



Progress in gender integration in feeds assessment: Insights from the design and application of G-FEAST in Africa and Asia?

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Background

Livestock serves multiple functions in the livelihood of a majority of rural households. It is a source of employment, income, food, and nutrition, and has the potential to drive growth in rural economies. However, the contribution of livestock and its potential is threatened by the scarcity of feed coupled with glaring gender disparities in access and control, which is prevalent in various livestock value chains.

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI's) Feed and Forage Development program addresses the increasing demand for animal-source foods by availing options that can improve livestock productivity by tackling the feed-related challenges in a gender-responsive way. In the efforts to work out how to improve livestock feeding, the program has had several accomplishments including the continuous allocation of

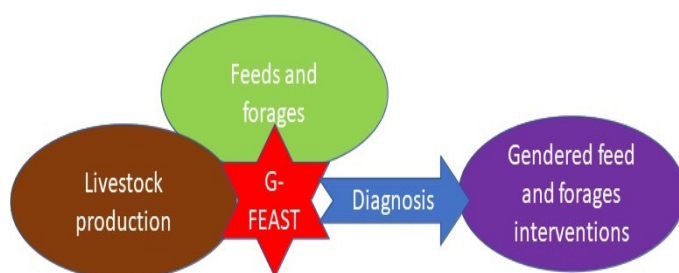
resources towards the development of a diagnostic tool which is used to assess local feed resource availability and use. The Feed Assessment Tool (FEAST) was developed in 2009 (<https://www.ilri.org/feast>). The development of this tool was informed by the need to map out the feed resources available at community level, assess the quality and seasonality of the feeds, understand feed needs, reveal the constraints faced by communities in accessing feeds, and identify potential opportunities aimed at informing intervention strategies. Although reports written after implementation of FEAST helped farmers, extension workers and researchers fully diagnose and understand problems and potential interventions in animal feeding, one of the challenges with the original FEAST methodology was that it was based on very technical aspects (including rainfall patterns, types and breeds of livestock, livestock product markets and the quantities that farmers sold) while the complex gender dynamics in feed/forage provision were

not integrated in the methodology FEAST application. This led to a situation where the analysis of gender relations was excluded in the feed assessments and making it difficult to integrate gendered feed interventions.

Following this shortcoming, ILRI, the International Center for Agriculture Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in collaboration with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) took up the challenge of designing a gender-responsive approach to feed assessment and designed the G-FEAST tool in 2016 (<https://www.ilri.org/download-g-feast>). This is a gendered tool which is diagnostic in nature and enables the assessment of gender relations in feed production. The application of the tool began in 2019. So far, the tool has been adopted and applied in five countries: Kenya, Uganda, Vietnam, Burkina Faso and Zambia. Plans are underway for its use in Zimbabwe.

The aim of designing G-FEAST was to introduce an integral assessment of gender relations in feed assessments in order to account for gender differences in problem or constraint identification; choice or adoption of feed technologies as well as the effect the technologies or interventions would have on households as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptualization of interventions after implementation of G-FEAST.



Why synthesis of gender integration using G-FEAST?

After about three years of application of G-FEAST in five countries, the ILRI gender and feed teams are taking a pause to ask a critical question: 'How well is the G-FEAST tool delivering on gender analysis in the feed research process and what areas might still have gaps that may require improvement'? Through a synthesis of 23 field reports that were generated after application of the G-FEAST methodology in the five countries [Burkina Faso (1), Kenya (3), Vietnam (1), Uganda (5), Zambia (13)], the team was able to implement a review and synthesis guided by the following questions: i) What quality of gender data has emerged from the application of G-FEAST?, ii) Whether/how do the G-FEAST findings influence gender integration in feed intervention designs?, and iii) Is there evidence that the designed feed interventions have the potential for delivering on women's empowerment in communities?

Approach used in the review and synthesis of G-FEAST reports

The team used a two-steps process in the review and synthesis. The first step was a desk review of the 23 G-FEAST reports guided by a framework that spanned five thematic areas (see Table 1). The five thematic areas included:

Theme 1: Review of the technical feed assessment in the reports to assess if there were indications of gender relations highlighted, i.e. factors affecting women, factors affecting men in feed availability and use.

Theme 2: If the report had any sex disaggregated data e.g., division of labour; decision-making, etc. and the insights that were standing out from the data.

Theme 3: If the report highlighted constraints that are specific to men or women.

Theme 4: If the report highlighted opportunities available for men and those available for women.

Theme 5: If the report recorded a feeding intervention designed in a way that potentially targeted men and women. If this was done, the intervention was reviewed on its potential to reach, benefit, empower women, or transform gender relations in the community. The potential was subjectively scored on a range of scores from -1 to +2 where -1 indicated missed opportunity, meaning the intervention did not make any gender considerations; 0 was gender neutral and talked of farmers in general, +1 indicated minimal gender considerations, and +2 was a recommended intervention that was gender sensitive. Evidence to support the scores each reviewer gave was recorded.

Farmer Alemu Demewos, irrigating his fodder plots using a solar pump to lift water from a hand-dug shallow well (photo credit: ILRI/Fikadu Tessema).



Table 1. G-FEAST reports synthesis framework

Sites	Technical feed assessments	Sex disaggregated data			Constraints for women and men	opportunities available for women and men	Designed feed/forage intervention	Evidence to support the assessment
		Division of labour	Decision-making	Others				
Below assess the qualities of the interventions Score guides (-1 to +2)								
2.1 Potential for 'Reach' men, women, youth (- to +2)								
2.2 Potential of 'Benefiting' men, women, youth (-1 to +2)								
2.3. Potential of leading to empowerment for men, women, youth (-1 to +2)								
2.4 Potential of transformation norms and social relations (-1 to +2)								
Reviewers comments (gaps things we would have wanted to see-basis for recommendations of how to improve G-FEAST)								

The second step involved consultation workshops with the technical feed and gender team members to brainstorm on the findings and see if the technical team resonated with the reviewer's assessments. Two such meetings were held in November and December 2021. Participants reviewed the results, the identified gaps and the potential to improve the G-FEAST methodology.

Synopsis of the synthesis findings

Table 2 shows the detailed preliminary findings of the G-FEAST synthesis task. The results are organized based on the above five identified themes.

On theme one, results revealed that sex disaggregated data were gathered and recorded in all the reports reviewed. All data were collected through the single sex focus group discussions (FGDs) method (women and men FGDs separately) or one gendered FGD (male or female only FGD) per study site. Further, while women enumerators should interview/facilitate women FGDs and men enumerators facilitate men FGDs, this was not the case in some cases. For example, in some reports men enumerators facilitated women FGDs and vice versa. The proposal is to train both women and men enumerators to facilitate women and men FGDs, respectively. Also, in

another case, household survey questions were asked to a representative six men and six women, but it was not recorded whether both the man and woman were from the same household or not. The synthesis findings recommend the need to interview men and women from the same household to bring out the intra-household gender dynamics on decision-making, access to and control over resources, and benefits sharing.

Farmer Wubejig Kefale harvesting green feed from her irrigated fodder to feed to her lactating cows (photo credit: ILRI/Fikadu Tessema).



Table 2. G-FEAST Synthesis preliminary findings

	How well does G-FEAST collect gendered data and subsequently inform implementation of gendered feeds/forages interventions?	Recommendation
Fieldwork planning and group characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer groups are divided by men and women (sex disaggregated), however, few reports are one gendered. Further, farmers were classified based on land ownership (small, medium, large) Household surveys are implemented but not clear who was interviewed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure single sex focus group discussion (FGDs) Capture other intersectional issues- guided by questions like which women, which men? Survey of woman and man from the same household (separately) to bring out the intrahousehold gender dynamics
Technical feed assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on technical feeds seems gender neutral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender dynamics in practices, adaptations in feed acquisition during shocks Clarity on ownership and control over resources is needed
Sex disaggregated data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on division of labour, decision-making, income, and credit were sex disaggregated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploration of the why and the what questions would be more informative
Gender analysis of constraints and opportunities for intervening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence was found of gender analysis of constraints and opportunities and neither were the designed interventions gender-sensitive/responsive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important to have guidance on the 'gender analysis' step of the G-FEAST methodology.

In some reports, FGD participants were more than the recommended FGD maximum number (8-12 participants), which hinders free and detailed participation of each participant. Hence, the need to observe the recommended number of FGD participants (8-12) to allow participation of all the participants and ensure discussions are kept crisp and focused.

On theme two, data on the technical field seems to be gender neutral. It focuses on types of feeds used and their composition. Access to critical resources like land is gendered but only in some of the reports. To capture gender dynamics and gender differences, the FGD questions should probably focus on practices and adaptations, feed acquisition, and use during shocks and storage.

On theme three, most reports recorded sex disaggregated data on division of labour, decision-making, income and credit access. Although the youth/boys and girls who were documented to play a role in providing labour for feeding and watering of livestock sometimes were forgotten/masked. However, reporting on decision-making needs reworking and linking to critical resources rather than reporting of jointness in decision-making, which masks gender differences. In addition, reporting on credit should be linked to critical resources to be more meaningful. Exploration of the 'why' and the 'What' questions across the variables (labour, decision-making, credit etc.) is likely to be more informative in revealing structural factors producing, reproducing, and propagating the gender differences in the way things are currently happening.

On theme four and five, the interventions designed were mostly going back to the default of technical feed options. There was no evidence of attempts at gender analysis. The constraints and opportunities discussed were mostly gender neutral. Although some reports stated constraints faced by women and those for men, recommendations of potential interventions were gender neutral (gender blind). Reference to the sex-disaggregated data reported earlier was almost always not done. It seemed that the qualitative data collected hardly made it to the step where interventions were designed.

Further questions

The review team is now at the stage of asking a set of further questions (instead of concluding). Why is it that this process/tool starts with a lot of commitment to gender integration but defaults back to the spot where there is no evidence that any gender analysis was implemented and the recommended feed interventions are gender blind/gender neutral? Is it about the teams, the process or the G-FEAST template?

To help in answering these questions and proposing solutions, the review team will in 2022 join a team implementing the G-FEAST methodology in the field and participate in all the steps to identify where the gender ball drops off the process. This step will inform the recommendations made for improvement of the G-FEAST tool and its implementation.

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Photo credit

Page 1: Youth family members engaged in taking care of irrigated fodder plots
(photo credit: ILRI/Fikadu Tessema)

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