

The contribution of gender transformative approaches to value chain research for development

Paula Kantor (WorldFish)

Gender transformative approaches

The current widespread recognition of the importance of integrating gender into development is reflected in the growing prominence of gender strategies for research and development organizations, the emergence of compelling approaches for gender integration, and the development of indicators for tracking performance.

The agricultural research, development and donor community is building on this momentum to pursue increasingly more substantive approaches to gender integration as reflected in USAID's Feed the Future program and in many of the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs). Despite this, there is growing concern that these recent achievements need to go further if they are to integrate gender into development in ways that achieve lasting impacts on poverty and hunger. Unless development research and practice address the underlying causes of gender disparities in access to and control over agriculture and other valued resources, sustainable change is unlikely to be achieved.

Since the field of women in development emerged in the 1970s and transitioned to gender and development in the 1990s, research has documented the existence of gender disparities in access to resources, markets and technologies. In response, approaches that provide individual women access to resources, markets and technologies to fill the gaps have dominated agricultural development practice. However, these efforts have been insufficient on their own to bring about desired changes in ingrained patterns of inequality: Providing women access to resources and technologies does not automatically translate into control over them or their benefits, or into social acceptance of new roles and opportunities.

The lack of significant progress in reducing if not reversing these disparities after decades of research and program intervention highlights the need to test new program

approaches – gender transformative approaches (GTA) - that address both the fundamental causes and consequences of gender inequality. The hypothesis underlying gender transformative approaches to agricultural research for development is that qualitatively better and more lasting development outcomes will result from interventions that combine efforts to enhance access to resources, technologies and markets with efforts to understand and challenge the social context that enables social inequalities to exist and persist.



GTA and value chains

The arguments to design and test gender transformative approaches are directly relevant to the value chain component of the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish. Value chains operate within the

existing social context. Therefore, the social norms, attitudes and practices characterizing a particular place affect overall value chain operations. For example, accepted understandings of appropriate types and locations of work for women or men, including the expectation that women take on the majority of domestic labour, may constrain overall chain performance through limiting where in the value chain women and men are concentrated, irrespective of capacities, qualifications or aspirations. This gender neutral approach is evident in many value chain development projects that accommodate constraints on women's mobility due to cultural norms or domestic responsibilities by offering women opportunities close to home. This accommodating approach often leaves women concentrated in low value segments of a value chain and does not enable them to make the most of their economic potential for their own and the chain's benefit. However, inequalities also may contribute to chain competitiveness through women's lower relative wages, even for work in which they are considered more skilled than men, or through reliance on women's unpaid work on family farms to subsidize production costs. The potentially negative consequences of such terms of inclusion for women need to be captured in monitoring systems in order to understand full project impacts.

The 'embeddedness' of value chains within the social context also affects development outcomes for chain participants. Not taking the social context into account in designing value chain interventions to reduce poverty and improve food and nutrition security may lead to unintended consequences. For example, value chain interventions that work within the existing context of gender and other social inequalities – either purposefully or through blindness to these social issues - may not provide sufficient incentives (such as control over the benefits from their labour) for women to participate as the program expects, as shown in the example in box 1.¹ Interventions need to purposefully enable women or other marginalized groups to benefit from program participation through understanding and responding appropriately to power dynamics – in the household, market or community, as demonstrated in the example in box 2. The consequences of not doing so may lead to increases in women's unpaid workloads, reductions in women's control over resources, or declining household wellbeing.²

¹ For other examples, see Dolan, C. 2001. 'The 'good wife': Struggles over resources in the Kenyan horticulture sector', *Journal of Development Studies* 37(3): 39-70; and Dey, J. 1981. 'Gambian women: Unequal partners in rice development projects?' *Journal of Development Studies* 17(3): 109-22.

² WB/FAO/IFAD. 2009. *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*. Washington, DC: World Bank; Dolan 2001; Okali, C. & K. Holvoet. 2007. *Negotiating changes within fisheries development. Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme*. Rome: FAO.

Acceptance of the 'social status quo' also can hinder the achievement of food and nutrition security outcomes. Such an approach ignores intra-household gender relations that may limit: 1) recognition of the rights of women and girls to sufficient nutritious foods, 2) women's income control, or 3) women's voice in expenditure decisions. Income or food entering the household cannot be assumed to benefit all members; intra-household food distribution decisions and outcomes must be empirically investigated, and programs need to test ways to counter the causes of any identified inequalities in order to support the ability of all household members to benefit from improved access to and availability of food.

Box 1: Gender, incentives and program outcomes in Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, smallholder production of oil palm for export became a source of intra-household conflict affecting program outcomes for participating farm households. Marketing agencies contracted men to produce the fruit, even though they did not do the work independently; men relied significantly on their wives' and children's labour inputs. Such joint activity is normally supported by implicit contracts within the household around the use of the resulting income for family needs.

However, in this case, men did not fulfill these contracts by either remunerating their wives for their labour contributions or by ensuring women had a say in how the income was spent in the family. The uncertain economic returns from their contributions to oil palm production led many women to direct their labour to food production or other income-earning activities where the returns were more certain. This shift in labour allocation negatively affected oil palm production and family incomes. The marketing agency responded to this situation and set up a parallel system to pay women for the collection of loose palm fruit, providing women access to their own income and an incentive to continue to provide their labour to the joint enterprise.

See Koczberski, G. 2007. 'Loose fruit mamas: Creating incentives for smallholder women in oil palm production in Papua New Guinea', *World Development* 35(7): 1172-85.

To avoid these shortcomings in research for development aimed at improving the production and consumption of animal-source foods (ASFs) by the poor, more socially grounded value chain analysis is needed. Standard value chain analysis tends to focus on the nature of market relationships and decisions, and treats people largely as individuals separated from their contexts rather than influenced by diverse positions crossing the household, market and community. This approach needs to change so value chain analysis also critically assesses 1) how gender roles and relations in the household, community and market intersect such that women's and men's positions, relationships and responsibilities influence the others, and 2) the consequences of these complexities for chain performance and development outcomes.

Box 2: Involving women in aquaculture in Bangladesh

Two programs worked to involve women in fish farming in different parts of Bangladesh. A program in Mymensingh worked with individual women and men with household-owned ponds to provide technical training. They were successful in gaining women's participation by hiring female extension workers. In Jessore, an NGO program formed women's groups and supported them to obtain leases for ponds in which they farmed fish for sale. In both cases men were involved in fish sales due to norms around women's mobility and access to markets.

However, the group-based program was more successful in terms of women being able to maintain control over the income earned from the fish. In the first program, no attention was given in patterns of intra-household decision making and resource control. Women were unable to use the technical skills they obtained because men retained control over ponds, pond activities and financial decisions and no efforts were made to change this pattern through the program. In the group-based program, while men connected the women to buyers, they did so on behalf of the women's organization and not their wives. This changed the power dynamics and enabled the women's group to maintain control over the pond leases and related income.

See Riisgaard, L., A.M. Escobar Fibla and S. Ponte. 2010. Evaluation Study: Gender and Value Chain Development. DANIDA

- coupling efforts to orient ASF value chains to better meet demand among the poor with interventions that demonstrate to households the benefits of equitable intra-household food distributions.



The expected impacts of applying gender transformative approaches to value chain research for development are sustained improvements in the performance of value chains and in the level and equity of benefits flowing to poor women and men from chain participation. These impacts will be realized through developing interventions that enhance the equity of the social environment within which the chains and their participants operate, and implementing them in conjunction with technically focused value chain interventions. The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish tests this impact pathway by comparing the outcomes of integrated interventions that couple technical and transformative value chain interventions against the outcomes of technical approaches alone. Examples of integrated approaches to test include:

- combining efforts to improve poor producers' access to credit, inputs or markets with behaviour change communications that deliver evidence-based messages targeted at motivating positive changes in gender norms and practices that limit women's economic participation
- using evidence about women's potential as customers or employees to incentivize value chain actors to change their attitudes and behaviours regarding women's participation and position in the chain; or

Making GTAs to value chain research for development a reality

To design and implement gender transformative approaches to value chain development, researchers need to balance attention to the processes around production and sales of a commodity with attention to the social relations associated with these processes. They also need to develop strong cultures of learning to identify and share good practices so they can be adapted and tested in different contexts.

The three components supporting the implementation of GTAs in value chain research are no different from those involved in value chain research for development. GTAs just provide a new lens to the analysis, one which helps value chain research for development better reflect and engage with the complex social reality in which it operates. The descriptions of the steps below provide some initial guidance on how to make GTAs part of standard value chain research for development.

1. *In depth value chain analyses:* These analyses must describe both the market system and social context around the core commodity and how they interweave. They need to detail who does what, receives what, uses what resources and makes what

decisions at different points in the system, as well as explain **why** any existing social hierarchies exist and persist: e.g. Why are poor women and men concentrated in particular nodes, serving particular end markets? How does this effect chain performance? How does it relate to community norms or values, and to household roles and responsibilities? These explanations will illuminate the dynamics of power relations among value chain actors and how gender relations in the home, community and market intersect to affect women's and men's positions and outcomes in the chain.

2. *Design gender transformative interventions:* Use the results of value chain analyses to design gender transformative interventions. These interventions will address identified market and social bottlenecks in the chain. They will open new opportunities through

both improving access to economic resources among chain actors, and recognizing and responding to the ways social barriers block chain performance and the distribution of the benefits of chain participation.

3. *Develop gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation systems:* These systems are central to testing expected impact pathways and generating learning to document the outcomes of gender transformative interventions and the conditions under which they are achieved. They should track changes in: the material conditions and social positions of women and men participating in the chain; gender attitudes and practices of chain actors; and chain-level performance, including women's and men's shares in chain employment and income across nodes.



CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish aims to increase the productivity of small-scale livestock and fish systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk and fish more available and affordable across the developing world. The Program brings together four CGIAR centres: the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with a mandate on livestock; WorldFish with a mandate on aquaculture; the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which works on forages; and the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which works on small ruminants. <http://livestockfish.cgiar.org>

ilri.org
better lives through livestock
 ILRI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium

Box 30709, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
 Phone: +254 20 422 3000
 Fax: +254 20 422 3001
 Email: ILRI-Kenya@cgiar.org

Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
 Phone: +251 11 617 2000
 Fax: +251 11 617 2001
 Email: ILRI-Ethiopia@cgiar.org

