reproductive health. Sustainable, widespread change of gender norms will depend on harnessing the processes through which social norms and attitudes about gender, family planning, reproductive health and violence are transmitted within a society. However, to develop effective interventions, more needs to be known about how boys and girls come to experience and define themselves as men and women and how harmful constructions are, and might be, contested. It is critical that interventions are not only effective but also feasible for programs to implement at sufficient scale to make them transformational and broadly adapted.

To this end, the GREAT project consortium conducted formative research to inform the development of evidence-based gender transformative interventions that will be evaluated for impact and scaled up if successful. This think piece presents the process of translating research into action and reflects on both challenges and lessons learned.

Background

Evidence suggests that gender norms and social expectations of appropriate roles and behaviors for men, boys, women and girls, as well as the transmission of these norms by individuals and social institutions, directly influence health-related behaviors.[38] Inequitable gender norms are related to a range of issues, including family planning use, reproductive health decision making, parenting practices, gender-based violence, and transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.[39] Gender- based violence itself is a major cause of morbidity and mortality among girls and women and increases their future vulnerability to ill health.[40] Violence rooted in gender inequality is compounded by notions of masculinity, including the need to dominate women. Women and girls living in conflict or post-conflict settings, such as northern Uganda, are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Northern Uganda is currently recovering from more than 20 years of civil strife, resulting in massive disruption of health services, internal displacement, erosion of traditional social and family structures (56% of the population are youth, with 23% orphaned), and high incidence of gender-based violence.[41] Early initiation of sexual activity, engagement in transactional and intergenerational sex (9.6% of women aged 15–24), and lack of access to reproductive health information and services contribute to increased risk of unintended pregnancy and HIV infection.[42]

Formative research

During the first phase of the GREAT project, the project consortium conducted formative research, consisting of a **program review** and **ethnographic research,** to inform intervention design.

Program review

During the program review, GREAT sought to identify programs that addressed adolescent sexual and reproductive health and gender, including gender-based violence, and which utilized approaches that could be adapted and scaled up in northern Uganda. The team identified 61 projects through the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), project partners, existing literature and program reviews, and through 28 key informant interviews. For each identified project, the team determined the target population, main outcomes, level of evidence, lessons learned and potential for scale-up.

Ethnographic research

The ethnographic research was conducted in two post-conflict districts in north-central Uganda: Lira in the Lango sub-region and Pader in the Acholi sub-region. Data were collected from two sites in each district between March and October 2011. The team of ethnographers consisted of eight members (four male, four female) hired by project partners (Save the Children and Pathfinder) for the specific purpose of conducting this research. They ranged in age from their early 20s to mid-30s, were from the regions where they would be conducting interviews, and had intimate and extensive knowledge of the social, cultural and political context in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions. All interviewers were fluent in Lango/Acholi and English and had training in social work, counseling, and/or psychology. They all had previous experience either working with children and/or conducting qualitative research. The ethnographers worked in teams of two (one interviewer and one note taker).

The team of ethnographers was directly supervised by a Uganda-based research coordinator. She had a masters degree in public health from Makerere University and was also a trained social worker with eight years of experience working on the issues of GBV, HIV/AIDS, and adolescent sexual and reproductive health throughout Uganda, including northern Uganda. She was fluent in English, Lango and Acholi and was familiar with the cultural, social and political context in these sub-regions. Her primary responsibilities as research coordinator were to provide ongoing technical leadership and program management support to the research team. The research coordinator was supported remotely by the US-based principal investigators through weekly Skype calls and two in-country meetings. The ethnographers participated in two training workshops, one week of field testing, and a post-test workshop. The first workshop was three days long and was conducted by the research coordinator and a local co-investigator from Makerere University. The training focused on orienting the ethnographers to the GREAT project and the key concepts of gender, gender-based violence, and adolescent

38 M.E. Greene and G. Barker, 2011, "Masculinity and Its Public Health Implications for Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Prevention," in Routledge Handbook of Global Public Health, R. Parker and Marni Sommer (eds.), New York: Routledge.
39 Inter Agency Gender Working Group (IGWG), 2011, "A Summary Report of New Evidence that Gender Perspectives Improve Reproductive Health Outcomes," Population Reference Bureau (PRB).
40 L. Ashford and C. Feldman-Jacobs, 2010, "The Crucial Role of Health Services in Responding to Gender-based Violence," USAID, IGWG and PRB.
41 J. Annan, C. Blattman and R. Horton, 2006, "The State of Youth and Youth Protection in Northern Uganda," UNICEF.
42 Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010, "Population Projection Report."

sexual and reproductive health. An overview of ethical considerations while working with human subjects and children was also provided. The second training (held one week later), was conducted by the research coordinator and one of the US-based principal investigators. The training provided an orientation to the formative research, team roles and responsibilities, research protocol, and ethical considerations specific to the study (including practicing obtaining informed consent from children and their parents). The training also included a review of the research instruments, how to handle emotionally charged situations, key interviewing and note-taking skills, data transcription, and data management (including practice sessions and role plays). All instruments were then field tested over a one-week period, and a post-test workshop was conducted in which the research team discussed successes, challenges and needed revisions to the research instruments. Once data collection began, ethnographers received ongoing feedback and support from the research coordinator and principal investigators.

Forty life history interviews with adolescents and 40 in-depth interviews with significant others identified by youth participants were conducted to provide contextualized understanding of how gender norms and attitudes are formed, what these norms and attitudes are, and how they are related to GBV and adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Interviews explored gendered experiences of puberty, sexuality, reproduction and violence at key points in the life course when youth are adopting new roles and responsibilities and constructing elements of their gender identities—very young adolescence, older adolescence, newly married and parenting youth.

Participatory data collection methods, including projective techniques (photo/object elicitation, drawing), were used to facilitate rich discussions. Interviews with significant others focused on respondents' knowledge and attitudes regarding gender and sexual and reproductive health, how these attitudes were formed, and their perceived influence on adolescents. US-based researchers in collaboration with Ugandan counterparts conducted inductive and deductive analyses of transcripts using a grounded theory approach. The study protocol and research instruments were approved by Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at Georgetown University and Makerere University.

The challenges faced while conducting this research included the following:

- Due to the nature of the research and the fact that research participants were as young as 10, receiving IRB approval took several months, which significantly delayed the research process.
- The use of projective techniques was new to interviewers and research participants, and therefore during the training workshop a lot of time had to be spent practicing these techniques so that interviewers felt comfortable using them. Some projective techniques worked better than others during pre-testing, and therefore changes needed to be made to the data collection instruments, and certain activities were removed.
- The interviews with adolescents were long and had to be conducted in two sessions (one week apart) either after school, on weekends or during school holidays. There were a couple of instances of loss to follow up and new participants had to be identified.
- The ethnographers resided in the research communities during the data collection period and while there, they witnessed incidences of violence and had to negotiate their level of involvement in such incidences.
- Certain life experiences were traumatic for participants and difficult for them to share. Interviewers received training from a child counselor on how to handle such situations in a sensitive manner. In addition, a referral

network was set up so that (if needed) participants could receive additional psychosocial counseling.
- Managing expectations of communities was also an important challenge. This was done by holding community-level meetings prior to conducting the research. During these meetings, the objectives of the research and expected outputs were clearly described, and community members had an opportunity to ask questions. In addition, a thorough informed-consent process was conducted with identified participants and (if relevant) their parents.

Key actionable findings
The formative research generated the following results that were used to inform intervention development.

Key program review findings
Findings show that programs that involve different cohorts of young people in a segmented and targeted way using age and life-stage appropriate activities and that meaningfully engage multiple stakeholders have proved successful. Key findings include the following:

- Successful programs include **complementary interventions** at the structural, social and individual levels (e.g., mass media complemented by small group reflection).
- Programs that aim to address gender should **start by looking inwards** and working with program staff to reflect on their own gender norms.
- **Identify and foster champions** and role models that demonstrate positive behaviors, norms and choices.
- In post-conflict settings, gender inequality may not be a felt or expressed need. Therefore, **consider finding entry points** such as sports, health services and livelihood opportunities.
- **Focus on power** rather than gender. Power can be discussed within the context of daily lives and can be both positive and negative. Discussing power empowers young men and women without necessarily placing the blame on someone.
- Programs that **engage girls and boys separately** with intentional efforts to bring them together at different points have been effective.

Key ethnographic research findings
- **Revitalizing culture**: Results reveal a picture of communities striving to rebuild their cultural identities and practices in the aftermath of tremendous social disruption and violence. It is important to support the efforts of leaders and communities to revitalize positive elements of cultural traditions in a gender-equitable way.
- **Influencing gender norm formation**: Family members, peers and elders were found to play central roles in the socialization of gender norms among children and adolescents. Efforts should be made to engage all of these individuals, harnessing existing socialization processes.
- **Talking about gender**: The conceptualization of an "ideal" man as one who protects and provides for his family was expressed by study participants of all ages and sexes. This could provide a leverage point in addressing gender-based violence.
- **Sexual and reproductive health**: Study participants reported that contraceptive use was infrequent in their communities, citing barriers such as lack of support from male partners, perceived negative side effects, stigma and concern that use will cause marital discord.
- A**ddressing violence**: Participants reported that multiple forms of violence—verbal, emotional, physical and sexual violence—were common, and identified alcohol use and conflict over land as contributing factors. Community mobilization against violence is likely to be well received,

as all participants expressed a desire for ongoing community sensitization on violence.

GREAT Intervention Model

The formative research findings were used to develop a constellation of interventions that can impact gender norms to positively influence health outcomes with the potential to catalyze widespread, sustainable movements to challenge gender inequalities.

The intervention strategy is based on a life course perspective with differentiated yet complementary interventions for different age groups. Interventions for very young adolescents (VYAs) are designed to lay the basis for future health and well-being by forming equitable gender norms and attitudes, while interventions for older adolescents are designed to foster healthier, more equitable behaviors. The GREAT intervention model includes the following components:

- A **radio drama** as a means of catalyzing discussion and change at scale. The radio drama has been developed by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda, which has vast experience in developing behavior-change-focused serialized radio dramas targeting the youth.
- The development of a **scalable toolkit** to promote reflection and dialogue. The toolkit is comprised of a Coming of Age Flip Book and Community Engagement Game to be used by very young adolescents, and Activity Cards to be used by older and married adolescents. These have been designed with the partnership by specialized teams and variously reviewed. These will be rolled out through existing small groups.
- A **community action cycle** that will be conducted with key community leaders to strengthen their capacity to promote and sustain change.
- Cross-cutting **activities that recognize and celebrate people** who demonstrate commitment to gender-equitable behaviors as peers.

Moving from evidence to intervention

The intervention was developed through a participatory, evidence-based and iterative process. The GREAT team kept the purpose of the research—to design an effective, scalable program approach— front and center throughout the process. The factors that facilitated transformation of research into action were related to research methods and analysis, partnerships, and process.

Research methods and analysis

GREAT had the luxury of a full year to conduct formative research before designing the intervention. This provided the opportunity to embed researchers in the field to collect in-depth qualitative data. Projective techniques proved useful to provide information on feelings and motivation—fundamental elements of the intervention design. A close partnership between implementers and researchers has enriched the study design and kept research focused on actionable findings.

Researchers tailored the analysis and reporting to the specific needs of the intervention designers, who selected priority themes for analysis. During the earlier phases of developing a broad intervention design, the design team included TAG members and project staff from Save the Children, Pathfinder and IRH. Three consultants (behavior change communication specialists) were later hired to support the development of specific products (radio drama, radio discussion guide, activity cards, community game, flip books). The TAG and project staff remained involved in intervention design and development through review of product drafts and participation in pre-testing activities and workshops. Results were presented by theme in bulleted form and included comments on barriers, opportunities and intervention implications. Stories of role models, proverbs, songs and salient

quotes were included. The designers recommended including some typical examples and putting more emphasis on facilitating factors. They also commented that the barriers helped them identify challenges that the materials needed to address and that they found the bulleted lists and quotes helpful.

Partnerships: engaging local stakeholders

From its inception, GREAT has built stakeholder buy-in through the formation and engagement of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and a participatory project design process. The project design was informed by a workshop with the TAG, consisting of representatives from district local governments, NGOs, cultural institutions, police and officials from the ministries of Health, Gender and Education. The workshop began with the presentation of the formative research findings. Using these findings, participants worked in small groups to identify and prioritize outcomes for each of the targeted life- stage cohorts. Drawing from the program review, the TAG generated interventions to address these outcomes.

Using the interventions and outcomes identified by the TAG, consortium members assessed their feasibility and refined and streamlined them into a cohesive approach to be piloted. This process actively engaged key stakeholders in processing the research and using it to inform the project design, ensuring the relevance of the proposed intervention by basing it firmly on evidence and experience.

Process used to move research into practice

The process the team used to move the research into practice rested on a foundation of the following three elements:
1) development and use of a creative brief; 2) structured tools to ensure research findings were reflected in intervention materials; and 3) a participatory, iterative process of review and pre-testing.

Development and utilization of a creative brief

Once the key outcomes and the overall intervention concept were identified, consortium members developed a creative brief to guide material development. Product development often gets underway without a clear sense of expectations between project leadership and the creative team. This results in an uncoordinated, extended and expensive development process with many revisions and delays. The purpose of the creative brief is to describe the direction chosen for the intervention and to provide a coordinated look, feel and vision for all materials. It also ensures that each partner develops products according to a shared vision.

Structured tools for integrating results into material design

Each design team member followed a similar process, basing their work on the creative brief and frequently referring to the bulleted results. Each team created a matrix appropriate for the type of material they were working on to facilitate systematic inclusion of research findings. For example, the design for the Coming of Age Flip Book began with a matrix for each page that included the behavioral objective and related research finding, as well as a column for the story line and content. One designer explained that she kept the results next to her to ensure that her work was evidence based. The design team also drew on theoretical perspectives, such as the ecological model and the trans-theoretical model of behavior change, to ensure that the materials addressed facilitating and constraining factors at personal, social and environmental levels.

Participatory, iterative development process

The final products were extensively reviewed by partners and TAG members before finalization; most were reviewed at outline, draft and near-final stage. This procedure was time consuming and required patience; however, the process of harmonizing differing perspectives strengthened the final product. A critical element of the review was input on cultural norms and context from local staff and TAG members.

All toolkit products were carefully pre-tested. An essential component of this pre-test was usability— whether these products could be used by the young people with little to no support from GREAT— because this is the proposed mode of roll-out and use. To test this, extension workers selected a facilitator from the pre-test participants and spent about an hour orienting the facilitator. If the facilitator needed support, the extension worker helped out, but this would be noted as a less usable product. GREAT team members completed observation forms and discussed usability, understanding, interest, relevance and call to action with the facilitator and participants. Synthesized findings were discussed and group members agreed upon necessary revisions.

Addressing challenges
GREAT encountered numerous challenges during the process of moving the research into a scalable toolkit for widespread implementation. The challenges and strategies for addressing them are described below.

The design process was resource intensive—ample time and money were needed to conduct the research and allow meaningful participation by consortium partners and TAG members. GREAT spent one year conducting the formative research and another year designing, pre-testing and producing materials.

Research, particularly qualitative data analysis, is very resource intensive, and usually takes longer than expected. GREAT faced a window of only six weeks for analysis prior to the intervention design workshop. This challenge was addressed by asking the design team to select and prioritize themes for analysis and by using a team approach to analysis. In addition, the analysis team did not prepare a narrative report for the design workshop, instead producing bulleted key results by intervention theme. While partnerships have been key to GREAT's success to date, it would be naïve not to recognize the challenges of a true partnership. Collaboration requires time and patience to address issues such as funding expectations, recognition, and competing priorities and visions. The value of partnerships rests in the different perspectives offered by each member, yet these challenge points of view and force partners to reconsider their plans and actions—often resulting in implementation delays and frayed nerves.

At the core of GREAT is gender norm transformation, yet gender norms are difficult to operationalize and highly context dependent. The GREAT design team worked diligently to "behavioralize" social norms in order to show the concrete behaviors we expect to change.

Despite the team's best efforts, the designers needed information on topics that were not covered in the research. In those cases they relied on the perspectives of Acholi and Langi participants in design workshops, as well as input from field staff and discussions during field visits.

Lessons learned
The lessons learned during GREAT are many, and undoubtedly will increase during the implementation phase. Key lessons to date include the following:
- Focus formative research on emotions and motivations.
- Include the design team and local partners from the beginning of the research process.
- Nurture partnerships and participatory processes—plan for adequate time and patience.
- Focus, focus, focus! This applies to the research questions and analysis, as well as intervention objectives. Keep an eye on the theory of change that informs your work.
- Analyze and package findings in a way that meets the needs of the design team. Include program implementers in analysis—their contributions will be concrete, substantive and directly applicable to material development.
- Allow more time (and money) than you think you need for everything.
- Strive for maximum participation at all levels, while maintaining efficiency.
- Donor policies and procedures have significant influence on the process. For GREAT, the vision of USAID, which allowed ample time for formative research and a strong, collaborative relationship, has been a key facilitating factor.
- Some issues that still intrigue our team are the following:
    - In cases of gender transformational projects where there are not always immediate tangible results, how can we maintain stakeholder buy-in over the long term?
    - What would be the best model for scaling up such interventions, which by design are so grounded in the norms of particular localities?

SECTION III: TRANSFORMING MONITORING AND LEARNING

1. How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Index[43]

Ruth Meinzen-Dick[44]
Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington D.C., USA

I'm really not a numbers person. I've run my share of regressions and statistical analyses in my time, but I usually don't find the numbers satisfying, because I know that they gloss over issues and don't capture nuances. This is especially true of many "gender indicators." For example, the Gender Empowerment Measure in the United Nations Development Program's 1995 Human Development Report[45] is based on indicators such as the ratio of women's to men's earnings and the percentage of women in parliament and professional positions;[46] both measures ignore the status of women who are not in formal employment.

Thus when USAID first approached the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to develop a Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), I was hesitant. On the one hand, I applaud the agency for taking women's empowerment seriously enough to include it in the monitoring and evaluation of the U.S.'s flagship Feed the Future (FTF) program. I recognize that too often, what is not measured does not count, and some kinds of indicators are needed if we want agricultural programs to address gender equity and not just "household" incomes. But much of what we care about in terms of gender equality is difficult to measure. How could we find indicators that are meaningful and that can be collected cost-effectively?

Through a partnership between USAID staff with expertise on gender equality, female empowerment, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E); Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) experts on developing multidimensional indices; and IFPRI researchers with a lot of experience in measuring gender issues through intra-household surveys, we were able to develop an index that is now being used in the FTF focus countries.[47] While the indicators and index are not perfect, they do provide a starting point for measuring what happens to women and men in agriculture.

Although the WEAI is designed to be comparable across countries, I don't think that is its most important use. Tracking changes over time is likely to be more important, to see whether there is an improvement or deterioration of women's status in agriculture. But to my mind, the WEAI may make its greatest contributions by getting agricultural program staff to think about what effects their interventions may have on gender equality in each of the five domains over which empowerment is measured, and as a diagnostic tool to identify the areas of greatest need

for women's (and men's) empowerment. It may also have an additional, "stealth" benefit, of getting research and M&E teams to interview both women and men within the household—an important methodological contribution, especially when so many think that it is sufficient to interview only the (usually male) "head of household."

The Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE) are as follows:
- **Production:** whether women are involved in sole or joint decision making over agricultural production and their level of autonomy in those decisions.
- **Resources:** ownership of, access to, and decision making power over productive resources such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables and credit.
- **Income:** sole or joint control over the use of income and expenditures.
- **Leadership:** membership in economic or social groups and comfort in speaking in public.
- **Time:** allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks and satisfaction with the available time for leisure activities.

Too many gender-blind agricultural development programs have led to negative outcomes in one or more of these areas. Highlighting these domains and measuring outcomes in each should at least lead to a "do no harm" approach in each area. But I would like to see it taken a step further, to use these domains and the baseline information on the status of men and women in each indicator as the basis for a transformative approach. The following descriptions give examples in each of these domains.

Production: There has been a tendency in many agricultural programs to import what I call a "Farmer in the Dell"[48] view of gender roles that copies the European folk song assuming that men are the farmers, bypassing women, even where they have been independent agricultural producers. An agricultural development program that wants to show improvements in the production domain would need to start with some kind of understanding of who within the household makes what kinds of decisions.[49] Do men and women each make decisions regarding different activities or different types of production? If so, then the program needs to ensure that women's activities also receive new technologies and extension advice. If men and women make joint decisions (which may not be apparent if the men are the public face of the family, dealing with outsiders), then both should be consulted. And if men really are the sole decision makers of most production decisions, then it is important to ensure that women's concerns are being addressed, lest the interventions lead to outcomes that are not consistent with women's interests. For example, if men make the sole decisions about a crop or fish species to grow, but women are the ones responsible for the food preparation, it is important that women's concerns about cooking traits or nutritional quality of the food be recognized and addressed.

[45] UNDP (United Nations Development Program), 1995, "Human Development Report," New York: Oxford University Press, http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1995/chapters/.
[46] See also http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/gdi_gem/.
[47] See USAID (United States Agency for International Development), IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) and OPHI (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative), 2012, "Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, " http://www.ifpri.org/publication/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index.
[48] In this European and American folk song, "The farmer in the dell ... The farmer takes a wife ... The wife takes a child," etc., reinforcing the notion that farmers are men, and farmers' wives' main role is childbearing.
[49] The data on gendered participation in agricultural decision making are not readily available. Although there are some efforts to collect this information (see R. Meinzen-Dick, B. van Koppen, J. Behrman, Z. Karelina, V. M. Akamandisa, L. Hope and B. Wielgosz, 2012, "Putting Gender on the Map: Methods for Mapping Gendered Farm Management Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa," IFPRI Discussion Paper 1153, Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01153.pdf), the WEAI surveys may provide the first widespread information on this topic.

Resources: There is ample evidence that there is a gender gap in control over assets, and that this gap contributes to the lower productivity of women in agriculture.[50] It is not only productivity that matters; there is also evidence that control over resources gives women greater bargaining power within the household, which is empowering for women and can also lead to improved outcomes for their children's welfare. Transformative agricultural projects, then, would seek opportunities to strengthen women's assets and reduce the gender asset gap. Baseline WEAI studies would show which resources women currently hold.[51] This information, together with information on which resources are needed to take advantage of new livelihood opportunities, can be used to help prioritize where to help women to accumulate assets and identify what type of assets may be most important.

Income: Too often, agricultural development programs have increased men's incomes, with the assumption that this increase will be shared with the rest of the household. But as with control over assets, such a unitary model of the household has been proven to be inaccurate; there is now plenty of evidence to show that not only do men and women not pool their resources and income, but also that they consistently spend it in different ways. Indeed, Alderman et al. argue that it is time to "shift the burden of proof": Those who want to say that such a unitary model holds, should show that it applies, rather than requiring those who say that differences between men's and women's incomes matter to prove their case.[52] Unfortunately, this notion has not always crossed over from research into agricultural development programs—too many still focus on "household incomes" without looking at the extent to which men or women will control those incomes. Worse yet, many commercialization programs take produce that is under women's control (often for home consumption or sale at local markets) and allow or encourage men to take it to markets in such a way that men end up controlling the income, even when women are the ones who put in much of the labor or provide other productive inputs. Alternative approaches to marketing are available, including having market agents pick up produce from homesteads or making payments via cell phone or into women's accounts with photo passbooks. These alternatives ensure that no agricultural marketing program contributes to women producing and men taking the produce to market and squandering the proceeds on the way home. But just increasing women's incomes may not be sufficient to empower women, especially if that increase results in additional responsibilities (e.g., paying school fees). What would real transformative agricultural programs look like in this domain? What can be done to promote women's sole or joint control over income and expenditures? Certainly identifying ways to increase women's incomes and control over incomes, but perhaps also working with communities to address norms and practices, so that women's work, incomes and voice are valued by men (and in-laws) as well as by the women themselves.

Leadership: Agricultural development programs frequently use group-based approaches to reach large numbers of people. Designing these organizations so that women can participate can contribute to empowerment, because women are then able to go out of the house, connect with others, share information, get inputs, etc. The first step is to remove barriers to women's participation, such as requirements for members to be land owners, or limits of one member per household (which will often be the man). Although the indicator for the index is just membership in a group, real empowerment would require going beyond nominal membership to ensure that women actually have a voice in groups.[53] We considered an indicator of how much input the respondents felt they had in group decisions, but too few women—or even men—were "empowered" on that indicator. Thus, encouraging group membership is an important first step, but more effort is needed to foster—and measure— effective participation. Formal measures to ensure that at least one third of members are women, or that there are women officers, can help strengthen women's voices, as can training for women on public speaking. Location, timing, seating arrangements and conduct of meetings are no less important, but require more attention to local context. It may also be that there are other social groups or networks that women already participate in, which might be a more appropriate way of reaching women with new technologies or practices, as we often find that men are more likely to be part of formal producers' organizations, whereas women get their agricultural information from social or religious groups.

The second WEAI indicator in the leadership domain, comfort in speaking in public, can be adapted to any particular type of agriculture or natural resource management issue. Programs designed to contribute to women feeling comfortable in speaking about their concerns and knowing who to go to for information or with problems would certainly be transformative.

Time: Many gender-blind projects have, implicitly or explicitly, assumed a low opportunity cost of women's time. This can lead to overburdening of women's workloads with negative effects in terms of personal stress and decreases in care of children, even if incomes do rise. Gender-aware projects would at least look at how new activities fit with existing ones. Gender-transformative projects can look for ways to decrease drudgery and time-consuming tasks in production or domestic responsibilities for women while also increasing the space for more rewarding activities. For example, programs that bring clean water closer to homesteads, for both domestic uses and livestock, can reduce women's time burdens for collecting water, and if they reduce water-borne illnesses, further reduce women's time for caring for sick family members.

Concluding remarks
Whether or not we measure these domains and indicators, thinking through how any type of intervention is likely to affect women's decision making in production, resources and income under their control, leadership, and time allocation is an important step toward women's empowerment. Taking it the next step to actually measure changes in each of these areas creates greater accountability and ensures that any trade-offs between women's empowerment and more easily measured outcomes (such as yields or incomes) are taken into account. The latter is especially crucial in contexts of results- based management: If targets and indicators are to assume a larger role in assessing "success" and shaping resource allocation, then we need to ensure that changes in the welfare of women are assessed as core elements of that success, not just desirable (but optional) byproducts. In that case, imperfect indicators of women's empowerment may be better than no indicators at all.

[50] FAO, 2011, State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011: Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap in Development. Rome: FAO.
[51] For more resources on how to measure the assets under women's control, see the toolbox available at http://gaap.ifpri.info/.
[52] H. Alderman, P.A. Chiappori, L. Haddad, J. Hoddinott and R. Kanbur, 1995, "Unitary versus Collective Models of the Household: Is It Time to Shift the Burden of Proof." The World Bank Research Observer 10(1): 1–19.
[53] B. Agarwal, 2001, "Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry, and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework," World Development 29(10): 1623–1648.

2. Approaches to Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment

Anne Marie Golla
Economist and Evaluation Specialist,
International Center for Research on Women,
Washington D.C., USA

What is economic empowerment and why measure it?
The idea that empowering women is critical for poverty reduction and development is more and more accepted—development programs often have women's economic empowerment as an explicit goal. This raises a new question: How do we measure it?

Measuring women's economic empowerment is critical to actually being able to achieve it. Developing and including the right gender indicators in program log frames and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans is key to ensuring that gender is effectively integrated during implementation. Moreover, these indicators help the program team define what they hope to achieve from the beginning of the project and devise strategies to get there. Most fundamentally, tracking and measuring changes will allow projects and programs to adapt and improve projects based on what is learned. Explaining up front how results will be measured is often a precondition for getting funding, and showing results is necessary for continued funding.

Before we can measure women's economic empowerment, however, we need to understand what it is and how it is manifested. There is no standard definition for women's empowerment, but there is a broad consensus in the literature on the key components of empowerment. Most definitions include agency or the "ability to think and act independently," control over one's self and resources, and/or autonomy and voice. Thus, empowerment concerns the ability to make and act on decisions, control over and access to resources, and ability to participate in leadership and management of resources. There are still important differences in how empowerment is defined by various scholars. Some authors emphasize that empowerment requires collective action, while others are happy focusing on individual empowerment. Different authors focus on different levels of empowerment—individual, household, community, workplace, and state or national. Some authors stress that empowerment is a continuous process of change along many dimensions, not a binary state of either being disempowered or empowered. Some would argue that empowerment cannot even be defined by external organizations; rather, it must be defined by the people who are seeking empowerment themselves. Many authors include the caveat that women must be the agents of their own empowerment; they cannot be passive recipients of empowerment.

Economic empowerment has also been defined variously. In some situations, economic empowerment is understood as "empowerment in the economic sphere," with indicators focusing on women's self- confidence, self-esteem, and voice and ability to work together in areas concerning productive activities. Thus, the recently launched Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) defines economic empowerment through five main components: decisions over agricultural production, power over productive resources such as land and livestock, decisions over income, leadership in the community, and time use.[54] Women are considered to be empowered if they have adequate achievements in four of the five areas.

On a programmatic level, however, what "economic empowerment" means is often not explicitly defined. In practice, the term economic empowerment is often used to mean the same thing as economic advancement (e.g., improvements in work and business outcomes, income, etc.). Activities in economic empowerment projects often focus on helping women increase their economic capacity (for example, via skills training or increasing access to markets), with very few activities specifically designed to address decision making or agency.

The International Center for Research on Women's framework for women's economic empowerment includes both components: economic advancement and agency and power in the economic sphere.[55] This provides a very broad definition of economic empowerment, encompassing change at many levels from individual to global, and achieved by the actions of many actors. To use the framework, it is not necessary for everyone to adopt the same definition of women's economic empowerment in their programs. It is also not expected that a single organization or project will address every component of economic empowerment. Rather, project teams can use the framework to understand both the broader picture of what economic empowerment means for the women they work with and specifically what their program will contribute towards it. Different programs may focus more on the economic side or the agency/power side—this is fine. However, planners should be aware that they are not addressing economic empowerment as a whole, but components of it. If someone else is not working on these "missing pieces," or if nothing is happening that might change them, then the process of becoming economically empowered might be stalled for these women.

Achieving women's economic empowerment is a long-term goal, which may take place over generations. Changes in social norms and attitudes may themselves take many years to change. Key economic decisions such as age of marriage, years of education, field of study and family size that occur relatively early in life influence a women's economic opportunity set throughout her life, so creating effective change may often mean working with younger girls and women, who may realize the final economic results only after 30 or 40 years. Institutional change to laws and enforcement may take years. Achieving women's economic empowerment also requires work along many different dimensions and by many partners. A given program in this sense is not achieving economic empowerment in its entirety, but rather only working towards small parts that contribute to the larger goal. How do we ensure that the combined efforts of many actors and women themselves do eventually add to up to women's economic empowerment? Part of it is to be aware of what other organizations are doing and what changes women are creating on their own. If there are gaps, can organizations be identified who can address them? Or should programs be redesigned to include those areas as well? Regardless, organizations need to continue to seek information on what has been achieved and what is still needed. Change is occurring constantly, with or without the efforts of development organizations. If progress is made on one front, and it becomes clear that other constraints are preventing it from leading to empowerment, the direction of efforts may need to change. Likewise, if needs in one area have been met, organizations need to move on to where the need is.

Program partners often ask for a list of "women's economic empowerment indicators" that they can use in their projects. Many indicators have been used to measure empowerment. However, since economic empowerment is a broad and multidimensional concept, and since a given project only addresses some components, there is no universal list of indicators appropriate for all projects. In fact, even what constitutes empowerment is different in different places. Women living in different cultures, different socioeconomic classes, and

[54] International Food Policy Research Institute, 2012, "Feed the Future: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index," Washington, DC.
[55] A.M. Golla, A. Malhotra, P. Nanda and R. Mehra, 2011, "Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators," International Center for Research on Women, Washington, DC.

rural and urban areas are likely to have very different ideas on what empowerment means. Where social norms and mobility constraints limit women from working, even being able to work outside the home can be strongly empowering. For other women, working for low wages or having to quit school to work might be disempowering. Other women might effectively work a "double shift" if they work full time and still have to take care of all household responsibilities; for them, having more help from partners or better day care might be empowering. What constitutes empowerment can even change over time, as conditions change in a given place. What was empowering for the older generation might be an accepted norm for younger women. For this reason, which indicators are selected for a given program must be adapted to the local context.

Quantitative and qualitative measurements
Women's economic empowerment has been measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. Both qualitative and quantitative data can be used to investigate women's voice and role in decision making; access to and control over resources; access to markets for labor, services, and goods both as suppliers and consumers; autonomy; and mobility. On the economic side, researchers might be interested in productivity; access and use of productive inputs; access to markets for labor, credit and goods; and returns or profits.

Qualitative measures have the benefit that women themselves can be asked what they consider to be empowerment. This is harder with quantitative indicators, which must be defined in advance. Qualitative data are particularly useful at the formative stage, as the intervention and indicators are being designed. Qualitative data can also be used to get at more nuanced aspects of empowerment. For example, how decisions are made in the household is often substantially more subtle than simply "my husband decides," "we decide jointly," or "I decide," as it sometimes appears on quantitative questionnaires. Collecting qualitative data on indicators can therefore help in interpreting quantitative data. It can also provide important information on why things are done a certain way and how the woman feels about them. Qualitative information is often considered less expensive to collect than quantitative, and generally requires less planning time, although careful systematic qualitative data collection may be costly. However, it is more difficult to standardize qualitative data collection in different locations and over time. It can also be difficult and time consuming to analyze qualitative data. In particular, it can be harder to agree on what and what level of detail to report. It is also difficult to track qualitative data for monitoring, unless they are converted into codes that can be tracked in a database. For large programs in particular, fitting qualitative data into project design, monitoring and evaluation in ways that are systematic, transparent, and useful for adapting the program and reporting impact can be a challenge. While there are methods for monitoring and evaluation, such as outcome mapping and most significant change, they usually require time and skill to implement. Continuing to develop ways for programs to collect and use qualitative data in ways that work for them would be useful.

Quantitative measures have the advantage of enabling generalizations and inferences about a larger group of people. They are easier to analyze and track, and they are more standardized. Quantitative measures are often considered more rigorous than qualitative data. However, qualitative data can be collected and analyzed systematically. At the same time, quantitative data can also be subjective in terms of which questions are asked, how they are asked and what analysis is done. Typically, quantitative measures of empowerment and economic empowerment have been modules on decision

making, control over resources and income, etc., in household surveys that generally targeted only women. Also, quantitative information generally requires more planning, time and resources to collect than qualitative information does.

Ideally, qualitative and quantitative data on women's empowerment are not substitutes for each other, but complements. Each can provide information that the other cannot. The best evaluations will use both.

Using an index to measure empowerment
A relatively new direction in measuring empowerment has been the development of an index to measure empowerment, similar to indices used to measure welfare. The WEAI, launched in February of 2012, will be used for performance monitoring and impact evaluations of Feed the Future programs around the world, as well as to track progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of gender equality.[56] As was mentioned above, the WEAI measures women's and men's engagement in five domains: decisions about agricultural production; access to and decision making power over productive resources; control over use of income; leadership in the community; and time use. It also measures women's empowerment relative to men within their households. Women are considered empowered under the WEAI if they have adequate achievements under four of the five domains. A sub-index reflects the percentage of women who are as empowered as the men in their households. Although the WEAI focuses on agricultural production, it could easily be adapted for other productive activities and contexts.

The advantage of an index like the WEAI is that it summarizes a great deal of complicated information into a single number that is easy to report. If more detail is needed, researchers can report what proportion of women fit into one of the domains or can conduct analysis on individual components from the data. The standardized set of questions allows some comparability. This makes the index useful for monitoring women's empowerment over time. Repeated surveys of both men and women over time in multiple countries will make an important contribution to understanding economic empowerment in agriculture. It would be useful to have such measures for urban women, self-employed women and women working in jobs as well. In terms of program evaluation, the individual indicators that make up the index may prove to be more interesting than the index itself, both because it will be easier to measure changes in a specific indicator and because these will provide more information on exactly what has changed.

Of course, a single number cannot tell us everything we need to know about empowerment. Interpreting what an index means can also be difficult. For example, what does it mean when we say an index is .75 or that 49% of women are empowered according to this scale? Is that a high level of empowerment or not? Does it mean we need to work with these women or not? Combining all components of empowerment into one index may obscure differences between different groups and locations as well. Finally, the values an index manifests can change dramatically when the parameters and weights used to construct it change. For these reasons it is important to look not only at the value of the index, but at its individual components, as well as to think about how changes in the way the index is constructed might affect conclusions about empowerment. How much would conclusions change if we changed the definition of the index?

Selecting appropriate measurement approaches and indicators
Different kinds of measures are needed for different purposes. For initial needs assessment, more complex and open-ended measurements are needed. Quantitative surveys may make more

---

[56] For more information on the index, including case studies and links to the questionnaires used to construct it and information on the Feed the Future program, see this page from the FTF website: http://feedthefuture.gov/article/release-womens-empowerment-agriculture-index.

sense than qualitative assessments to provide baseline data. For project monitoring, it is often necessary to have data collected by project staff that can be analyzed and reported frequently; for example, each month or quarter. In this case, measurement approaches and indicators that can only be collected via a large household survey may not be very useful. The scope of the program and who is implementing it also play a role, as well as what types of M&E systems they currently have. A small pilot program or a program run by a local NGO will have different information and evaluation needs than a large-scale program, where complex data collection and management information systems can be created. Just as with any other set of indicators, thought has to be given to how empowerment indicators will be measured.

Measuring for evaluation generally implies measuring change that was caused by the program. Therefore, for an evaluation, it is important that we measure the indicators upon which the program will have an impact large enough to measure. Larger sample sizes may be required to measure statistically significant changes compared to an average at one point in time, since any errors in measurement are compounded. The more error is involved in data collection for an indicator, the harder it will be to measure any change in it.

As an example, consider women's decision making in the household as an indicator. Decision making is an important element of women's economic empowerment, but not necessarily a good evaluation indicator. Participation in decision making is somewhat subjective—the same woman might give different answers depending on how she interprets the question or how it is asked. This means her participation is likely to be measured with error. In some cases, women's decision making is very high even at the beginning of the program, meaning there is little room for change. Moreover, most projects do not have activities to directly increase women's decision making. While decision making may actually change indirectly through other aspects of the program, the change is likely to be small. If the expected change is small and it is likely to be measured with error, it may simply not be possible to measure it.

To avoid this problem, the indicators chosen for evaluation should be based on a well-developed and realistic theory of change. The theory of change provides an analysis of the broader situation of women's economic empowerment, with all the constraints and opportunities women face in being economically empowered; also, it maps out the pathways through which the project will create change and which specific elements of women's economic empowerment it will address. As noted above, a single project cannot change all the constraints and barriers to women's economic empowerment, particularly in the time frame of only a few years. The indicators that the project should be evaluated on are not changes in overall economic empowerment, but only those things the program actually intends to change as defined by the theory.

The theory of change can also provide insight into when changes caused by the program will occur. In measuring changes due to a program, timing is critical. If the evaluation measurement takes place before the change occurs, it can't measure it. However, if we measure too far after the program, it may be difficult to isolate the effect of the program, unless sample sizes are big. If the program itself was only in the active implementation phase for a year or two, the "depth of change" that can be measured will necessarily be only the more immediate outcomes.

Almost all project and evaluation teams want to measure long-term, "deep" impact such as, for example, poverty reduction, improved nutrition or changes in empowerment. However, it is important not only to focus on indicators of long-term or indirect change, but on indicators of immediate, short- and medium-term change. These are not in themselves indicators of women's economic empowerment. The most basic are simply process indicators: whether women participated, in which activities, which women participated and which did not, etc. The next tier contains outcomes directly related to project activities. If the program is training women how to use a new technology, for example, how many women actually adopted the technology? How do they use it? If they are not using it, why not? The next tier might be whether the changes had a positive effect on their lives or work. For example, did the new technology increase sales? Why or why not? Were there gendered barriers that prevented women from benefiting from the technology? While these indicators do not measure empowerment, they are crucial to understanding whether the program has the potential to economically empower women. They also provide the kind of information that will be most useful to the program design team in terms of devising better programs.

For some projects, measuring up to this level is already an important accomplishment. Many programs do not have the resources even to adequately measure these intermediate indicators, and for that matter many do not even measure sex-disaggregated data. The starting point is to ensure that basic process indicators on program reach are being measured well, as well as immediate outcomes and indicators. This is the building block upon which other findings are based.

Measuring these immediate and intermediate indicators is a good place to start for programs that have not previously incorporated gender into their M&E. Many organizations are new to integrating gender into programs and M&E plans. They require a transformation of the organizational culture in which they implement programs and M&E, which can take time—there may initially not be understanding of gender or empowerment or even much buy-in to the idea of measuring empowerment. In some cases, organizations are trying to integrate gender into their M&E at the same time as they are trying to create new M&E systems and improve the quality of M&E overall. In these cases, a phased approach may make sense, starting by introducing more basic, immediate indicators and then attempting to incorporate measurement of deeper indicators later.

Measuring indicators at different stages of change, as suggested above, will help tell a more convincing story about how the program has worked and whether it has made progress towards its goals. A "black- box" evaluation, which reports only changes in a final indicator without measuring more intermediate changes that can be expected to occur, tends to be disappointing because it does not show how the change occurred. The results of such an evaluation may be questioned. However, if indicators along a spectrum of change have been measured and all point to the same conclusions, even an evaluation that does not have the benefit of the most rigorous methodology may be quite convincing.

Conclusions and next steps

Women's economic empowerment is a broad concept. How it is defined and measured will vary for different organizations, programs and purposes. In choosing how to measure economic empowerment, it is important to be realistic about what projects aim to change, what the timeline for change is and what resources are available for an evaluation. Many projects working towards women's economic empowerment may not have a measurable impact on women's economic empowerment directly, but rather contribute to broader efforts to achieve empowerment that may occur only in the long term. Moreover, many projects do not have the resources or time frame available to realistically measuredeeper impacts or do a rigorous impact evaluation. However, all projects can use an economic empowerment lens in M&E to help them understand how they are helping women become economically empowered.

The good news is that it's not necessary for every project to measure an impact on broader "economic empowerment" itself. Learning about how to best economically empower women requires information from many projects with different kinds of evaluations and data. Even without an impact evaluation or measurement of broader "women's economic empowerment," projects may provide useful information on how best to deliver services or which services are used, or on systematic qualitative or performance- based evaluations that raise new questions. External studies may also provide information on what works outside of an evaluation.

The wider challenge is to move beyond the idea of evaluation of individual projects and focus on learning about programmatic approaches to economically empower women. How can this be accomplished? Is it possible for evaluation efforts to be better coordinated across different projects to maximize learning and use resources most effectively? How can we identify the most pressing questions on achieving women's economic empowerment and share them with those designing M&E of programs? How can we improve sharing of results, both positive and not, across different organizations?

3. Rethinking Women's Agency

Nitya Rao
Professor of Gender and Development,
School of International Development,
University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

In her paper on measuring empowerment, Naila Kabeer notes the importance of access to resources (assets and employment) and final well-being outcomes in contributing to gender equality, but finds the process of empowerment incomplete without an exercise of agency. Agency is an important dimension of power as it relates to people's "ability to define one's goals and act upon them .... It also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity .... It can take the form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance, as well as the more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis."[57]

Within development practice, however, agency has been equated with the ability to make decisions, with the whole range of nuances Kabeer indicates often forgotten. Jejeebhoy et al., for instance, while endorsing the importance of agency, define it in terms of individual characteristics such as freedom of movement, access to resources and decision-making capacity.[58] While efforts are made to distinguish between different types of decisions—practical, routine and everyday acts, related to one's material position, and the more strategic decisions that could potentially contribute to transformative shifts in social position and gender relations—the underlying conceptualization of agency or empowerment is indeed one of an "assertive, modern woman," who speaks rather than remains silent, who goes out and works rather than stays at home with the children, who is schooled rather than not literate, and so on. A very particular characterization of an empowered woman as an individual with a certain set of attributes is constructed—many of these attributes could be seen as universal human rights, but these derive from a rather elite construction of what constitutes a good life and what is valued by "middle class" society.

To take the example of literacy: This is often, though mistakenly, equated with knowledge. Non-literate women are then automatically seen as lacking in knowledge—even innocent and childlike—by development practitioners, and strategies are put in place for "awareness raising" and "capacity building" of these women. The starting point is a negative attribute, a lack of something that is valued, rather than a more positive construction of the knowledge they do have. Some of the discussions around "farmer first" and "knowledge reversals"[59] have sought to challenge this view, as have micro- level analyses that often find no clear relationship between education (as equated with schooling) and empowerment; nevertheless, the myth continues. While I am not challenging the importance of education, it is clearly a resource in the hands of women; it does not automatically lead to agency.

The complex process of negotiations within the household and other institutions needs to be unpacked in much more nuanced ways. Based on my own field research in India, I offer alternate and additional ways of understanding and unpacking agency on the ground. I present at least five key domains that need attention, as follows: a) the nature of work, productive and reproductive, in which women engage, the success with which they engage in it, and the recognition of this success; b) the different dimensions of decision making, such as financial provision, bringing up children, running the household, fertility and marriage, and the extent to which women have control over these different areas; c) the importance of subject position and recognizing differences among women in shaping agency, but equally gender interests; d) the interlinkages between institutions, with male bias in market or state institutions sometimes overriding gains made at the household level; and finally, e) the importance of collective agency in transforming social norms.

Defining work and work participation

Several economists, including Amartya Sen,[60] have pointed to the importance of paid work outside the home for strengthening women's bargaining position within the household. The argument runs somewhat like this: While women do engage in reproductive work at home, this is unrecognized and undervalued. There is a perception held by both men and women that women are merely sitting at home and not contributing much to the household, as contributions tend to be measured in monetary terms. Hence, when women engage in paid work and bring home cash earnings, there is a much clearer recognition of their contributions, which potentially enhances their say in household decisions. Social and personal worth is here constructed in terms of women's engagement with paid work, with reproductive work continuing to be undervalued. It is also assumed that paid work constitutes "decent work" as per International Labor Organization norms and is a worthwhile activity in itself.

For a majority of working women in South Asia, who are rural and poor, paid work is arduous, inflexible, involves long working hours—often in poor working conditions—and most importantly, is low paid. Gender wage gaps persist at all levels, and especially among the poor. Women's earnings are hardly sufficient to exit a marriage and set up an independent home, for instance; paid work doesn't take away from financial dependence on the man and other members of the family. Secondly, women's work participation does not necessarily imply a control either over their time or indeed over household expenditure patterns. Women's earnings are usually invested either in household subsistence or improvements in land or business enterprises controlled by men, or in assets that enhance male status such as consumer durables, rather than equipment to reduce domestic drudgery, for instance.[61] They therefore don't necessarily entitle women to greater leisure; double and triple work burdens remain intact.

It is not surprising then that with increasing male wages and social protection measures such as subsidized food grains, where available, even a slight improvement in the standard of living leads to a withdrawal of women from the workforce. A withdrawal from distress employment is not necessarily a bad thing for women's welfare. But does this necessarily imply a loss of women's agency? What appears crucial from my research in India is women's reproductive success in shaping ideas of personal worth. While their earnings are important for household survival (this again giving them no choice/agency in terms of expenditure), it is reproductive success, and more importantly, producing children of the right sex, that seems to give them a say in household matters. When a woman is unable to conceive, she is likely to be

[57] N. Kabeer, 1999, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," Development and Change 30(3): 438.

[58] S. Jejeebhoy, R. Acharya, et al., 2010, "Measuring Agency Among Unmarried Young Women and Men," Economic and Political Weekly 45(30): 56–64.

[59] R. Chambers, 2007, "Who Counts?: The Quiet Revolution of Participation and Numbers," Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

[60] A. Sen, 1990, "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts," in Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development, I. Tinker (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 123–149.

[61] P. Chowdhry, 1999, "Ideology, Culture and Hierarchy: Expenditure-Consumption Patterns in Rural Households," in From Myths to Markets: Essays on Gender, K. Sangari and Uma Chakravarti (eds.), New Delhi: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies and Manohar Publishers, 274–311; S. Garikipati, 2011, "Microcredit and Women's Empowerment: Through the Lens of Time Use Data from Rural India," CEB WP No. 11/034, Brussels: Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, Centre Emile Bernheim.

abandoned or a second wife brought in; a woman who produces only girls also faces a higher risk of abandonment and violence; while a woman who produces a son is valued, as are her efforts to bring up the child with all possible care and attention. Of course, later in life, such a woman also enjoys the status of a mother-in-law, served and taken care of by her daughter-in-law. Social worth, then, and the consequent ability to exercise agency does not only emerge from paid labor or earning capacity, but equally from reproductive potential (including beauty) and success.

Cross-cutting here are issues of caste identity (work participation rates in India are much higher for the lower castes, who are driven by pressures of survival to take up low-paid, low-quality work, which also carries low status), as well as women's life-course mobility.

Dimensions of decision making
The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) focus primarily on household-level decisions (major purchases, minor purchases), female mobility, and control over income and money. A different way of classifying decisions could link them to the productive, reproductive and personal domains of life.[62] The first could include financial provisioning and engagement with agricultural (and other work-related) decisions; the second could focus on decisions involving the upbringing of the children (educational choices, etc.) and running of the household; while the personal could include more individual and strategic life choices such as the selection of marriage partner, age at marriage and fertility- (and contraception-) related decisions. Once again, there is an issue around the relative value of each of these domains.

We tend to assume that decisions in the productive domain are valued more than those in the reproductive domain, linked also as these are to notions of the public and the private. While this may be the case in some contexts, it is not necessarily always the case. Upbringing of the children—particularly their educational success—is seen to lie in women's domain, irrespective of women's work or earning status. These decisions today are not straightforward—that is, whether to send the child to the local school or not—but involve a host of decisions around tuitions, choice of schools (with possible boarding arrangements), extra-curricular activities, and so on, often with major financial implications for the household. There is evidence from Nepal and even my own research in north India to show that up to half the household's earnings may be invested in the education of their children. This then is a major arena for decision making, wherein women are likely to be involved irrespective of their work status.

What I have called the personal domain involves women's strategic control over their bodies and lives. In the Indian case, caste seems to be significant in shaping women's agency in this domain, with the lower castes having greater freedom of choice than the middle or upper castes. Wealth/class in fact ends up constraining women's agency, and the role of education is ambiguous. In my north Indian study,[63] I found that even educated women from landed households did not necessarily have great control over their fertility, and indeed no control over sex selection. Older women, mothers and mothers-in-law do exercise some agency in the marriage of their children, especially among the higher castes, at least indirectly, through what Kabeer calls backstage manipulation. This is a crucial area for assessing the level of empowerment, yet as it relates to women's personal lives and choices, it is seen to lie beyond the realm of development projects and interventions. It is also the hardest to change, as it involves challenging the normative understandings of gender and wider social relations.

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) developed by IFPRI measures the roles and extent of women's engagement in the agriculture sector in five domains, as follows: 1) decisions about agricultural production, 2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources, 3) control over use of income, 4) leadership in the community, and 5) time use. By confining itself to the productive domain and to individual attributes, however, it misses the connections between the productive, the reproductive and the personal, and the interconnections between them, as well as the degree of cooperation that persists within and between households.

Subject position and difference among women
The first point that I want to make here is that women are not a homogenous category, but are differentiated by age, class, marital status, caste/ethnicity/race, etc.; hence they don't necessarily share common interests. The interests of a migrant woman worker or a landless agricultural laborer are likely to be distinct from that of a landowning woman farmer or an educated middle-class woman. Their interests derive from their particular social position and location at a point in time, and hence their struggles too are centered around these interests—what Maxine Molyneux distinguishes as women's interests and gender interests.[64]

While women as women may have certain interests, these are not likely to match their gender interests, namely the interests deriving from their particular social location/position. This helps explain the absence of women's solidarity on many issues, including a daughter's claims to inherit land. Brother's wives are likely to support their husband (and sons) rather than another woman, his sister.[65] Another common example derives from the tensions between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Their gender positioning is such that it is difficult for them to forge alliances as women, given the competition they are in over control of a man—the son versus the husband.

The second issue relates to life-course mobility. Even a single woman's interests can change as she progresses through life—as a daughter, young bride, wife, mother or mother-in-law. And this is not a linear progression—she may have agency as a daughter vis-à-vis her parents, but lose this as a young bride facing her marital household. This may increase with the birth of a son, but once she is widowed, she can face a decline in agency. In my own study, I found age and subject position (stage in the life cycle) crucial determinants of women's agency, apart from caste. The implication, of course, is that agency is not fixed in time—it is rather more fluid in nature, and can express itself across different domains and dimensions of life at different times. Just as the experience of work is complex and needs disaggregation, agency cannot be unraveled without taking into account other key elements of women's and men's identities as well as contextual changes over time.

Institutional linkages
We often conceptualize gender relations in very narrow terms as relations between men and women, usually husbands and wives. However, they are much broader, involving also men and men and women and women. But even in the narrower sense of the household and intra-household relations, agency is greatly influenced by what happens outside the household, in institutions of the community, markets and the state. In a context of extensive male migration in patriarchal north India, I found much greater cooperation between men and women at the household level than I had anticipated. Men recognized and appreciated women's

[62] N. Rao, 2012, "Male 'Providers' and Female 'Housewives': A Gendered Co-Performance in Rural North India," Development and Change, 43(5).
[63] Ibid.
[64] M. Molyneux, 1985, "Mobilisation Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua," Feminist Studies, 11(2): 227–254.
[65] N. Rao, 2005, "Questioning Women's Solidarity: the Case of Land Rights, Santal Parganas, Jharkhand, India," The Journal of Development Studies, 41(3): 353–375.

roles in managing and maintaining the family farms and sought to give them any support that they could.

For instance, to help women overcome the lack of resources, especially money, to purchase inputs and services from the markets, I found an interesting use of technology. The migrant husbands had a bank account in their city of work, and left their wives the ATM or cash card. This allowed the wives to withdraw cash and spend it as and when the need arose, given the absence of their men for a large part of the year. Men tried to take their leave and return home usually either during the planting or harvesting seasons, so they could also help their wives in the period when the work was particularly intense. Gender relations were not transformed; in fact, male migration added to women's work burdens and vulnerability. Yet it did to some extent strengthen conjugal bonds and cooperation. Establishing a straightforward linkage between divisions of work at the household level and women's agency is then not easy.

It is institutions of the state such as banks, agricultural cooperatives, the state agriculture department and extension services that continue to maintain the notion of men as farmers and women as housewives and helpers. They deny women direct access to the services on offer, reinforcing women's dependence on their husbands or other male kin, and in turn their subordinate status. Even though women are prepared to act, their agency as farmers is constrained. Changes in state policies and institutions, however, require collective advocacy and action—it is difficult for one woman to bring about change.

Where institutions of the state have been supportive, however, one does find an expansion in women's agency. In Tamil Nadu, social protection measures, such as maternity benefits for six months after the birth of a child, alongside cheap rice supplied through the public distribution system, have both directly and indirectly helped expand women's choices.[66] With basic food security ensured, poor and low-caste women are able, for the first time, to choose whether or not to work, perhaps to stay out of the workforce for a period of time—choices that they never had in the past. State policy makes these choices easier to negotiate at the household level. A negative fallout of the availability of cheap rice, however, has been a surplus of cash available to men after providing for basic household needs, leading to increased alcoholism and violence.

Individual and collective agency
So far, I have sought to conceptualize individual agency. However, there are limits to this in a context where women face considerable institutional/structural barriers to the exercise of agency, be they from market mechanisms, state policy or social norms. Advocacy for policy change and changing social practices requires collective action. Agarwal emphasizes that collectives improve incomes and production, enhance women's self-confidence and self-esteem, and develop leadership capacities that can be exercised in other settings.[67]

Nevertheless, most institutional spaces remain bounded. Collectivities, based on particular identities, tend to exclude some—often the poorest—who lack the time and resources to contribute equally to the collective enterprise. As already mentioned, women are not a unified category, but have different subject positions, family circumstances and interests, depending on their own social positioning at a particular point in time. So in speaking of women's engagement with collectives, it is important to consider who sets the agenda, who participates in

negotiations, and the mechanisms through which different voices are heard or represented.[68] NGOs often select educated and slightly better-off women as group leaders, but clearly the issues they prioritize draw on their own lived experiences. Apart from issues of rights and recognition, the issue of representation then becomes crucial.

The mandate and remit of collectives is often circumscribed by the agendas of implementing agencies. They provide opportunities for women to potentially influence and change policies, decisions and relationships that affect their lives, yet impose limits on the fields of possible action. Where experts are present to mediate and voice concerns, women's own voices often go unheard. Examples abound of women taking up activities and adopting ideologies promoted by those facilitating their organization (in line with the NGO mandate), with a view to gaining some benefits in the process.[69]

Over the last decade, women's self-help groups (SHGs) have become synonymous with collective action. Yet in analyzing rural women's engagement with institutions (ranging from the household to the community, state and markets), the levels, spaces and forms of power this entails, separately and as interrelated dimensions, need examination.[70] Spaces for struggle and negotiation can be formal, accessed by right (e.g., panchayats) or by invitation (e.g., land reform committees), and informal, claimed or created outside mainstream institutions. They can take forms that are either permanent/ongoing in nature (e.g., SHGs or federations organized by NGOs) or involve transitory action (e.g., land marches). Power relations within and between these different spaces may be visible in observable decision making, hidden in the ability to set the political agenda or invisible in silently shaping meanings of what is acceptable. Addressing each of these depends on the exercise of agency, but the form may vary. This reinforces the importance of taking account of different interests, constraints and strategies, as all jointly, though differentially, constitute the meaning and expression of agency for women.

[66] N. Rao, 2012, "Caste, Kinship and Life-course: Rethinking Women's Work and Agency in Rural South India," Feminist Economics (forthcoming).
[67] B. Agarwal, 2010, "Rethinking Agricultural Production Collectivities," Economic and Political Weekly, 45(9): 64–78.
[68] N. Fraser, 2009, Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World, New York: Columbia University Press.
[69] D. Mosse, 2005, Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice, London: Pluto Press.
[70] J. Gaventa, 2006, "Finding the Spaces for Change: a Power Analysis," IDS Bulletin, 37(6): 23–33.

SECTION IV: TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES AND POLICY

1. Engaging Complexity: Reflecting on CARE's *Pathways* Women and Agriculture Program Design Process

Andrea Rodericks
Executive Director for Program Quality and Learning,
CARE India, Delhi, India

This paper offers my personal reflections on facilitating gender transformative change, framed specifically around two years of work as CARE USA's Coordinator for Women and Agriculture, during which I led the design process for a Women and Agriculture program across six countries[71] in Asia and Africa. This process resulted in the development of CARE International's *Pathways* Program. The paper outlines specific aspects of the design process that were used to situate women's empowerment[72] at the core of the program design. This experience generated important design lessons and also inspired broader reflections on complexity and organizational change, two issues which I believe development organizations must pay more attention to if we are to succeed in facilitating gender transformative change.

The backdrop

The *Pathways* design story begins with influences going back as far as 2004, when CARE initiated a multi-site, participatory and rigorous review of the impacts that CARE's worldwide programming was (and was not) having on women's empowerment. This was called the Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women's Empowerment (SII). The SII spanned 30 countries and almost a thousand projects in the CARE International portfolio that made some claim to advancing the rights and well-being of women and girls. It drew on the views of thousands of women and men on women's empowerment across different regions and sectors of CARE's work.

The findings of this process were powerful, but not simple. They revealed valuable contributions that CARE projects were making to women's attempts to overcome the material and social drivers of poverty—expanding women's assets and skills, and in some cases nurturing more equal social and political relations between women and men in households, communities and social organizations. The SII findings, however, also revealed missed opportunities to achieve deeper and more lasting change. Good results could have been much better, and many projects struggled to bring together the analytics and strategies that would enable them to more effectively address gender and power relations. For example, comparing results across CARE's village savings and loan portfolio in multiple African countries demonstrated that microfinance in the absence of a broader livelihood and empowerment strategy yielded disappointing results in both economic and social dimensions. The SII also pointed to potential harm that CARE's programs could create if implemented without a robust understanding of organizational perspectives on the place of women's empowerment in development outcomes and on how gendered power shapes poverty.

The SII, spanning three years, represented a courageous and honest attempt on CARE's part to invest its own resources to really understand women's empowerment and the impact it was having on that empowerment. CARE staff openly acknowledged the obstacles to learning, innovation and risk taking, including those imposed by resilient power structures in the development enterprise that inhibited their commitment to long-term social change.[73]

A significant output from the SII was agreement on CARE International's women's empowerment framework, with three main components: agency, structure and relations. SII findings revealed that CARE had most success in improving agency, but women themselves participating in the process valued the structural and relational aspects of empowerment more. The SII ultimately led to a series of recommendations, one of the most powerful being the adoption of a "wide-screen" optic (i.e., understanding empowerment as the sum total of changes needed for a woman to realize her full human rights). This includes the interplay of changes in her own aspirations and capabilities (agency), in the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices (structures), and in the power relations through which she must negotiate her path (relations). In practice, this meant understanding how individual gains in indicators such as agricultural productivity, income and literacy relate to drivers and obstacles shaping gender relations and women's empowerment. Other significant programming recommendations included the following: committing to long-term change focused on specific population groups, developing perspectives on power and theories of social change as a basis for programming, and working in multi-stakeholder partnerships to address underlying causes of poverty and marginalization. Organizational recommendations included the importance of unyielding leadership in promoting these changes, fostering knowledge and learning, articulating positions that demonstrate accountability to impact populations, and taking responsible risks to foster learning about their paths toward empowerment.

The reason this backdrop is important to the story of the design of *Pathways* is the deep wave of organizational change that spread across CARE, partly (but not only) in response to the SII, evident in the shift to a Program Approach (with long-term programs as the organizing principle of CARE's work). This shift and the organizational and mindset changes that accompanied it strongly influenced the *Pathways* design process. Five of the six participating country offices were in the midst of developing their core long-term programs and aligning organizational systems and processes to advance them.

Another influence on the design of *Pathways* was an initiative launched by CARE USA in 2008 (funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation) called A Place to Grow, which sought to understand better how CARE addresses gender equality within its agricultural portfolio across several African countries. A key finding from this study was that agricultural projects were much more likely to empower women if they incorporated specific high-level project goals or objectives focused on gender equality or the empowerment of women.[74]

The *Pathways* design

In 2009, with support from a planning grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CARE started the design process for a multi-country initiative to achieve more productive and equitable participation of rural women smallholders in the agriculture sector resulting in their empowerment. I moved to CARE USA's Sustainable Livelihoods Cluster as Coordinator for the design.

The SII had produced sufficient evidence to make the case for a wide-screen approach in our analysis, enhanced clarity on our impact groups, and placed the objective of women's

[71] India, Bangladesh, Malawi, Tanzania, Mali and Ghana.

[72] In the context of the Pathways program (and throughout this paper) I describe a focus on the empowerment of poor women smallholder farmers as a critical pathway to achieving gender transformative change.

[73] The above findings were drawn from the Summary of Phase II of the SII, E. Martinez, 2006, "The Courage to Change: Confronting the Limits and Unleashing the Potential of CARE's Programming for Women," Synthesis Report Phase II: CARE International Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women's Empowerment, CARE USA (February), http://expert.care.at/downloads/careexpert/CARE_TheCourageToChange.pdf.

[74] CARE USA, 2009, "A Place to Grow – Empowering Women in CARE's Agricultural Programming," Briefing Paper, September.

empowerment within the formal objectives of the new program. It was clear to me that the program's focus on empowerment would require shifts from traditional approaches used to design agriculture or economic development programs. I began to plan for a design process that could draw on thinking from across a range of technical sectors (agriculture, economic development, gender equality, food and nutrition security, climate change) across six countries from a base within CARE's agriculture team in Atlanta. The process that unfolded was fascinating—rich in lessons for program design, organizational change, engaging complexity and life.

Empowerment included in the goal of the program

One of the first steps in the design process was to ensure the explicit inclusion of empowerment of women smallholder farmers in the program goal, resulting in a focus on three pillars: "Productivity"; "Equity" in agricultural systems; and "Empowerment," leading to more secure and resilient livelihoods. This inclusion strongly influenced the ultimate choice of the program's key levers of change. In addition to levers such as access to productive resources and improved levels of agricultural productivity, they included a lever on household influence of women smallholder farmers,[75] nudging attention beyond changes in agricultural practice and productivity to changes in the whole of women smallholders' lives. This included understanding women's roles as caretakers, mothers and decision makers in the household and community, and taking into account issues such as women's workloads in designing strategies.

The inclusion of women's empowerment in the final goal also helped draw greater attention to clarifying the perspectives driving the empowerment objectives, which were as follows: i) empowerment as a means to achieving development outcomes (i.e., improved engagement and productivity of women smallholder farmers); ii) empowerment to achieve social justice and rights with more equitable and productive participation in agriculture contributing to this; and iii) empowerment as a journey of personal/collective transformation. The third perspective was expressed most strongly by the South Asian teams, leading to a strong focus on different forms of collective action seen as vital to shifting power relations. Taken together, these perspectives drew greater attention to the pathways that different types of smallholder women may follow toward empowerment.

Understanding smallholders

Another early part of the design process involved an attempt to better understand our impact groups. This was in response to the finding that large-scale agricultural programs, by bluntly targeting smallholders or women, had often failed to benefit the more vulnerable among them. An effort was initiated to better understand the universe of smallholders and identify a set of socio-demographic characteristics that influenced their trajectory toward empowerment and more secure and resilient livelihoods. This understanding then framed the program's impact and sub-impact groups in each country. In addition to establishing clarity of focus, this process laid the groundwork to respond to the intersection of various identities—gender, class and livelihood systems—as well as the relationships between various groups stemming from these identities. Some questions through this process included the following: How do gender relations within pastoral households in Mali differ from fishing households? How does a smallholder woman's identity as a member of a low-caste community in India intersect with her identity as a woman farmer in her efforts to access productive resources? How is this different for smallholder women farmers in tribal communities? What are the power relations between these groups, and how do these intersect with gender identities? And what do the answers to these questions mean for the design of an agriculture intervention?

A common, people-focused conceptual framework

A key step in initiating the design was facilitating agreement on a common conceptual framework as a basis for dialogue across six country contexts, which would enable analysis from various sectors to be integrated in understanding the operating contexts, including their gender and power dimensions. The framework used for this purpose was an adapted sustainable livelihoods framework, into which CARE's women's empowerment framework was embedded. This faced some resistance from a few technical staff more comfortable operating from a sectoral lens, but received greater acceptance in country offices where teams had begun to develop more people-centered approaches as a result of long-term program design. It also served as a framework for organizing diverse information generated from multiple processes in country programs and from other actors, including women smallholder farmers. Finally, it emphasized the importance of understanding the evolving context of people's lives (including gender relations) before articulating technical actions. An example of one effect this had on the design was in the selection of crops shortlisted, criteria for which included considerations related to the empowerment of women smallholders.

Multi-disciplinary design teams

For the *Pathways* design, each country program was asked to form a multi-disciplinary design team, involving staff or partners from agriculture/food security, economic development and women's empowerment specializations. The rationale was to use the design process to generate collaboration across these teams and bring together the best of their knowledge and analysis. Teams were enthusiastically formed at the start of the process; however, there were challenges to keeping these multi-disciplinary teams consistently involved. Everyone understood their value, but work patterns and practices proved to be difficult to shift because of workloads, habits of working in silos and different priorities for different technical teams. In some country offices, the women's empowerment or gender teams had not done detailed work with the agriculture teams in the past, and this interaction required thoughtful planning, facilitation and sponsorship of senior management. Nevertheless, these efforts paid off, and the theories of change that emerged from most countries reflected inputs from multiple sectors. At CARE USA headquarters, we worked within existing organizational structures rather than develop a similar multi-disciplinary team. In hindsight, this was a mistake, as processes to draw inputs beyond CARE's Sustainable Livelihoods Cluster were less systematic and sometimes turned into sites of struggle linked to broader organizational change dynamics.

Closing reflections

The above paragraphs summarize some practical considerations informing the *Pathways* program design process that attempted to develop strategies to address improvements in productivity, equity in agricultural systems and empowerment of women smallholder farmers from specific household types across six different contexts. While these are important lessons to take into future designs, in retrospect, there are broader lessons to be learned from the experience of encountering, trying to embrace and addressing the complexity that social change processes such as women's empowerment or gender transformative change introduce into the programming or research environment.

While there was much energy and excitement about the *Pathways* design process across CARE and about the resources that were made available for it, some concern began to surface about the complexity of the emerging design. This was particularly apparent as teams moved to the proposal development phase and tried to incorporate the design in various donor proposal and presentation formats more suited to blueprint technical

---

[75] This includes contributions to and influence over household income and decision making. This is based on the understanding that shifts in intra-household gender relations are essential for shifting power in favor of women's empowerment.

interventions and linear logic models. Staff at various levels took up the challenge and tried to fit the uncertainty inherent in social change processes into more results-based language describing sharp activities and targets, while struggling to present and protect the analytical underpinnings of the design.

This was a learning process. Over time all those involved learned to communicate more clearly about the design and to work through important details. It was also sometimes a draining process, demanding resilience and commitment from those who had closely engaged in the design, often with little appreciation of the value of the complexity that had been uncovered through the process. There is no getting around the fact that social change is complex, and as organizations committed to gender transformative change, all development actors need to learn to recognize and embrace this complexity, learn from it, and accept that we will not always have the answers and evidence upfront. This will require finding ways to motivate and incentivize program and research teams to genuinely understand and respond to power relations and complex social change processes, and foster more facilitative and adaptive roles to enable learning from emergent change.

My final reflection comes from observing and interacting with the organizational change that all of the processes described in this paper required, either in ways of working, sequencing of processes, or shifts in relations between different teams, initiatives or actors. Like many change processes, this one demanded significant effort and resolve on the part of many in the team to hold steady with a clear eye on the purpose of the work. As a small two-member agriculture team in Atlanta, the support we each provided the other, the trust we could count on from the head of the Sustainable Livelihoods Cluster and our personal allies across the organization were vital to our ability to bring the design to completion. This aspect of the work must not be underestimated in supporting those in our organizations on the frontlines of change to fulfill the promise of gender transformative change.

Drawing on my experience of the design process of *Pathways*, I offer the following questions for consideration to organizations attempting women's empowerment or gender transformative change in agricultural programming and research:

1. **Why do we seek gender transformative change** in agriculture? What perspectives and assumptions drive our intent, and how does this influence our organization's positions on related issues?
2. If we believe gender transformative change necessitates social change, **what competencies, research methods and learning processes help** us understand and respond to the complexity inherent in social change processes?
3. **What is the role of leadership** in development organizations in enabling an understanding of the intersection of power and social relations with technical advances?
4. **Who can serve as change agents** at multiple levels in facilitating gender transformative change in our programming and in our relationships with donors and other development actors? How can our organizations enable their success?
5. **What personal change is required** of researchers and programmers at different levels to promote gender transformative change in agriculture?

2. Reflections on Gender at Work Experience

Rieky Stuart
Senior Associate, Gender at Work,
Toronto, Canada

Gender at Work (G@W) is an NGO that has the following aims:
- To build knowledge on gender-biased institutional features and how to change them;
- To support institutional transformation initiatives and capacity development of change agents;
- To work with key decision makers in related social justice/ development/rights communities to integrate this new knowledge in their analyses, strategies and practice.

Gender at Work's associates around the world undertake action-learning programs, evaluations and other activities with NGOs, governments and multilateral organizations to achieve these aims. This brief reflection highlights some of the lessons from action-learning programs that G@W has undertaken and others it knows about, as well as the lessons from recent institutional evaluations of gender mainstreaming that G@W has led or participated in (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)).

Working with organizations often means working with women and men together, rather than separately, to change relations between women and men to be more equal. Similarly, agriculture is traditionally a family-based enterprise, requiring the inputs of all family members to be successful. This family-based tradition simultaneously embeds traditional (unequal) gender relations along with the technical skills of agricultural production. Since gender inequalities have been shown to reduce women's agricultural productivity,[76] creating new norms that make visible, value and respect the contributions— and constraints—of both women and men farmers becomes an important strategy both in its own right and as a means to increase global food security. G@W's action-learning approach—based on critically reflecting on everyday practice and behavior in teams or groups that usually work together—has been shown to influence attitudes and behavior among women and men participants in favor of greater gender equality.

Normally in this approach, an organization that wants to improve its capacity to build gender equality selects a small staff team to lead the action-learning process. Skilled G@W facilitators work with the staff team to gather and analyze information about existing gender relations and gender [in]equalities in the organization and its outreach through interviews and document reviews. Together the facilitators and staff team plan a workshop whose aim is to share what has been learned, invite reflection and generate a six-month action plan. (The plan might be to gather and analyze more information, to identify systems and work processes that need to be changed and determine how to change them, to identify a process to reinforce new or challenge old behavior, etc.). Different units in the organization might develop different action plans. Ideally, such a workshop would be held for three or four different organizations together, so that they can deepen the analysis and reinforce the desire for change through exchange. After six months of implementation—with support from G@W facilitators if required—the teams come together again to reflect on their progress, adjust their plans and proceed with a second round of implementation. At the end of a year-long or 18-month process, a final workshop captures the learning and the change that has been accomplished, as well as outstanding issues.

Some funding organizations working in agriculture use a similar approach, but can often provide additional inputs needed to promote change. SDC in its Cuba program has fostered improved agricultural productivity using both adult education and technical agricultural support to improve livestock and vegetable production in agricultural cooperatives. IFAD in Central America, especially in Guatemala, has had success with improving production and income in indigenous communities using an approach that values women's and men's contributions to value chains for cardamom, coffee, vegetables and small rural enterprises while expanding and overlapping what were viewed as traditional gender roles and increasing women's participation in decision making in the household and in farmer organizations. In Peru, IFAD's work with indigenous communities has favored proposals for funding that involve women and young people in their conceptualization and design. The communities know the criteria, and their men and women representatives are actively involved in assessing the competing proposals. Oxfam/Novib and IFAD, with support from Linda Mayoux, have created a Gender Action Learning (GALS) process in Uganda that starts with women and includes a range of actors in the value chain to improve productivity and returns based on transforming unequal gender relations.

What these approaches have in common are the following:
- skilled facilitation, working with real issues that are identified and selected by participants
- working with groups of people who normally work together/have existing relationships
- encouraging exchange and comparison among different organizations working on similar issues (this helps to maintain professionalism and an openness to learning)
- using an approach that fosters mutual respect and complementarity among women and men, as well as among different stakeholder groups (e.g., community members/NGOs, farmers/food processors/buyers) while recognizing differing interests
- critically examining the limitations of existing gender roles and relations
- repetition and reinforcement of new systems and behavior over time—a 10-year project or longer, in the case of IFAD in Guatemala and Peru, or an 18-month process like the G@W/UNWOMEN collaboration with Indian NGOs on the Dalit Women's Livelihoods Accountability Initiative to support their equitable access to MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme)

While participants and organizations report high levels of success and satisfaction with this range of gender action-learning processes, the documentation of how gender relations change toward greater equality and the systematic evidence of such change is lacking. A review of a dozen International Financial Institutions (IFIs), multilateral and bilateral institutional gender evaluations[77] found that there is a lack of a theory of change or program theory for gender equality, there are no indicators, and data are often anecdotal, non-existent or inadequately disaggregated. In general, the world of development planning generally articulates problems as solvable, especially through the application of technical solutions through the use of concepts such as program theory/theory of change. But in fact, the intricacies of social dynamics, gender power relations and the ways in which these can reinvent themselves in the face of new realities often defies solutions through planned change and certainly defies planned technical change. But lack of any theory of change that adequately includes changing socially constructed power relations means that research and learning to find out what works, why and how to replicate it becomes very difficult,

---

[76] FAO, 2011, State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011: Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap in Development. Rome: FAO.
[77] Evaluation Cooperation Group of the IFIs, 2012, forthcoming (November).

and organizations are then incapable of deliberate programming to foster greater equality between women and men.

This lack of clarity is evident at the organizational (policy) level, in program and project design, in implementation, and in monitoring and evaluation. Ideally, the hypothesis of why change is needed, what needs to change, how to generate that change and how it can be measured should be consistent at all of these levels. However, in most cases, there is no information about the effect of a program or project within the household on workload, access to resources, or increased influence and decision making among household members. As a result, in a number of cases, anything to do with women in a development project or program is seen as contributing to gender equality, by programmers and/ or by evaluators. For example, a number of agricultural projects that increased women's work burden were used to illustrate progress on gender equality. There is no clear concept of what is needed to change gender roles and relations in favor of equality, or how to do it.

There is an argument and some evidence that greater equality among women and men will improve agricultural productivity.[78] There is also evidence of a positive correlation between successful development programming and adequate attention to gender equality, but there is no indication of causality. It could be that successful programming is more likely to include attention to social dimensions, including gender inequality. Or it could be that attention to gender equality generates greater success (FAO, IFAD, World Bank gender evaluations).

One of the benefits of these recent institutional evaluations has been an overhaul of the existing policies and systems to address this lack of clarity. Both FAO and IFAD have revised their gender policies to provide clearer guidance for program designers, managers and evaluators. However, there is considerable room for building common frameworks, plain-language terminology, and user-friendly and consistent indicators for the kinds of changes needed to build equal relations among men and women in agricultural production and marketing systems. Staff in organizations who are not gender specialists but are required to address gender inequality are often confused by specialist terminology that is not explained through real-world examples in plain language. Often, gender concepts reflect fine ideological and political distinctions that do not address the professional requirements of policy-makers, managers, researchers, planners, implementers and evaluators, but instead ask them to learn a "new" gender language. This communication gap between gender specialists and other specialists can mean that gender equality loses out.

As well as the revised gender equality policies noted above, there are several initiatives underway to build a common and clear understanding of how to define and measure gender equality results within a more robust theory of change/programming theory. CARE and Oxford University have been collaborating to measure "women's empowerment."[79] USAID's Feed the Future Initiative has been working with IFPRI and OPHI on a Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. Gender at Work and the Institute of Development Studies hosted a workshop on developing indicators for gender equality. Operationalizing these frameworks for agencies and governments responsible for agricultural development is a task that needs urgent attention. Building greater consistency—but not uniformity— and making these tools accessible to decision makers and implementers alike would be an important contribution for agricultural research that is attentive to gender equality.

---

[78] FAO, 2011, State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011: Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap in Development. Rome: FAO.
[79] CARE, 2012, "Reaching New Heights: The Case for Measuring Women's Empowerment."

This page intentionally left blank

With communities, changing lives

RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
CGIAR Aquatic Agricultural Systems