Technical Report

Assessing the Use and Impact of GenderUp: Lessons for Gender-Responsive Innovation Design and Scaling

Mastewal Yami, Erin McGuire, Ojongetakah Enokenwa Baa, and Karen Nortje

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We extend our sincere appreciation to our partners, stakeholders, and collaborators whose expertise, insights, and commitment have contributed significantly to shaping this work. Their contributions have been instrumental in advancing CGIAR's ambition to scale proven innovations across food, land, and water systems, fostering impact that is inclusive, sustainable, and transformative.

We also recognize the continued support and collaboration of national and regional partners, whose engagement ensures that the solutions developed are responsive to local needs, strengthen innovation systems, and contribute to building more resilient agrifood systems.

To learn more about the CGIAR Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program, please contact: **scaling@cgiar.org**

About the CGIAR Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program

Scaling for Impact (S4I) is a CGIAR program (2025–2030) that tests, refines, and scales innovations in food, land, and water systems. It works to align those innovations with stakeholder needs to achieve transformative impact.

Website: https://www.cgiar.org/cgiar-research-portfolio-2025-2030/scaling-for-impact/

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AUTHORS

Mastewal Yami, Responsible Innovations

Erin McGuire, Responsible Innovations

Ojongetakah Enokenwa Baa, Researcher, Gender, Social Inclusion and Youth, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Pretoria, South Africa

Karen Nortje, Research Group Leader, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, IWMI, Pretoria, South Africa

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PHOTOS

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Cover photo is from a CGIAR GenderUp training workshop organized by the Ukama Ustawi Initiative and IITA in Lusaka, Zambia, featuring Millicent Liani.

DESIGNED BY

Radia Rowshan, Communication Analyst, CIMMYT

Contents

Acronyms

AID-I GLR - The Great Lakes Accelerated Innovation Delivery Initiative Rapid Delivery Hub

ALOFT - Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow

CGIAR - Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

F2F - Farmer to Farmer

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GESI - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

HQCP - High Quality Cassava Peel

IITA - Institute of Tropical Agriculture

IPSR - Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness

IWMI - International Water Management Institute

M & E - Monitoring and Evaluation

MDII - Multidimensional Digital Inclusiveness Index

MEL - Monitoring, Evaluation, and learning

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations

OH - Outcome Harvesting

PIDA - Pastoralist Initiative Development-Aid

REM - Ripple Effect Mapping

RI - Responsible Innovations

RS - Responsible Scaling

SSA - Sub-Saharan Africa

TAAT - Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation

UU - Ukama Ustawi

WaPoR - Remote Sensing for Water Productivity

Executive summary

GenderUp is a responsible scaling tool that supports innovation teams in developing inclusive and impactful scaling strategies. GenderUp facilitates collaboration among project teams from diverse backgrounds to work together in achieving responsible scaling in agri-food systems. It has been in use since 2020 and used in 20 countries with over 100 active GenderUp facilitators.

Under the CGIAR, innovation teams have been building capacities for inclusive innovation design and uptake using GenderUp. This impact study was developed to capture diverse experiences in acquiring the knowledge and skills of the conversational tool, how and extent GenderUp is used, as well as perceptions on the suitability, adaptability, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the tool in 'real life' situations as project teams, specifically within the Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program, apply it. The evaluation not only focuses on capturing experiences and stories that show current use and impact but also provides space for the users across CGIAR programs to provide input for its further improvement. Based on this, the evaluation was designed to draw insights from individuals and teams that participated in the GenderUp training workshops and GenderUp facilitators who have already used the tool in their projects and initiatives. The analytical approach included qualitative synthesis of findings of online surveys and Focus Group Discussion to inform an analysis using Outcome Harvesting (OH) and Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) to identify outcomes. These lessons aim to guide the S4I Area of Work (AoW2) on inclusive innovation pathways.

Implication for this Evaluation: The findings confirm GenderUp's value as a reflective and capacity-building tool. To meet the Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program's responsible scaling accountability requirements, where ongoing and future innovation evaluations must track: (1) Which Solution Track innovations used GenderUp, (2) What innovation package changes resulted from the use of GenderUp, (3) What GESI-disaggregated outcomes were achieved. This represents a shift from "tool usage and user satisfaction" to "innovation contribution and beneficiary outcomes."

Key findings

- GenderUp has reached diverse users. It has been used both by women (60%) and men (40%), and 38 organizations operating in over 20 countries across the world, including the CGIAR.
- First interaction with GenderUp showed variation among users. Users of GenderUp tool first interacted with GenderUp tool mainly through GenderUp facilitator training.
- Time and resources invested in adopting GenderUp were perceived as reasonable compared to the benefits of the tool.

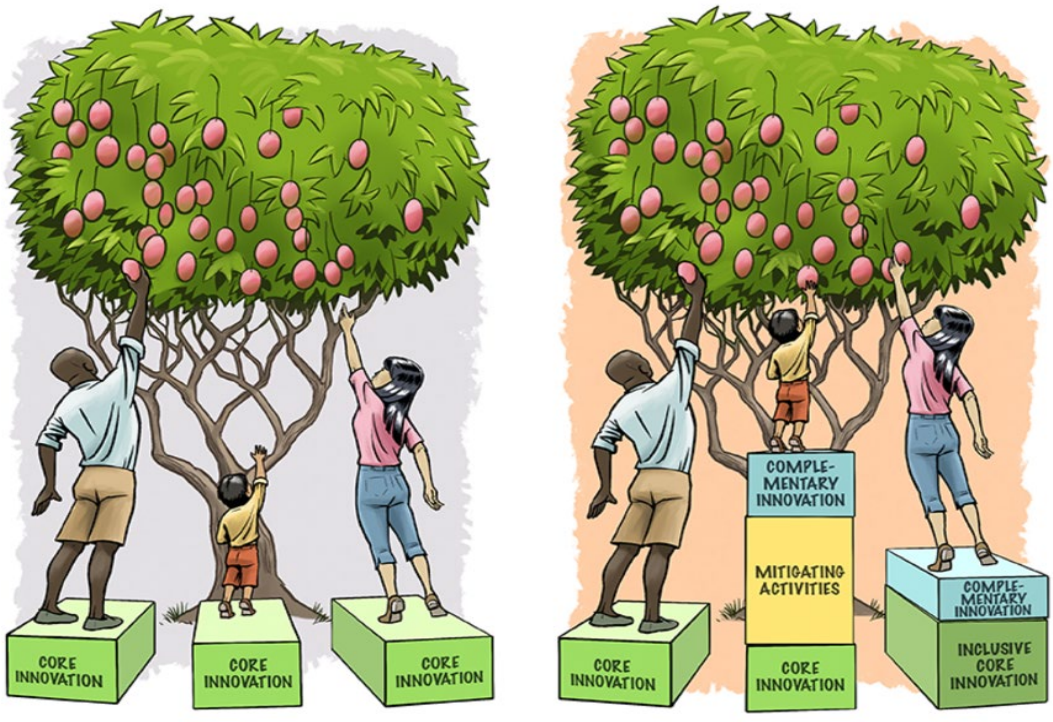

Figure 1: GenderUp figure showing differences traditional scaling and responsible scaling. Source: McGuire, E., Leeuwis, C., Rietveld, A. M., & Teeken, B. (2024).

Key findings continued

- GenderUp was most relevant for use as a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) tool (43%), and for a combination of GESI and scaling activities (51%).
- GenderUp exhibited suitability for integration for use in different stages of the project cycle and showed adaptability to local contexts and flexibility in its operationalization.
- GenderUp has been adapted and used in combination with other tools. Examples of adaptability include its use in combination with biophysical modeling tools for the identification of different personas and to project the impact of agricultural innovation.
- GenderUp has increased users' capacity in designing gender-responsive interventions and contributed to deliberate GESI integration in project activities. It has also been used as a participatory research methodology.
- GenderUp led to the integration of inclusion components in project designs. The key principles of GenderUp, such as inclusivity and local consideration in scaling strategies, enabled project teams to focus not only on the participation of the 'powerful' and 'visible' actors in innovation and scaling processes but also to invest time and resources to identify the 'invisible' and 'powerless' actors (i.e., marginalized groups).
- GenderUp influenced the allocation of budget or resources toward gender-related activities, and it helped in the identification and mitigation of potential social or gender-related risks.
- GenderUp users faced challenges, including time and resource constraints, constraining cultural and gender norms, different levels of understanding of the GenderUp concepts by the project team, a low level of translation and localization of GenderUp concepts, and limited capacity in facilitation.
- GenderUp provides a clear entry point for scaling AoW2 innovations (solution tracks).

Findings show that GenderUp has had a measurable influence on users' thinking and practice. It has led to improvements in promoting responsible and inclusive innovations, changes in mindsets towards the critical need for consideration of marginalized groups and voices, and influences teams and institutions on gender-responsive design and implementation of innovations and technologies. For greater impact, it needs to evolve from a reflective tool to one that fully supports a co-design process of innovations, supporting innovation teams earlier in the ideation and curation phases.

Key recommendations

- Adopt a modular approach and have different versions to match the time and resource availability of the users. It just needs to have a modular format for convenience. It needs to be formulated in a way that it can be used for 1 hour, 2 hours, or a full day. It must be handy for people with different time and resource availability.
- Focus should go beyond analyzing social differentiation. Its development and use need more awareness of the whole context of the place, its environment, knowledge, and information available on the innovation, and its relevant business model.
- Consider other social inequalities, such as clearly bringing the youth dimensions. Youth issues are high on the development agenda, and integrating youth aspects in the GenderUp tool could contribute to more youth inclusivity in program and project activities.
- Redesign the tool so that the final workshop product can be easy to use and a ready-to-use conceptual framework of what was produced through a GenderUp process.
- Consider the capacity of the team to implement all the stages properly. Some issues, such as doing an intersectionality profile and technical know-how on responsible scaling, need to have the relevant expertise in the team.
- Redesign the tool to influence institutional culture. A shift in institutional culture is required for long-term change so that users of the tool can change their scaling approach based on the discussion of the GenderUp workshops.

GenderUp at a Glance

# Users	200
% 	60
% 	40
# Organizations	38
# Countries	20

Top modes of engagement

- Facilitator training.
- GenderUp workshops.
- Information exchange by colleagues.

Top perceived benefits

- Most relevant for use as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion + Scaling tool
- It exhibited suitability for integration for use in different stages of the project
- It showed adaptability to local contexts, and flexibility in its operationalization.
- It has been adapted and used in combination with other tools.

Top recommendations

- Make the tool modular with different versions.
- Consider other social inequalities.
- Redesigned to make usable final workshop product.
- Consider the capacity of the team to implement.
- Influence institutional culture to be effective.

Introduction

Scaling innovation has become a central mechanism to achieving impact within Agriculture Research for Development (AR4D). Yet persistent questions remain about how to ensure that scaling processes themselves are responsible, socially acceptable, and attentive to the diverse and sometimes divergent needs of users and non-users. As CGIAR and its partners increasingly recognize that scaling is not merely a technical expansion, but a social and political process shaped by power, context, and differentiation, the need for methods that support *responsible scaling* has become more urgent.

GenderUp emerged in 2020 in response to this need. Developed by scientists from CGIAR, Wageningen University, and the University of California, Davis, GenderUp is a conversational, team-based method designed to help innovation actors anticipate potential risks, surface assumptions, question power dynamics, and adapt scaling strategies so they are more context-sensitive, equitable, and socially legitimate. While gender and social inclusion remain central entry points, the method ultimately aims to strengthen the broader principles of responsible scaling - anticipation, reflexivity, responsiveness, legitimacy, and alignment with diverse user realities.

GenderUp supports interdisciplinary project teams to reflect critically on how their innovations may benefit, burden, or exclude different groups and how scaling outcomes might vary across contexts. Its five stages—clarifying the scaling ambition, reflecting on the current strategy, adapting the approach using insights on social differentiation and contextual dynamics, identifying mechanisms to include marginalized or overlooked groups, and exploring differentiated impacts and unintended consequences—mirror core responsible scaling principles by embedding structured moments for reflexive learning and strategic adjustment (Figure 2).

This evaluation examines how GenderUp has been taken up across projects and organizations, including the reach of the tool, the modes of engagement, perceived benefits, how teams have adapted and integrated it into diverse contexts, the outcomes and impacts generated, and the challenges encountered during use. Together, these insights contribute to understanding how GenderUp supports responsible scaling in practice and how it may be strengthened to meet the evolving needs of CGIAR and its partners**.** The Scaling for Impact (S4I) program has committed to responsible scaling through two interconnected Areas of Work: AoW2 (17 Solution Tracks scaling specific innovations) and AoW3 (Enabling Environment Lab providing tools, capacity, and synthesis). GenderUp, positioned within AoW3's Activity 3.2 (Capacity strengthening for responsible scaling), demonstrates a traceable contribution to AoW2 innovation outcomes and how best to provide support to other CGIAR science programs and bilateral projects.

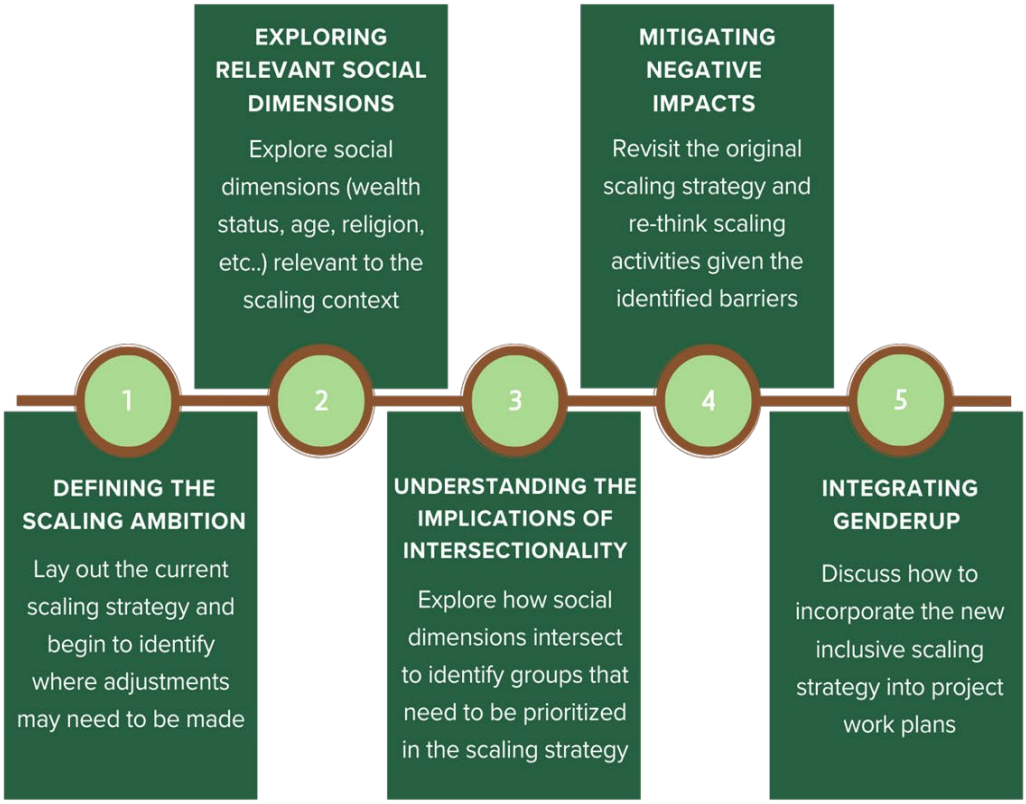

Figure 2: Showing the five stages of GenderUp, and the activities to be carried out in each stage. Source: Responsible Innovation

GenderUp evaluation framework

CGIAR is making a substantial system-wide investment in Scaling for Impact (S4I), a program designed to increase the reach, effectiveness, and long-term influence of innovations across the CGIAR portfolio. A central pillar of S4I is the commitment to responsible innovation and responsible scaling, with strong emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) as core determinants of equitable, durable impact for poverty alleviation. Within this agenda, GenderUp has emerged as a promising entry point, offering a structured, team-based method for anticipating differentiated impacts, addressing power dynamics, and adapting scaling strategies accordingly for innovation uptake.

As GenderUp is used more frequently across initiatives and programs - and as proposals for a broader, next-generation version of the tool continue to develop -it has become necessary to assess its current applications, strengths, limitations, and contributions to responsible scaling practice. This evaluation, therefore, examines how GenderUp is functioning within CGIAR's evolving scaling ecosystem and generates insights to inform future tool development, integration and innovation pathways that respond to outcomes on i) enabling environment diagnostics; ii) scaling support services for institutions; and iii) science-policy partnership interfaces for responsible scaling.

Evaluation objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation are to: 1) Assess Use and Reach: Document how GenderUp has been applied across geographies, institutions, and innovation stages; 2) Identify Outcomes and Impact: Examine changes in awareness, practice, and organizational approaches to gender and inclusion; 3) Analyze Enablers and Barriers: Understand what has supported or limited effective use of GenderUp, and 4) Inform Future Development: Co-create design recommendations for a "GenderUp 2.0" - now referred to as a "Responsible Scaler Toolkit" that integrates with responsible innovation and scaling frameworks (e.g. Innovation Platform for Scaling Readiness).

Evaluation design

The evaluation design was structured to draw insights from individuals and teams that participated in the recent GenderUp training workshops, and GenderUp facilitators who have already used the tool in their projects and initiatives. The analytical approach included qualitative synthesis of findings of online surveys and Focus Group Discussions, Outcome Harvesting (OH), Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) tools to identify outcomes that are beyond specific individual outcomes.

Evaluation will draw on responsible innovation (RI) and gender-transformative design principles, and aims to answer the following key questions:

1. How is GenderUp being used across contexts and disciplines?
2. What outcomes and impacts are observed?
3. What opportunities exist to strengthen GenderUp as a design and scaling tool?

Key evaluation questions

The overarching goal of this evaluation is to analyze the extent to which GenderUp has been used by project teams and organizations (the reach), the modes of engagement, perceived benefits of GenderUp, integration and adaptation of the tool in different contexts, outcomes and impacts, and challenges faced in using the tool. The overall evaluation questions are structured based on main categories (Table 1).

Reach and Use of GenderUp, such as users of GenderUp, types of projects or institutions, adaptation of the tool (translations, contextual examples, new materials), and most frequently used parts of GenderUp, and reasons.
Outcomes and Influence of GenderUp and its influence on project design, team dynamics, or decision-making, shifts in gender or inclusion outcomes, and integration of GenderUp in scaling frameworks or Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems.
Barriers and Enablers, such as the factors that have made GenderUp easy or difficult to use (time, training, institutional support), and exploring ways for facilitation, resources, or organizational buy-in to be improved.
Forward-Looking Design for GenderUp can be used earlier in the innovation cycle (during ideation, curation, or co-design), and relevant features.

Table 1. Evaluation questions

Themes	Key questions	Purpose
Experience and Use	"Tell us about how you've used GenderUp — in what context, with what results?"	Understand range and depth of applications
Outcomes and Impact	"What changes — in awareness, design, or behavior — have you seen as a result of using GenderUp?"	Identify tangible effects and pathways of influence
Challenges and Adaptation	"What challenges have you encountered applying GenderUp? How did you adapt the tool?"	Capture barriers and innovation
Early-Stage Integration	"How could GenderUp better support the *design and curation* stages of innovation — before implementation begins?"	Explore use in early innovation cycles
GenderUp Vision	"If you could redesign GenderUp, what would you change or add?"	Generate insights for next-phase development

BOX 1: AoW2 Innovations (solution tracks) for support using the GenderUp approach on scaling. These evaluation questions aim to guide and support some of AoW2 innovations ***(Solution Tracks)*** prioritized for scaling in 2026 through the innovation flagship program on responsible scaling outcomes. Specifically, the questions would be revised to target innovations that have used the GenderUp Methodology.

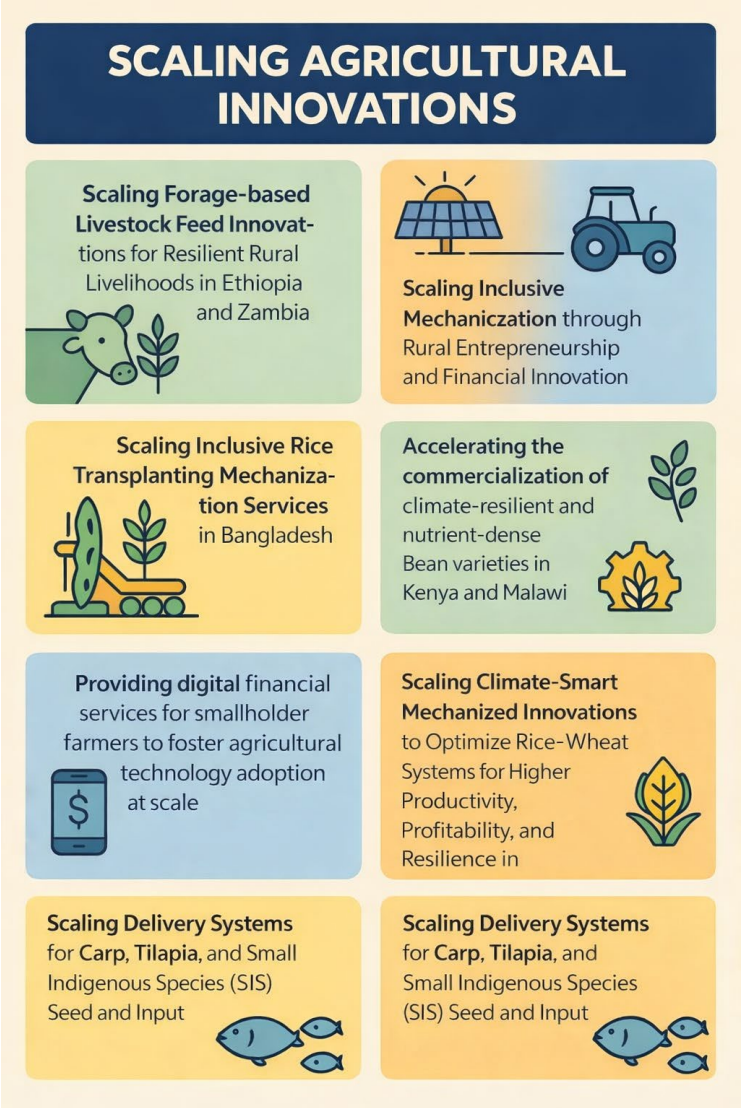

Figure 3: Area of Work innovations (solution tracks) to be supported through inclusive approaches using GenderUp. Source: Authors

Confirmed use cases

- **Ukama Ustawi Initiative:** GenderUp workshops shaped irrigation and mechanization scaling strategies in Zambia, resulting in documented social differentiation analysis and adapted dissemination approaches
- **TAAT Technology Profiling:** GenderUp informed inclusion sections of technology e-catalogs, providing stakeholders with gender-disaggregated barrier analysis for technology adoption in Benin
- **CROSSROADS Project (IWMI**): GenderUp workshop outputs contributed to modified soil fertility improvement strategies in Ethiopia, with reported 65% increase in reach to marginalized groups in DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi

A note on S4I Accountability: Evaluation scope and mitigating activities

Critical Limitations for Innovation-Level Traceability: While GenderUp has reached 100+ facilitators across 20 countries, only 3 initiatives have documented pathways from workshop outputs to specific innovation package changes to measurable inclusion outcomes. Most applications remain at the capacity-building or conceptual stage.

Beneficiary Outcome Documentation: Estimated beneficiary reach (620 women, 580 men in PIDA; 2000+ across East/Southern Africa programs) is not systematically tracked through MELIA or linked to specific innovation decisions. As the report notes, facilitators often did not have resources to document benefits or were too early to monitor.

Decision-Point Evidence: The evaluation captures perceptions of influence (e.g., "GenderUp changed team mindsets," "helped identify barriers") but does not yet track which S4I Solution Track innovations incorporated GenderUp insights into design specifications, partnership strategies, or IPSR profiles.

The findings confirm that GenderUp serves a meaningful function as both a reflective practice and a capacity-building tool. Looking ahead, meeting S4I's responsible scaling accountability standards will require a shift in how impact is measured — moving from whether the tool was used and whether users found it valuable, toward understanding how it shaped innovation decisions and what that ultimately meant for GESI outcomes at the beneficiary level. The table below maps out the concrete steps to operationalize this shift.

Forward Workplan for S4I Integration (2026-2028)

Timeline	Action	Owner	Output
• Q1-Q2 2026	• Pilot GenderUp with 5 S4I Solution Tracks during IPSR+ profiling	AoW3 CoA 3.2 + Solution Track Leads	• GenderUp workshop outputs feeding into GESI analysis modules
• Q2 2026	• Document innovation changes resulting from workshops	Solution Track M&E Specialists	• Case studies showing workshop → innovation package pathway
• Q3 2026	• Establish MELIA reporting protocol for GenderUp-influenced outcomes	AoW3 + MELIA Team	• Standardized indicators linking workshop insights to GESI-disaggregated data
• Q4 2026	• Synthesize evidence: which recommendations were implemented vs. shelved	AoW3 Portfolio Analyst	• Annual learning brief on "GenderUp to Outcomes" pathway
• 2027-28	• Track long-term inclusion outcomes through PRMS	S4I Leadership + PPU	• Evidence of changed innovation performance on GESI indicators

Data sources

The evaluation employed different methods and approaches in two phases. The main data collection methods were online surveys and focus group discussions.

Online surveys

In the first phase, online surveys were used to gather information from GenderUp facilitators. The online surveys were sent to more than 200 former and current GenderUp facilitators during October and November 2025. Out of the over 200 GenderUp facilitators, 76 participated in the online survey with a response rate of 38%. The online surveys were developed to capture details on the reach and profiles of GenderUp users, their first interaction with the GenderUp tool, how they have implemented GenderUp in their program or project activities such as adapting the tool according to the local context, or using GenderUp in combination with other tools, alignment of GenderUp with project objectives and activities, challenges and opportunities in using GenderUp, barriers to use GenderUp in their projects, outcomes and impacts achieved due to use of GenderUp tool, and support needs to improve the use of GenderUp. The online surveys included open- and closed-ended questions to gather qualitative and quantitative information such as scores and assessments of their experiences, and outcomes achieved from using the GenderUp tool in their projects.

Focus group discussions

In the second phase, five Focus Group Discussions with a group size of 4-6 were organized in November 2025 with project teams that have used GenderUp in their project activities. The focus group sessions focused on exploring the contributions of GenderUp to achieve outcomes along the Reach, Benefit, Empower, and Transform (RBET) framework developed by CGIAR. The focus group sessions were also used to harvest impacts and outcomes using Outcome Harvesting (OH) and Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) tools (Figure 4). The focus group sessions were also used to capture stories and experiences, direct and indirect impacts in using the GenderUp tool, and the required changes to make the best out of the tool in scaling efforts

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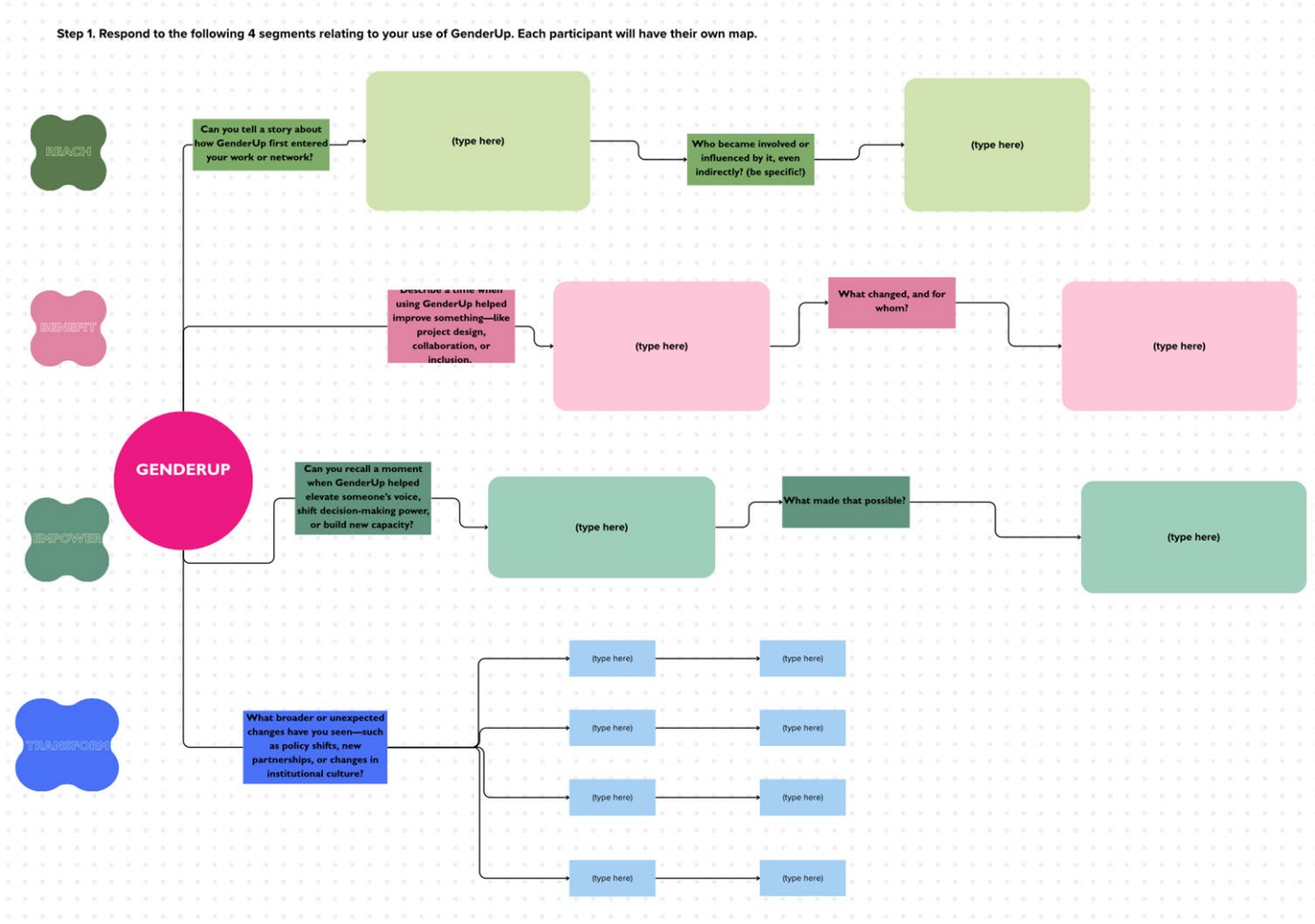


Figure 4: Showing a snapshot of a Canva used in a focus group discussion to capture the direct and indirect impact of GenderUp in project activities and Mapping the Ripple Effects.

Analytical approach

Methods synthesized qualitative and quantitative data from the online surveys and focus group discussions. OH and REM were used in the evaluation questions to identify the stories and narrations of outcomes of the GenderUp tool and assess the intended and unintended outcomes of the tool. The approach helped to shape the forward-looking nature of the evaluation in refining and upgrading the GenderUp tool for future use.

OH is an evaluation approach that encourages different stakeholders to participate in an evaluation process. OH enables the identification, description, verification, and analysis of outcomes. OH does not entirely emphasize extracting information from participants; instead, the tool emphasizes participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process (Wilson-Grau, 2018). REM is a versatile participatory evaluation tool that helps in capturing impactful stories that illustrate the impact of an initiative or intervention and providing a visual map of both intended and unintended impacts or outcomes (Chazdon et al., 2017).

REM is a highly relevant tool in evaluating the GenderUp tool due to its inherent nature in stimulating participation and collaboration among individuals and teams with different levels of experience in trying out, using it, and aspirations in continuing to use the tool in current and future projects. The fact that REM gives equal weight to analyze and integrate stories of impact (positive, neutral, or negative), and also the 'ripple' effect of the GenderUp conversational tool through networks, connections, and systems, helped to understand both the specific impacts and the extended impact in influencing behavior change across teams and projects.

Key ingredients of the REM were used in the evaluation process. 1) Appreciative inquiry was used in examining the changes teams and individuals have observed since they started using GenderUp in their projects. 2) A participatory approach was used throughout the evaluation process by engaging participants in the evaluation design process, 3) Interactive group discussions, and online surveys were used to facilitate participatory self assessments and reflections in individual and group settings, and 4) The mind mapping process was also employed to visualize the 'ripple' effect and impact of GenderUp in strengthening networks and relationships, whether or not it has led to new collaborations, and behavioral shifts across networks, connections, and geographies. This process also has relevance in visualizing the impact of GenderUp in influencing learning, empowerment, and influencing pathways at the systems level, such as in influencing policy, practice, and resource flows. In the future, deeper analysis using the same data set would yield more insightful results.

Key findings

Reach and user profile

GenderUp has reached diverse users. GenderUp tool has been used both by women (60%), and men (40%). GenderUp has been used by project teams and 38 organizations operating in over 20 countries across the world, and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with the highest use (over 50%) as depicted in Figure 3 and 4. In terms of regional distribution, most of GenderUp use was in East Africa (27%), South Asia (27%), South Africa (16%), and West Africa (15%) whereas less use was observed in North Africa (2%) and South America (2%). The GenderUp tool has been used by users from different institutions such as local governments, donors, national research centers, international research centers such as the CGIAR centers, academia, business networks, international and national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Users with diverse roles and seniority levels used GenderUp tool in their research and implementation roles. Roles of users included scientists, gender specialists, project coordinators, project managers, academic staff, consultants, volunteers, post-graduate fellows and graduate students (Figure 5).

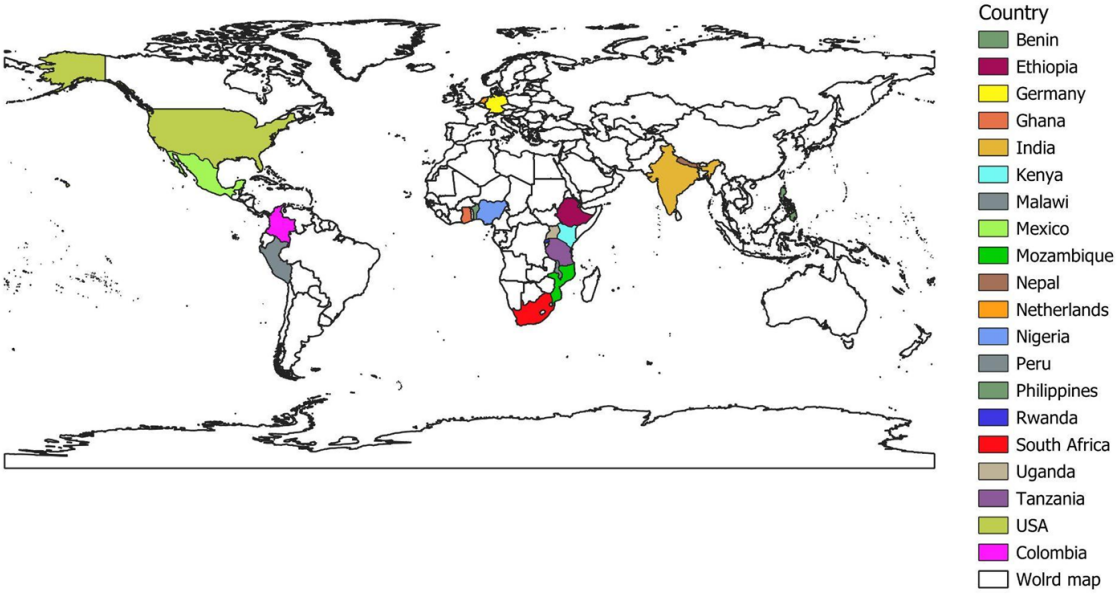


Figure 5. Geographical distribution of GenderUp users, illustrating how the GenderUp users are distributed globally.

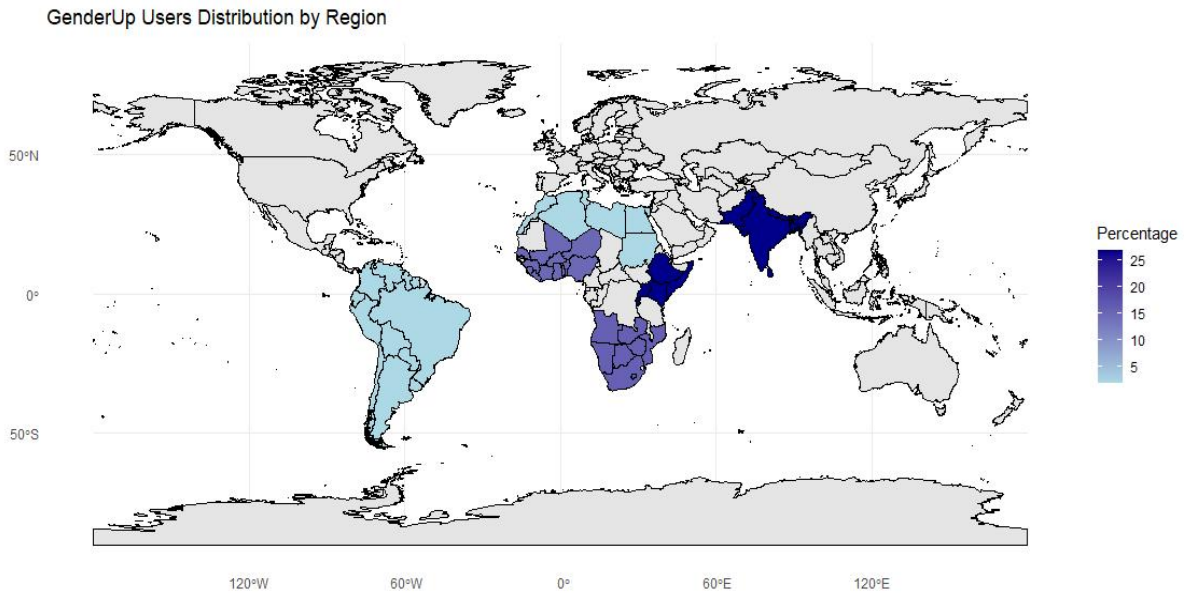


Figure 6. Map illustrating the extent of use of GenderUp in different regions.

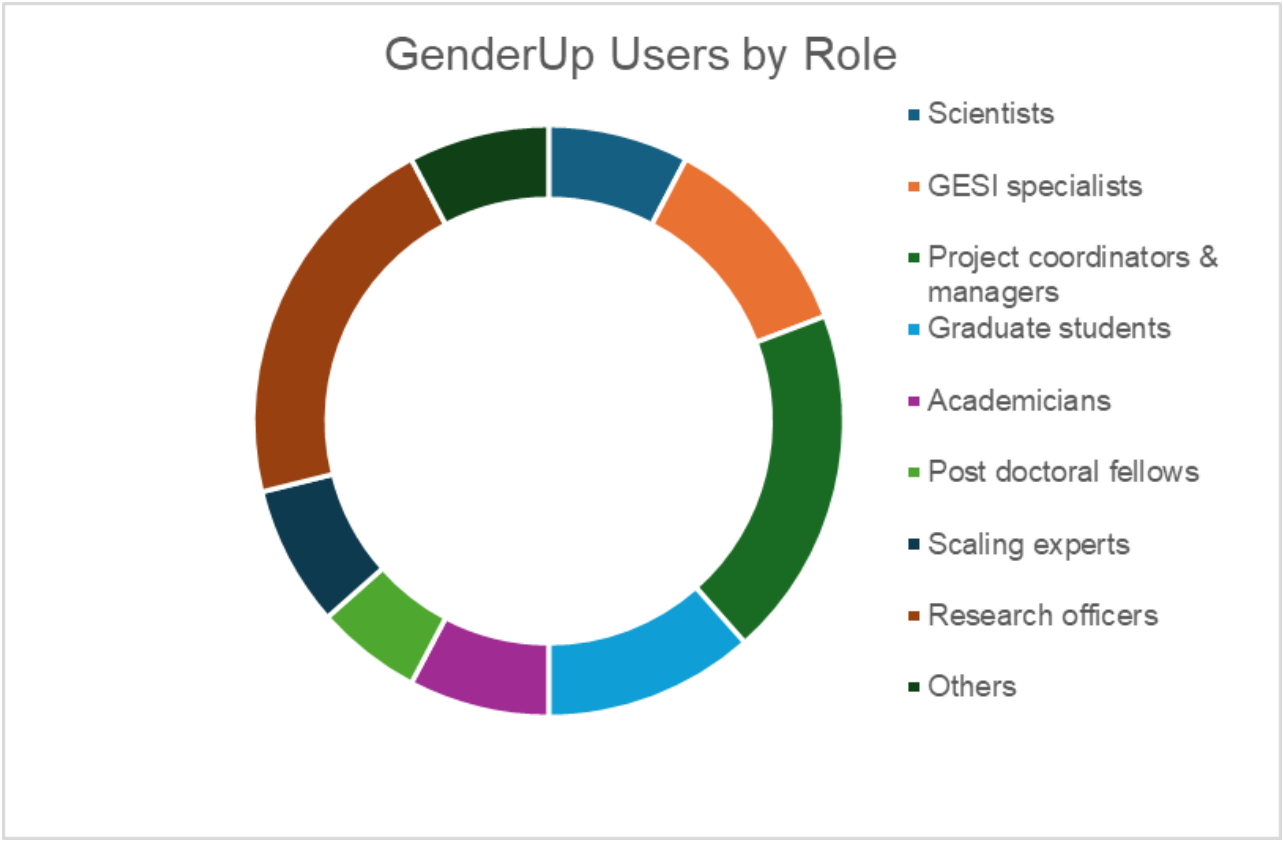


Figure 7. Roles of GenderUp users in their respective organizations and institutions.

Modes of engagement

First interaction with GenderUp showed variation among users. Users of GenderUp tool first interacted with GenderUp tool mainly through GenderUp facilitator training (64%), GenderUp workshops (25%), information exchange by colleagues (24%), followed by conference session or webinar (19%), and through website and other online materials (15%).

Application of GenderUp across projects and teams varied. The dominant use of GenderUp was for self-learning (36%), and as academic framework or conceptual consideration (29%) followed by facilitation of GenderUp workshops (25%), adapting the tool for use in other ways (20%), and as an educational tool to teach others (17%). A good number of users have reported that they have not applied the tool in their actual work yet (31%) (Figure 6). The frequency of use of GenderUp in the last 12 months varied from not at all (41%), 2-3 times (28%), once (24%), and more than 5 times (7%) with average use of twice within 12 months. A good number of users (60%) have an intent to use GenderUp in their projects while 25% are unsure, and 4% do not have a plan to use GenderUp in their projects in the coming 12 months. In terms of number of projects, users expect to use GenderUp in 2-5 projects (45%), in 1 project (23%), in no project (14%), and in more than 5 projects (2%) in the coming 12 months. Interestingly, those that applied GenderUp most often, also engaged in deeper learning, for instance taking the *Innovating and Scaling for Social Outcomes in International Food Systems* class offered by Dr. Erin McGuire, and other global scaling experts. This was particularly true for those that were not initially interested in GESI informed scaling.

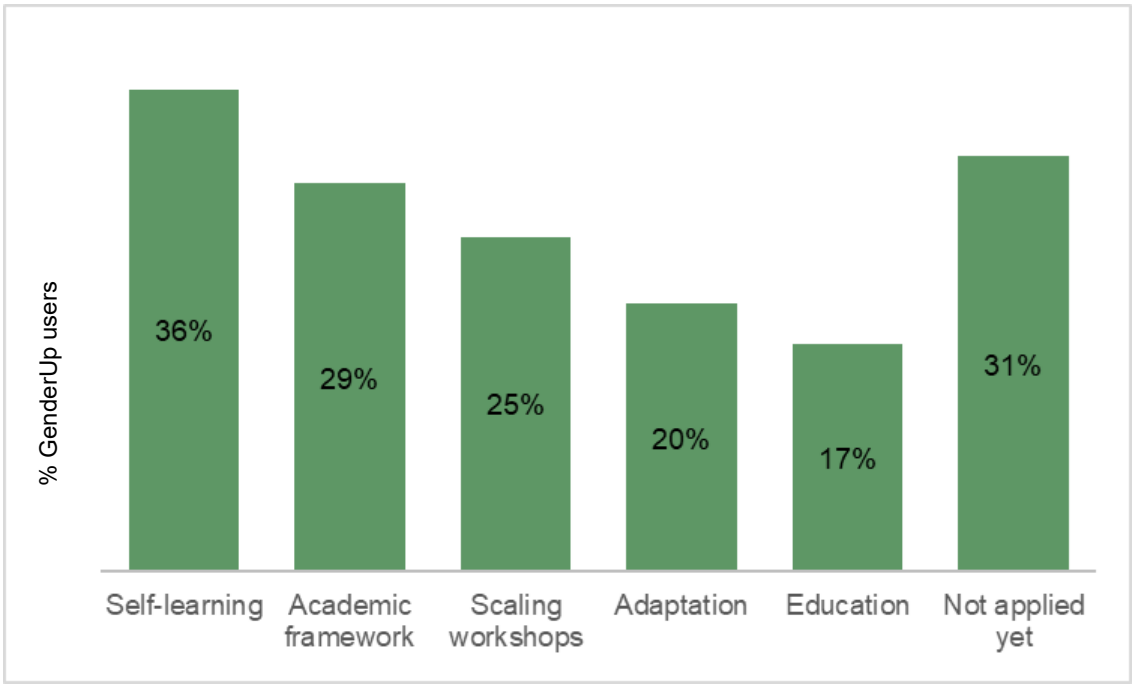


Figure 8. Diagram showing how participants used GenderUp.

Adaptations and integrations

GenderUp was the most relevant method for a combination of GESI and scaling activities (51%), and for use as a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) tool (43%). In contrast, the use of GenderUp entirely for scaling activities was limited (6%). For example, GenderUp was used as a framework for integrating GESI in a survey and analyzing not only who participated in project activities but also who did not participate, and the reasons behind non-participation in a project in Nepal. In this case, GenderUp helped in shaping the project teams' thinking on visibility and power relations among rural communities, thereby strengthening the inclusion components of the project design. The REM exercise also revealed that GenderUp has been perceived as a GESI tool by those implementing scaling activities and aimed at promoting Responsible Scaling (RS) in project activities by taking inclusivity and local adaptation at its center.

GenderUp exhibited suitability for integration for use in different stages of the project cycle. The tool was adopted and used in proposal development, facilitation of a gendered scaling strategy workshop, modification of project activities during design and implementation, and in M&E activities by including gender-specific indicators to regularly track participation, decision-making processes, and benefits. The Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) program of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) used GenderUp to design its inclusion section of technology e-catalogs to showcase and provide information to stakeholders planning projects and programs about particular groups, and the potential barriers that affect the groups from benefiting from the technologies and innovations in Benin. GenderUp was also used to develop a framework on farmers' typologies in projects implemented under the University of Bonn, Germany.

Table 2: indicating projects and programs that adapted GenderUp to suit their needs.

Initiative/Project	**Adaptation**	**Purpose**
Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT),	Inclusion section of technology e-catalogs.	To provide information on particular groups likely to be impacted by the technologies.
Remote Sensing for Water Productivity (WaPOR), IMWI, FAO	GenderUp steps adapted for use with digital tool.	To enhance inclusivity of digital tool.
Nepal national survey	GenderUp aspects were adopted in survey questions.	To improve the design of country-level agricultural extension strategies.
Borena peacebuilding	GenderUp was used for problem identification and social differentiation.	To increase participation of men and women in peace building efforts.
Farmer typologies, University of Bonn	GenderUp was used to develop farmer typologies.	To target different categories of farmers.
ALOFT program, USAID Farmer-to-Farmer program	GenderUp was adapted for use in capacity building by a regional program.	To enhance farmer- to farmer learning on inclusivity in agrifood systems.

GenderUp showed adaptability to local contexts and flexibility in its operationalization. GenderUp was not only used as a diagnostic and planning tool but also as a framework to strengthen the overall gender mainstreaming practice, using the principles of GenderUp in diverse ways across projects, and by simplifying and adapting the tool (e.g., simple format, local language, and visualization tools).

GenderUp has been adapted and used in combination with other tools (Table 2). Examples of adaptability include its use in combination with biophysical modeling tools for the identification of different personas and to project the impact of agricultural innovation (Figure 8). It was used in combination with other inclusivity tools in the Remote Sensing for Water productivity WaPOR project of IMWI and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), implemented by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). GenderUp stages 1-4 were used to guide teams on the inclusivity of the design of the digital tool, Multidimensional Digital Inclusiveness Index (MIDII), and to develop inclusive scaling strategies of the digital tools. Besides, GenderUp was adopted and used in the Ukama Ustawi (UU) Initiative for irrigation and mechanization technologies, and the CROSSROADS projects in IWMI for planning of inclusivity of dissemination approaches and outputs for soil fertility improvement in Ethiopia.

GenderUp was adapted and used to improve the design of country-level agricultural extension strategies. A good example for this was the adaptation and use of GenderUp in the Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOFT) program, a regional program that targeted at improving Farmer to Farmer (F2F) learning across Southeast Asia (Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand).

Figure 9. Photo taken at University of California, Davis – with a multi-stakeholder group discussing implications of innovation.

CGIAR Center-Specific Analysis: GenderUp Uptake and Relevance

Survey data from 21 CGIAR-affiliated respondents across 7 centers reveal differentiated uptake patterns. The following center-specific findings are relevant for targeting future S4I support and scaling strategies.

4.1 Response Distribution by CGIAR Center

CGIAR Center	Respondents	Key Engagement Pattern
IITA	7	Strongest engagement; TAAT e-catalog integration, Great Lakes AID-I training
Alliance Bioversity-CIAT	5	High interest but mostly conceptual adoption; not yet applied in practice
ILRI	3	Engaged through gender-livestock and health programs; regional networks
IWMI	2	Deepest technical integration; WaPOR/CROSSROADS digital tool adaptation
CGIAR (other)	2	Gender and Equality Accelerator; BDN engagement
CIMMYT	1	Early-stage; interest expressed but not yet applied
CIP	1	Early-stage interest from the Peru office

4.2 Center-Specific Findings

IITA

Strongest engagement among CGIAR centers, driven by TAAT Clearinghouse integration and Great Lakes AID-I training. IITA users report concrete innovation package changes (e-catalog inclusion sections) and beneficiary reach estimates (20,000+ marginalized farmers in the Great Lakes region). Key challenge: aligning GenderUp with existing inclusive approaches and private sector engagement.

Alliance Bioversity-CIAT (5 respondents)

Second-highest response rate, but most respondents have not yet applied the tool in practice. Interest remains high with users noting GenderUp's conceptual value for thinking about visibility and power in innovation processes. Priority need: moving from conceptual adoption to operational integration in Alliance innovation packages.

ILRI (3 respondents)

Users engaged through gender-livestock and health programs, contributing to workshops, peer learning, and regional networks. Evidence of integration with Wageningen University research partnerships.

IWMI (2 respondents)

Deep technical integration through WaPOR/FAO digital tool adaptation and CROSSROADS project. IWMI demonstrates the strongest example of GenderUp being embedded in technical innovation design rather than used solely as a reflection tool.

CIMMYT, CIP (1 respondent each)

Early-stage engagement. CIMMYT reports interest but has not yet had the opportunity to apply. CIP (Peru) expressed interest in learning the tool. These centers represent growth opportunities for S4I scaling support.

4.3 Cross-Cutting Finding

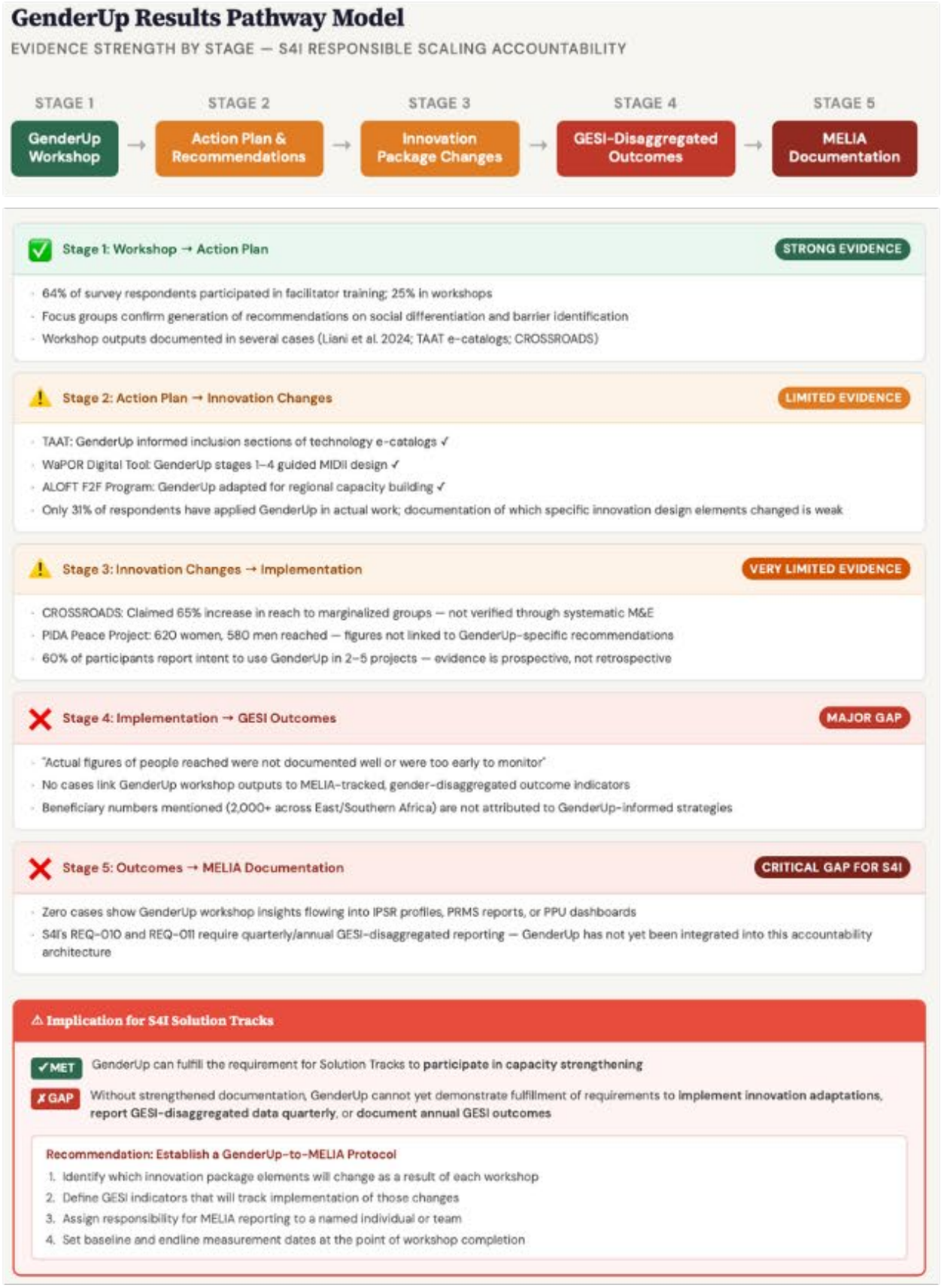
13 of 21 CGIAR respondents (62%) reported not using GenderUp at all in the past 12 months, and 8 of 21 indicated integration with Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness (IPSR) as a top improvement priority. This signals that bridging GenderUp from awareness to routine practice within CGIAR centers remains the primary challenge for S4I.

4.4 CGIAR Respondent Likert Scores

Measure	CGIAR Mean	N
Alignment with organizational priorities	4.42	19
Relevance to project objectives	4.11	18
Would recommend GenderUp	4.22	18
Benefits outweigh costs	3.88	17
Increased capacity for gender-responsive design	4.00	14
Helped identify/mitigate risks	4.12	8
Contributed to scaling plan development	4.00	7
Improvements in women's access to resources	3.67	6
Strengthened women's participation in decision-making	3.14	7
Improved case for gender-smart investments	3.55	11
Influenced budget allocation toward gender activities	3.40	10

Pathway from Workshop Outputs to Innovation Outcomes: Evidence and Gaps

For GenderUp to function as a **results tool** (not only capacity tool) in S4I, there must be a traceable pathway:



Outcomes and perceived impacts

This section reports on the findings from the online surveys and focus group discussions regarding the outcomes and perceived impacts of GenderUp. In the online survey, perceptions and attitudes on outcomes and impacts were measured with agreements or disagreements with statements about GenderUp, along values ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (strongly agree).

Organizational alignment

The GenderUp tool was well aligned with project objectives and priorities. The goals of GenderUp were aligned with the user's organization priorities (4.38/5). GenderUp addressed issues that were relevant to project or program activities (4.24/5). The alignment of GenderUp with project goals and objectives also encouraged users to recommend GenderUp to colleagues or partners (4.30/5).

Time and resources invested in adopting GenderUp were perceived as reasonable compared to the benefits of the tool. Obviously, project teams might not always have adequate time to implement the GenderUp stages and activities in a thorough manner and might not manage to use all aspects of the tool. Nevertheless, users perceived that the benefits of using the tool in their program or project activities outweighed the costs of using it in terms of time and resources (3.84/5).

Skill enhancement

GenderUp has increased users' capacity in designing gender-responsive interventions (Likert 4/5) and contributed to deliberate GESI integration in project activities. The tool has increased awareness and understanding of the need for inclusiveness and equality issues, and deliberate integration of gender issues in innovation and scaling processes among researchers with biophysical and social science backgrounds (e.g., TAAT program on technology profiling). It has also increased awareness of systematic ways of thinking in scaling innovations and contributed to improvement in the inclusiveness of the existing scaling strategy of a project. At the University of Bonn, GenderUp strengthened the capacity of the scaling team on the heterogeneity of farmers and other users of innovation because of the newly found GenderUp skill in the project.

GenderUp strengthened project teams' capacity in strategy development and contributed to capacity development efforts. Such contributions included the adaptation and use of GenderUp training materials in undergraduate courses and seminars. As well, salespeople who interacted with private sector actors and Government Ministries were influenced by the project team on how GenderUp could help achieve responsible scaling in TAAT technologies. The other contribution was the strengthened capacity of internal staff and partners on GESI, and power dynamics in innovation processes, thereby reflecting how local cultural contexts could be enablers or barriers to scaling efforts. GenderUp was also used to stimulate a reflective exercise on GESI awareness among staff members in team retreats.

GenderUp contributed to the development of a concrete scaling plan or pathways for an innovation (Likert 3.65/5). For instance, GenderUp informed the scaling plan of the TAAT e-catalogs that provided relevant information about each technology or innovation could affect particular groups, or constraints that might affect certain groups from benefiting from the technologies or innovations. The final output of the GenderUp workshops or the framework developed was logical and organized, which has contributed to the implementation of the scaling strategy in TAAT. A flexible use of GenderUp in projects implemented in the University of Bonn also enabled the development of a framework for categorizing farmers or developing farmer typologies. However, given the 3.5/5 rating, this could be improved.

GenderUp helped in the identification and mitigation of potential social or gender-related risks (4.27/5). GenderUp changed 'mindsets' that inclusion and responsible scaling need to go beyond the traditional GESI approach in just saying men and women beneficiaries, instead doing a thorough analysis on social differentiation, examining the influence of intersectionality, and doing scaling in a collaborative approach with integration of diverse views and experiences of the targeted communities. Examples included the outcomes of the GenderUp workshop conducted under the CROSSROADS program by IWMI and local partners in Ethiopia that contributed to reducing the negative consequences of marginalized communities and excluded groups.

GenderUp contributed to measurable improvements in women's access to resources/services (inputs, finance, training) (3.73/5). GenderUp strengthened women's participation in decision-making with targeted interventions (3.6/5). It was estimated the number of beneficiaries influenced by the GenderUp activities was 620 women and 580 men in the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) peace project in Ethiopia, and over 2000 beneficiaries across projects in East and Southern Africa through engagement in gender-livestock and health programs, workshops, peer learning, and microfinance initiatives, roundtable discussions, policy dialogues, and regional networks. However, the actual figures of people reached or influenced by the GenderUp tool were not documented well, or in some cases, were too early to monitor by project teams.

GenderUp influenced the allocation of budget or resources toward gender-related activities (3.5/5). Users of the tool also reported an improvement in their ability to make the case for gender-smart investments to donors or partners (3.7/5). GenderUp also opened opportunities for funding for gender-related interventions as a ripple effect. Examples included the funding opportunity provided to do more GenderUp workshops by the MasterCard Foundation following the positive outcomes of the High-Quality Cassava Peel (HQCP) project in Nigeria. However, this area could be significantly improved with additional attention to enabling environment support.

Behavioral changes

GenderUp has improved partnerships, fostered collaboration among multidisciplinary team members, and reshaped working culture. Project members often have diverse academic and professional backgrounds. Social inclusion and equity issues were sidelined and considered as responsibilities of people with a social science or gender background. The use of GenderUp in projects has helped team members to have a better understanding of how joint efforts can help achieve better results in innovation and scaling processes. It motivated the team members to collaborate with others more, to seek inputs and feedback on their work from team members with different backgrounds. In these ways, GenderUp strengthened partnerships, fostered collaboration, and positively reshaped the work culture (Figure 9).

GenderUp enabled participatory decision-making among the research team. GenderUp shifted the mindset of researchers towards consideration of social relations in addition to technical aspects. The tool improved group dynamics and participatory decision-making processes in team meetings. For instance, the use of GenderUp in peace processes in Borena, Ethiopia, resulted in equal representation of men and women in peace processes. The use of GenderUp also helped in adjusting the scaling strategy to include complementary innovation in addition to technical aspects of innovation, resulting in 65% increase in reach and benefit of marginalized groups in the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi.

GenderUp enabled consideration of social differentiation and gender in the field. Gender consideration was mostly viewed in projects as a checkbox item and a donor requirement in reporting. Consideration of social differentiation was perceived as a 'tedious' task of little importance to increase the impact of innovation and scaling efforts. Participation in GenderUp workshops changed the views of the project team on the significance of understanding social differentiation and the existing inequalities in communities that the innovations are thought to impact. For instance, there is evidence on the use of GenderUp workshops for capturing social differentiation and gender aspects in scaling projects in Zambia under the UU initiative https://hdl.handle.net/10568/170094 (Liani et al., 2024), and the integration of GenderUp in GESI trainings under the Great Lakes Accelerated Innovation Delivery Initiative Rapid Delivery Hub (AID-I GLR) https://hdl.handle.net/10568/139610.

GenderUp led to the integration of inclusion components in project designs. The key principles of GenderUp such as inclusivity and local consideration in scaling strategies enabled project teams to focus not only on the participation of the 'powerful' and 'visible' actors in innovation and scaling processes but also to invest time and resources to identify the 'invisible' and 'powerless' actors (i.e. marginalized groups), to understand the reasons behind their non-participation in decision-making processes, and to devise mechanisms for more inclusivity in the project activities.

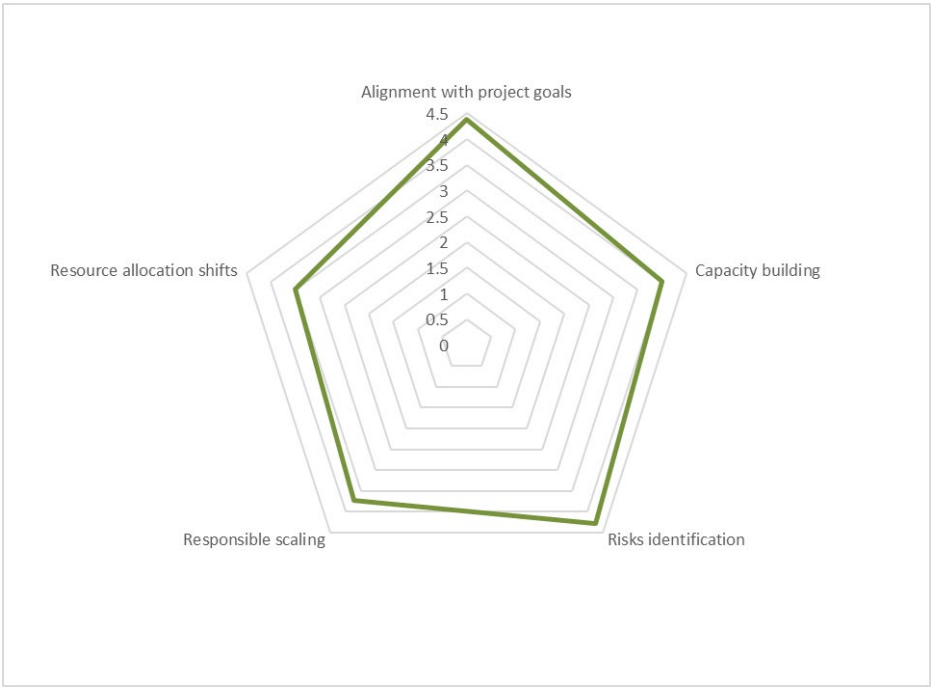


Figure 10. A diagram illustrating the perceived benefits of GenderUp based on alignment with project goals, resource allocation shifts, responsible scaling, risk identification, and capacity building.

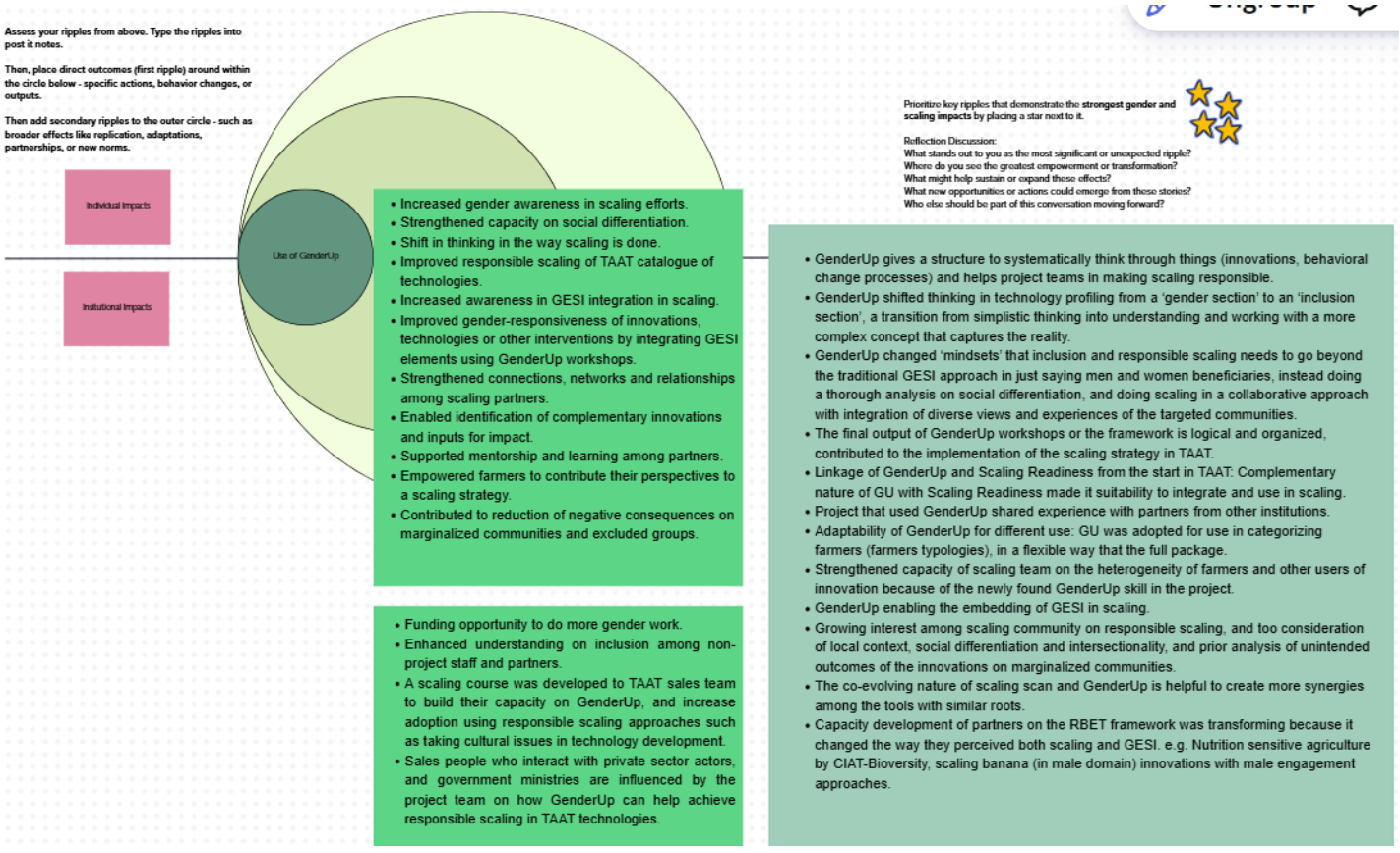


Figure 11. Diagram showing a summary of the direct and indirect impacts of using GenderUp and mapping the Ripple Effects of using the methodology by project teams that participated in the focus group discussions. Source: Canva summarizing the REM of the FGDs.

Challenges

Difficulty in linking reflections to actionable items in the 'redesigned' scaling strategy was the most frequently mentioned challenge that limited the use of GenderUp in projects. The tool encouraged teams to reflect on their scaling strategy and to identify gaps and strengths of their scaling strategy regarding inclusiveness, gender equality, social differentiation, and consideration of local contexts. However, project teams sometimes hesitated to make the required changes by revisiting their strategy with the 'new' actions required to upgrade their scaling strategy due to resources or project momentum, particularly if GenderUp was used late in the process.

Different levels of understanding of the GenderUp concepts by the project team were the next important challenge that affected the adoption of the tool. Project members engaging in GenderUp workshops might consider the tool as an assessment rather than generative, and this could limit their engagement in a constructive manner. Time and resource constraints influenced the use of GenderUp by project teams. The time it takes to thoroughly implement the tool and the logistical requirements in the 'real world' situation constrained the effective use of the tool.

Next to that, a low level of translation and localization of GenderUp concepts constrained the use of GenderUp by project teams. Translation of the GenderUp tool for different local contexts has not been manageable in a few cases. The underpinning concepts of GenderUp were not always implemented in practice due to the difficulty teams faced in the operationalization of gender concepts.

Limited capacity in facilitation affected the quality of implementation and the benefits of the GenderUp tool. Skillful facilitation is critical for the realization of GenderUp in promoting and enabling RI + RS. The tool requires that workshops be facilitated with proper time management, participatory process, and documentation of activities. Project teams faced challenges in making the most out of the tools due to limited capacity to facilitate participatory processes in the workshops.

Constraining cultural and gender norms limited the success of GenderUp in promoting responsible scaling. Such cases were critical in situations where open discussions on social differentiation and associated constraints in scaling innovations were limited due to cultural and gender norms of the stakeholders or communities. As well, implementation of GenderUp in scaling efforts faced challenges when stakeholders showed resistance to changing the existing norms in their institutions and were comfortable with the 'status quo' (Figure 12).

Institutionally, these challenges point to a clear need to move beyond voluntary or ad hoc adoption of GenderUp and similar GESI tools. For GenderUp to fulfill its potential as a results-oriented tool — not only a capacity-building exercise — AoW2 Solution Tracks should be required to integrate a recognized GESI tool such as GenderUp at defined points in their scaling strategy development, with facilitation support and adequate time built into project workplans. Equally important, S4I must provide the resources and systems needed to track what happens after workshops conclude: this means dedicated M&E capacity to document innovation package changes, clear protocols for linking workshop action plans to GESI-disaggregated indicators in MELIA reporting, and accountability mechanisms that make outcomes visible at the portfolio level. Without this institutional resourcing, even well-facilitated GenderUp workshops risk remaining disconnected from the evidence base that responsible scaling demands.

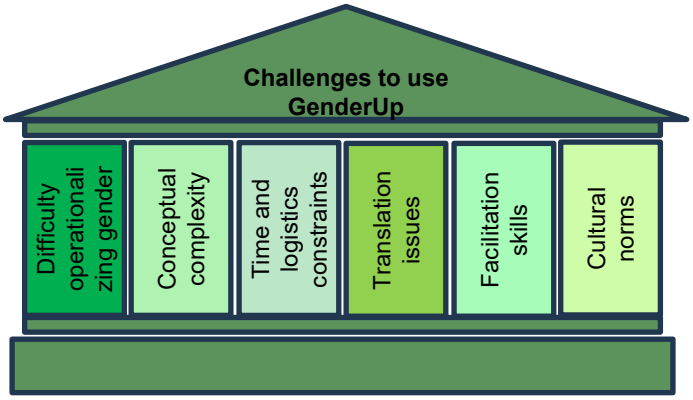


Figure 12. Challenges for using GenderUp in order of importance, based on findings of online survey and FGDs.

Support needs

Support needs for increased use of GenderUp include case studies and examples in simplified formats (67%), online refresher modules (50%), in-person training (37%), and technical assistance for pilot support (30%).

GenderUp for early-stage innovation (50%): Teams might need to begin engaging with GenderUp to support early-stage innovation. Different versions of GenderUp that are suitable for use in different contexts and depths are needed.

Simplify the technical terms and acronyms of GenderUp to make it understandable among the biophysical and technical team without GESI background.

GenderUp needs a redesign to be flexible to add new categories into the process, to fix some issues with the social differentiation, to go beyond being a reflective tool, and to make it generative.

Establish Community of Practice (CoP) to enhance exchange of knowledge and practice and support mutual learning among people using GenderUP in their project activities. A Community of Practice (CoP) of GenderUp users or Responsible Scaling might be options to consider.

Most important improvements required in GenderUP features for increased use include case studies and evidence of impact (62%), clear training and facilitation materials (56%), GenderUp for early-stage innovation (49%), simple scoring/short-form version (44%), integration with existing Monitoring, Evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems (44%), and private sector engagement templates (31%).

Discussion

Findings show that GenderUp has been used in many ways, across organizations and in different countries, indicating the adaptability and suitability of the tool to meet the needs of its users. Most users interacted with the tool through awareness of a facilitator training or from colleagues implies that the need for increased promotion of the tool in both formal and informal platforms to reach more users and organizations. This is particularly important in situations where project teams might not have access to the networks and connections that have previous experience in accessing training or using GenderUp in their project activities. This also indicates that simple modules or ”one-pager” version of GenderUp may be helpful and can be more easily disseminated.

The findings that GenderUp exhibited suitability for integration for use in different stages of the project cycle, and showed adaptability to local contexts, and flexibility in its operationalization contributes to the relevance of the tool in the processes, products and services provided through innovations in agri-food systems. It is also encouraging that GenderUp users reported time and resources invested in adopting GenderUp were reasonable compared to the benefits of the tool. This indicates both positive experience with the tool and a willingness to use it to strengthen scaling efforts, even when it requires additional time and resources. However, it also implies the need to address the time and resource constraints faced by the users to properly use the tool in their project operations.

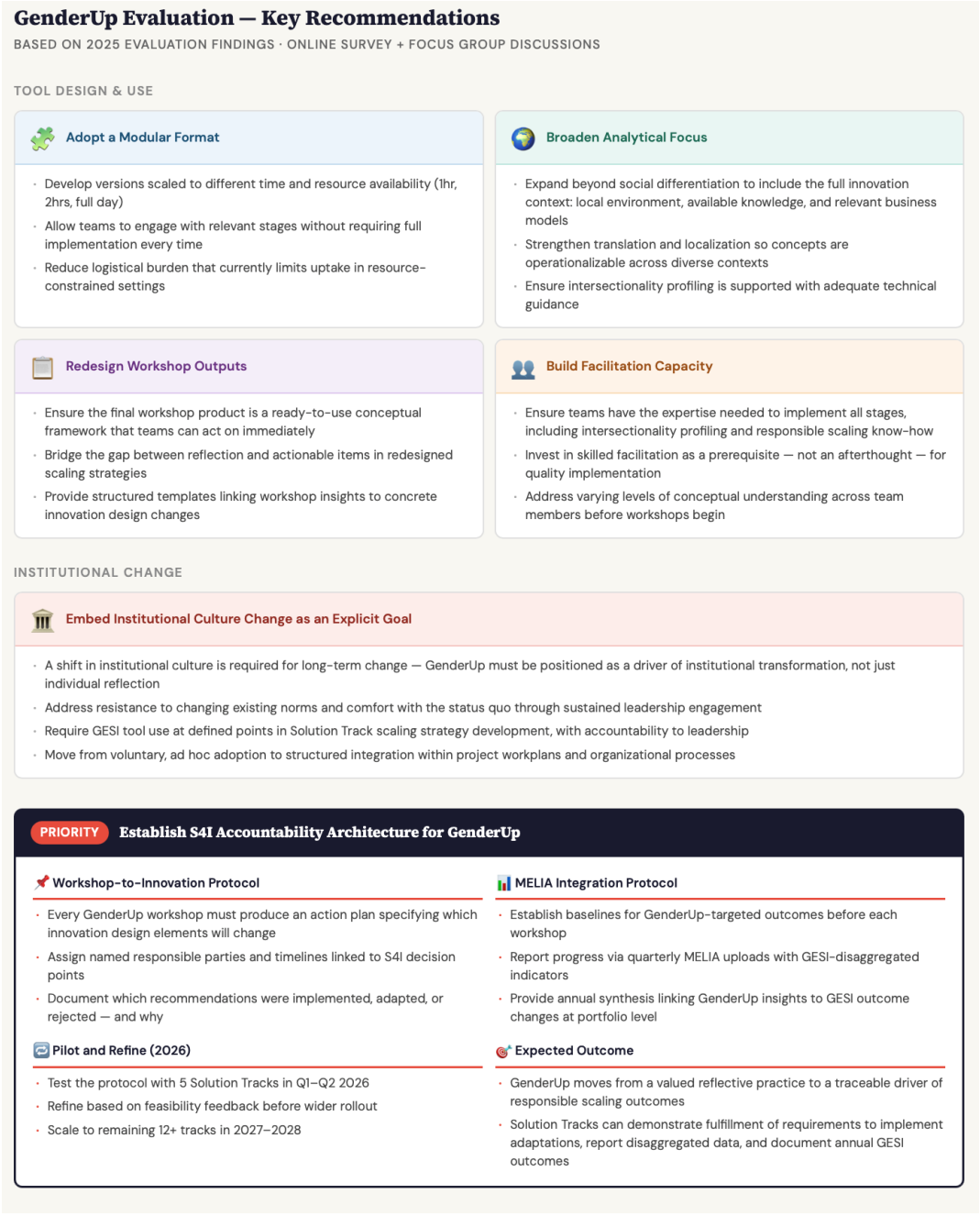
The other finding reveals that GenderUp was rated to be highly relevant for use as GESI tool, and for a combination of GESI and scaling activities. Besides, GenderUp has increased users’ capacity in designing gender-responsive interventions and contributed to deliberate GESI integration in project activities. In addition, GenderUp has led to integration of inclusion components in project designs by considering the ‘invisible’ and ‘powerless’ actors (i.e. marginalized groups) in the design and implementation of scaling activities. However, addressing concerns over capacity issues, facilitation skills, and mutual understanding on gender concepts among team members are critical to expand the use of the tool among diverse teams. The findings that GenderUp influenced allocation of budget or resources toward gender-related activities, and it helped in identification and mitigation of potential social or gender-related risks are of huge importance for sustaining the positive outcomes of the tool.

In sum, findings show that GenderUp has had a measurable influence on users’ thinking and practice. It has led to improvements in promoting responsible and inclusive innovations, changes in mindsets towards critical need for consideration of marginalized groups and voices, influences teams and institutions on gender-responsive design and implementation of innovations and technologies. For greater impact, it needs to evolve from reflection to co-design — supporting innovation teams earlier in the ideation and curation phases.

Conclusions

The report presents the key findings of the GenderUp evaluation carried out in 2025 using online surveys and focus group discussions. Findings show that GenderUp has reached diverse users, achieved positive and measurable outcomes in influencing scaling initiatives towards greater inclusiveness, social acceptability, and integration of minority groups in scaling processes. Measurable outcomes were reported in improving capacity for GESI and responsible scaling, improving budget allocation for gender work, and putting in place risk reduction mechanisms. Most of all, GenderUp has had a measurable influence on users' thinking and practice.

Achieving greater impact from the tool, however, requires evolution on two fronts. At the tool level, this means adopting a modular format that accommodates different time and resource availability, broadening the analytical focus beyond social differentiation to encompass the full innovation context, redesigning workshop outputs into ready-to-use conceptual frameworks, ensuring teams have the expertise needed to implement all stages, and embedding institutional culture change as an explicit goal. At the systems level, S4I must establish the accountability architecture that allows GenderUp to function as a results tool, not only a capacity-building exercise. This means requiring GESI tool use at defined points in Solution Track scaling strategies, creating protocols that link workshop action plans to innovation package changes and GESI-disaggregated MELIA reporting, and providing the facilitation support and M&E resources to make outcomes visible at the portfolio level. Together, these shifts would move GenderUp from a valued reflective practice to a traceable driver of responsible scaling outcomes across S4I.



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