

livestock Xchange



International Livestock Research Institute

A late (great) start on gender work at the International Livestock Research Institute

Jemimah Njuki

How far have we come in integrating gender awareness, principles and ethics at ILRI?

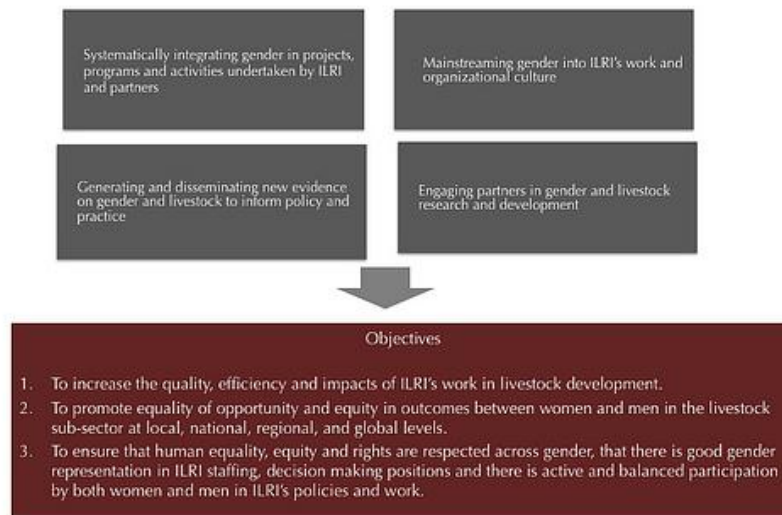
The first concerted efforts to look at gender issues at ILRI was in 2005, when ILRI commissioned a gender audit of the organization with the support of the Participatory Research and Gender Analysis Program (PRGA) of the CGIAR. The audit was led by ILRI's Ralph Roothart and Maria Mulindi. Although coming a decade after the ILRI started operating, and more than three decades after ILRI's two predecessor institutions had begun in the early 1970s, ILRI's self-commissioned 2005 gender audit still unearthed misconceptions about gender and lack of capacity to implement gender analysis in the institute.

A gender task force was subsequently formed in 2006 comprising staff from across the institute, but it

wasn't until 2008 that effort was made to start a meaningful dialogue with outside experts and partners on the topic of women and livestock.

Led by Patti Kristjanson, who then worked for ILRI as an agricultural economist (she has now joined the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security, based at the World Agroforestry Centre), this dialogue brought together about 200 professionals in research, non-governmental and private-sector organizations to begin to hammer out a coherent research agenda on global women and livestock issues. As a first step, the participants of Kristjanson's 'challenge dialogue' recommended carrying out a review of the scientific literature on women and livestock issues. The review was recently published as an ILRI discussion paper and has to a large extent defined our current gender and livestock research agenda.

ILRI's Gender Strategy: 4 Key Areas of Focus



The following year, 2009, was a turning point, or more precisely, a real starting point for ILRI's gender work. The institute hired Jemimah Njuki, a Kenyan sociologist who had been working at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture. Njuki was the first scientist at ILRI to be dedicated to gender and livestock research. With Njuki's knowledge of livestock, coupled with her expertise in gender research, ILRI aimed to begin to build a global and credible gender and livestock research agenda, to start to mobilize resources for this agenda and to work on mainstreaming gender-equitable perspectives and policies throughout the organization itself.

That same year, the gender task force became active and by the end of the year a draft gender research strategy was prepared and resource mobilization started in earnest.

In late 2009, ILRI's Targeting and Innovations Theme was split and a Poverty, Gender and Impact team was created partly in its place. Although some ILRI projects integrated gender in their work, especially ILRI's Markets Theme (e.g., Ranjitha Puskur in a project on Improving Productivity and Market Success of Ethiopian farmers'

and Delia Grace in a Food Safety and Risk Assessment Project), the first research grants ILRI received to generate evidence on gender and livestock markets, gender and assets, and gender and collective action arrived in 2009 and 2010. The results will be published in a book.

Looking back, it is remarkable how quickly ILRI has built a reputation for serious gender research. In 2010, ILRI convened two regional workshops, one on gender and market-oriented agriculture and another on gender and agricultural value chains. In that same year, the CGIAR Consortium recognized that its CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish had the strongest and most systematic integration of gender of all the research proposals it received. Also in 2010, ILRI's Njuki was invited to give a TEDx talk, The Missing Link, on Women in Agriculture at the TEDx Washington Circle.

On 9 and 10 November 2011, the ILRI Board of Trustees hosted a 2-day 'liveSTOCK Exchange' to discuss and reflect on livestock research for development.

Contributed by Jemimah Njuki, Leader of the Poverty, Gender and Impact research group at ILRI.

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