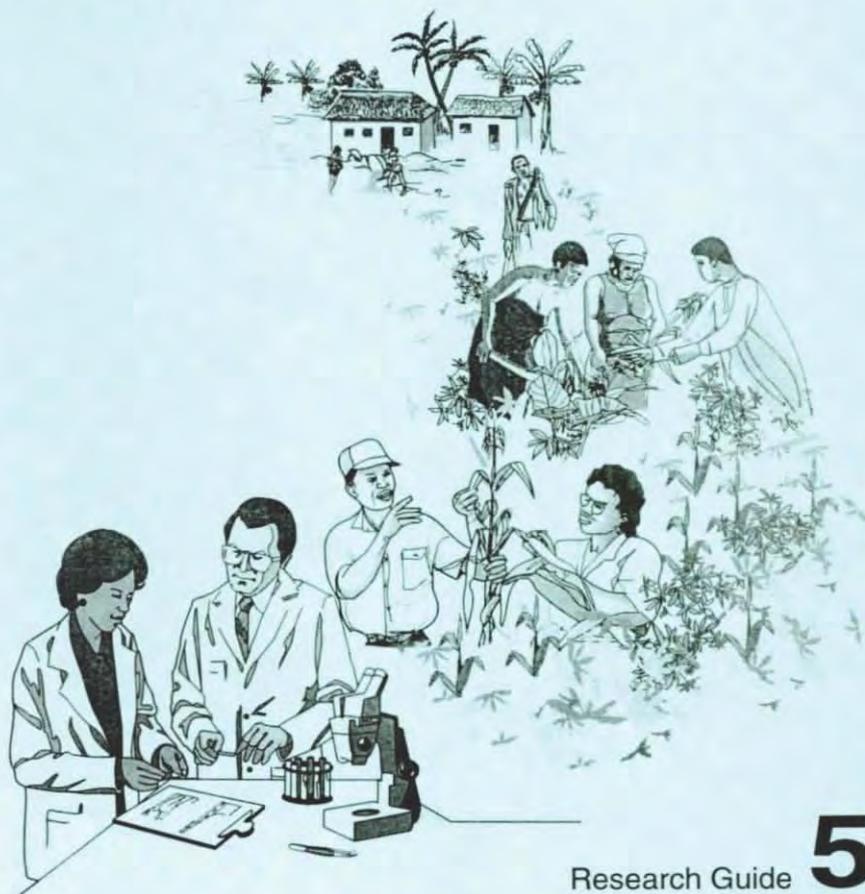




Gender analysis in agricultural production

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IITA Research Guides

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Gender analysis in agricultural production

Objectives. This guide is intended to enable you to:

- explain the objectives of gender analysis;
- discuss the reasons for gender analysis;
- identify gender roles;
- identify needs and constraints faced by men and women under different situations;
- analyze your own work for gender sensitivity.

Study materials

- Color slides showing men, women, young, old, and so on performing different roles in different countries or regions.
- Data of your country from gender analyses; data on gender roles.
- Checklists of gender-sensitive questions for different conditions.

Practicals

- Develop checklists of gender-sensitive questions for specific conditions.
- Practice gender analysis through informal surveys.
- Analyze your own work for gender sensitivity according to Section 5.

Questions

- 1 What is "gender"?
- 2 What is the focus of gender analysis?
- 3 How are the roles of men and women determined?
- 4 What is a common misconception of gender analysis?
- 5 What assumptions have led to the failure of targeting programs efficiently?
- 6 What percentage do women contribute to agricultural production in developing countries?
- 7 In what social farmer groupings do women predominate?
- 8 As an example, in what case can mechanization increase the burden for women?
- 9 What effect did the "invisibility" of women have in agriculture?
- 10 What is the first step in gender analysis?
- 11 What is an essential question in identifying gender roles?
- 12 How may gender roles vary?
- 13 Why do women have to take more and more responsibility for agricultural tasks?
- 14 What commitments other than agriculture does gender analysis take into account?
- 15 To how many working hours may a woman's working day add up?
- 16 Why do women face constraints related to inputs more severely than men?
- 17 Why do women often receive less extension services than men?
- 18 What decisions are controlled by strategic needs/strategic interests?
- 19 What types of farmers have special constraints in terms of control over resources and benefits?

Gender analysis in agricultural production

- 1 What is gender analysis?**
- 2 Why do gender analysis in agriculture?**
- 3 Identifying gender roles**
- 4 Identifying needs and constraints**
- 5 Using gender analysis in your work**
- 6 Bibliography**
- 7 Suggestions for trainers**

Abstract. "Gender" is a concept used in social sciences to look at roles and activities of men and women. These roles are often socially defined, and shaped by the traditions and beliefs of a particular culture. While women contribute between 60-80 % of agricultural production in developing countries, women farmers are least likely to benefit from agricultural extension services and technologies that could improve their production.

Therefore, theoretical and methodological work in gender analysis in agriculture has been expanding. Gender analysis tries to take account of roles on other fronts in the lives of farmers since an understanding of the overall commitment of time and energy is prerequisite to a better identification of farmers' needs.

1 What is gender analysis?

What is gender? "Gender" is a concept used in social science analysis to look at roles and activities of men and women. The focus of gender analysis is not on biological differences between men and women but rather on their experiences as members of society.

In most societies (historical, current, developing, developed) men have certain roles and responsibilities while more women have other roles and responsibilities. Often, the biological differences between men and women are used to explain these different roles. For example, men's physical strength is seen as making them more suited for doing jobs such as construction work, while women's qualities are supposed to make them more suited for jobs that involve detail and patience, like sewing.

But social scientists observe that roles for men and women can be quite different in different societies. For example, in India, women are laborers in the construction industry, and in Ghana, men have traditionally been involved in cloth weaving. It can also be noted that carrying heavy loads of firewood and water, not to mention children, uses women's physical strength, while working on complicated electronics problems can involve much patience and attention to detail on the part of men.

Such observations suggest that biological differences do not necessarily determine what men and women can or should do. Rather, these roles are often socially defined, and shaped by the traditions and beliefs of a particular culture.

Gender analysis focuses on these socially defined roles.

What gender analysis is not. A common assumption is that gender analysis focuses only on the status of women in society. But while gender analysis gives us insight into issues affecting women, it is focused mainly on the relationship of both men and women to the social and economic structure of a society.

Gender analysis is not necessarily about developing programs for women, although it makes it possible for more to be learned about the particular issues affecting women, as well as men. This in turn allows effective targeting of programs.

In summary, gender analysis is a tool for understanding, for learning more about the activities being done by men and women in society and the problems and opportunities that each face in doing those activities.

2 Why do gender analysis in agriculture?

A first reaction might be that gender analysis has little to do with agricultural research and extension. After all, crops are crops and farmers are farmers. As long as the focus is on the key issues in crop production and the key problems faced by farmers, that is what matters.

It is often assumed that men are farmers while women are farmers' wives and helpers. This has been the case in many international and national agricultural development policies and programs in the past. In some cases, such assumptions have led to the failure of targeting programs effectively or achieving program objectives. In the last fifteen years, however, these agencies have realized that the important role of women in agriculture should not be overlooked.

Women's contribution to agricultural production. In recent years, it has been recognized by researchers as well as development agencies that women contribute between 60-80 % of agricultural production in developing countries. This activity is seen as being particularly significant in sub-Saharan African countries, and data from Western Africa is consistent with this estimate.

Moreover, researchers are finding that women farmers tend to predominate in the group that most programs try to reach, namely:

- small holders,
- low income,
- producers of the most essential crops in food self-sufficiency for families, communities, and countries.

Unequal benefits. Ironically, studies also show that women farmers are least likely to benefit from agricultural extension services, and technologies that could improve their production.

In some cases, technologies have been created that offer no advantage to women farmers, but rather create more burden for them. For example, when mechanization is introduced which helps in land-clearing and land preparation, a task which is often carried out by men, the resulting larger field area can also increase the labor demands for planting, weeding, and harvesting, tasks primarily carried out by women.

At the same time, the "invisibility" of women in agriculture has meant that researchers and other people involved in crop management issues have not been able to tap the rich experience and knowledge of women farmers.

National and international agencies are now paying more attention to identifying and responding to the needs of women farmers, as well as men farmers, when developing policies and programs. This is particularly important because women are often involved in growing the food crops which are fundamental to all human, social, and economic development, as well as playing a crucial role in the production of cash crops on which much development programming has been focused. These developments are the results of gender analysis.

Key concepts / definitions. Theoretical and methodological work in gender analysis in agriculture has been expanding. The conceptual framework used in this guide is based on the work of Feldstein and others

(1989), Overholt and others (1985), and Moser and Levy (1986).

In this introduction to gender analysis, the following key concepts will be used:

- gender, and particularly the difference between gender and sex;
- roles, including productive roles, reproductive/ domestic roles, and community roles;
- needs/constraints: practical needs, strategic interests, and the distinction between access to and control over resources and benefits.

These concepts will be used through the different steps of gender analysis. Basic definitions are highlighted in the relevant sections; however, the most important point is to see how these concepts are used in doing gender analysis, and what can be learnt by applying them.

3 Identifying gender roles

The first step in doing gender analysis is to identify roles. Essentially this is a process of finding out "who does what".

In Ghana, a researcher or an extension worker focusing on cocoa production and talking to a group of farmers who are all men, would probably feel their target audience has been reached. This is because cocoa is considered a "men's crop" (although there is evidence that women do play a significant role in cocoa farming, both as farmers in their own right, and as laborers at particular points of the process). On the other hand, talking to a group of men farmers on groundnut or tomato production may reveal that the group has little experience in the cultivation of the crops.

Experienced agriculturists as well as social science researchers, are now aware that there is a gender division of labor in agriculture. A better understanding of the different roles of men and women in agricultural production can be achieved through formal surveys and field studies, as well as informal interactions between agricultural researchers, extension workers, and farmers.

Gender roles in agricultural production. Theorists suggest that one focus for gender analysis is on men and women's productive roles. The activities that men and women carry out in the agricultural process come under this category.

Through research and experience over the past 15 years, a better picture of gender roles in agriculture is emerging. In some cases, women and men might grow separate crops, as in the above example of cocoa and tomatoes. In other situations where the same crop is grown,

men and women use separate fields, with the latter tending to use a smaller plot for growing the food that their family eats. However, research indicates that it should not always be assumed that there is a sharp gender division between growing cash crops and domestic crops.

Men and women may work on the same crop on the same field, but perform different tasks, for example, land preparation by men and planting and weeding by women. Various tasks may be performed either by all family members, or assigned to different members of the family.

Variations in gender roles. It is important to keep in mind that these patterns in the gender division of agricultural work will often differ quite markedly amongst countries, regions, and communities, including ethnic communities.

In Ghana, for example, a survey of gender roles in maize production showed men to play a major role in land clearing and preparation, while women predominated in marketing. However, these patterns varied by region: Women participated in land preparation to some degree in Brong Ahafo, Eastern, and Volta Regions, but not at all in Upper West. Similarly, men played a significant role in marketing in the Brong Ahafo region, while in other regions these activities were carried out almost exclusively by women.

Female headed farms. When analyzing men and women farmers' productive roles, it is also important to realize that farming families are increasingly involved in the cash economy, so some members work outside of the farm for wages.

Gender analysis shows that in most African countries, including West Africa, it is men who tend to be involved in working for wages. For families in the agricultural sector, this means that women have to take more responsibility for agricultural tasks while their husbands are occupied or away in wage labor.

The number of female headed families, and female headed farms, is consequently rising quite rapidly; the estimated percentage of female headed rural households in Ghana is approximately 30 %, while in Zambia, for example, it has been found that in some districts, the percentage of female headed farms is as high as 50 %. It is becoming of increasing concern to policy makers that this growing group of farmers face considerable constraints that affect women in particular.

Reproductive / domestic and community roles. It is evident that both women as well as men play important roles in agricultural production. But men and women farmers do not just carry out their agricultural activities in a vacuum. The daily needs of farming families have to be looked after; like everyone else, farmers have to eat, wash their clothes, and raise and educate their children. Farming families also participate in community life, for example, in their churches, in social activities, and in various community organizations.

Gender analysis tries to take account of these roles on other fronts in the lives of farmers, since an understanding of the overall commitment of time and energy is a prerequisite to a better identification of their needs.

Theorists in gender analysis use the term reproductive roles in a much wider sense than biological reproduction alone; referring rather to the full set of activities related to meeting family members' needs and the management of the household.

Gender analysis also shows that in addition to the activities that women farmers carry out in the agricultural production sphere, they are at the same time heavily involved in these reproductive/domestic roles. Thus, time studies show that women spend numbers of hours not only in agricultural tasks, but also in cooking, and caring for children, as well as chores such as fetching water and firewood which are needed to carry on domestic tasks for the household. Some estimates are that these combined responsibilities all add up to as much as 14-16 hours for women's workday.

Gender analysis also reveals that women have heavy time commitments in their community roles, such as visiting the sick, attending funerals, and so on. Of course, men have community roles as well; however it is the overall commitment of daily time and energy by women farmers that is an important consideration for those who are preoccupied with agricultural development.

4 Identifying needs and constraints

Practical needs and constraints. There are several practical needs which farmers face in order to carry out their agricultural production. These include access to:

- land,
- seeds,
- fertilizer,
- labor,
- information on technologies and usage.

Gender analysis shows that there can often be differences between men and women farmers' access to these basic inputs in agricultural production, and these can create particular constraints for women farmers.

For example, in terms of land ownership, fewer women farmers than men own their own land. This is due to a variety of reasons, including patterns of inheritance and property rights in marriages, and lack of money.

Researchers in a number of sub-Saharan African countries have found that this question of land ownership becomes particularly intense as urbanization and social development creates more pressures on land. Where women do own land, it tends to be farther away from their home, and more dispersed in turn, the constraints faced by women farmers are exacerbated because they also face mobility problems (less access to transportation, having to either take children with them, or make arrangements for their care while they are gone), as well as heavy time commitments.

All farmers have a practical need for cash or credit to purchase inputs including land, seeds, fertilizer and labor. Research finds that women face this constraint more severely because of their overall low income

status in society. Thus women farmers have much smaller land holdings, and are less able to purchase improved seed varieties and inputs such as fertilizer that can help improve their yield.

In particular, women face severe constraints in access to labor, both because of their own heavy time commitments and their inability to pay for hired labor or labor saving technologies including animal traction.

In turn, women farmers tend not to receive the extension advice, credit, and supports that large, more successful farmers can attract, creating a vicious circle of low productivity and poverty.

Other factors have also contributed to the relatively low level of extension services women farmers have received in the past. For example, the predominance of male extension workers can create difficulties in areas where there are cultural inhibitions against men speaking directly to women.

Strategic needs. The types of findings described above point to what theorists refer to as strategic needs or strategic interests. Strategic interests are related to inequalities in status and power, whereby certain groups are more disadvantaged in society.

Gender analysis also enhances the understanding of these types of needs. It shows that it is not only a question of whether farmers have access to key inputs, but also whether they have control over resources and benefits. Essentially these issues are related to decision making: how men and women farmers decide on how much land to plant, what crops to plant, whether to use fertilizers or other technologies, whether and when to

hire labor, what proportion of their yield to sell and what to keep for their family's consumption, and what to do with the cash that comes from sale of their produce.

All low income farmers, both male and female, face constraints in terms of control over resources and benefits, by being less able to own their own land, for instance, and less able to use cash or obtain credit to purchase inputs.

But as discussed above, more women farmers fall into this low income category. Moreover, because of social customs, women in many societies, including West African societies, often have a subordinate role in household decision-making on some issues.

Separate responsibilities, budgets. In some West African countries women and men can each have their own responsibilities for specific household expenditures, and accordingly for obtaining and using resources to meet those responsibilities. It is important to recognize the existence of these gender-related patterns and dynamics in household responsibilities and decision-making.

For example, researchers and extension workers have learned from experience that if they are introducing a *technology for use in "men's crops" or "men's fields"* that takes more of women's labor time away from their own fields and their own crops, it will be less successfully adopted. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that an improvement that raises the cash income from a "men's crop" or "men's fields" will necessarily result in additional cash flowing to the woman farmer or the overall household, even if women and children have contributed labor to that product.

5 Using gender analysis in your work

In applying gender analysis, the following suggestions should be considered:

As a researcher:

- seek information on the roles of both male and female farmers at the diagnostic stage;
- ask questions of both men and women farmers on crops where both, or each, perform certain tasks;
- ask women farmers to provide answers to questions about their own work;
- review your research plan to see how issues, such as time and labor saving concerns, are being included in the research agenda and design;
- focus some of your research attention on developing low cost, low labor, and low maintenance technologies that work under adverse growing conditions (taking account of women farmers' constraints in obtaining cash / credit, having easily accessible fields, and time commitments);
- explore some of the specific issues faced in "women's crops" and "backyard crops" in their role in food production and overall social and economic development;
- develop experiments and focus on issues faced by small plot farmers;
- in defining research questions, look beyond the production stage, and traditional questions of yield, to include issues related to harvesting, storage, processing, preparation, taste, and nutrition.

As an extension worker:

- seek information, observe, and share with researchers your understanding of gender roles in particular crops and agricultural tasks;
- include information on "women's crops", especially food crops, when providing technical *information to farmers*;
- visit both men and women's fields;
- provide information directly to women what relates to their specific tasks;
- provide information to both men and women for shared tasks;
- find ways of recruiting women farmers (especially those who are managing farms themselves) as contact farmers;
- consider alternative ways of communicating to farmers, for example, in groups (bearing in mind women's time and mobility constraints);
- facilitate the formation of women farmers' groups (building on traditions of women's groups in self-help, labor exchange and savings and credit);
- present new technologies in ways that are easily understood by both male and female farmers, and that can be implemented one step at a time, bearing in mind literacy and language issues faced by women in particular.

As a program planner and administrator:

- include explicit recognition of gender roles, needs, and constraints in program design, monitoring, and evaluation;

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- provide training to extension workers in gender roles, needs, and constraints; incorporate these issues into all agricultural training programs;
 - build in special initiatives to reach women farmers, for example, raise the number of female extension workers in regions where there are cultural inhibitions to male workers communicating directly to women. (One such initiative could be to train female home-economics extension workers in agricultural sector issues);
 - bear in mind the literacy and language issues faced by women in designing and planning extension programs;
 - develop consultation processes with women's groups and farmers' groups to obtain input from both women and men farmers in designing your programs.

While these suggestions might give you some ideas, by actually doing gender analysis you will be able to identify those initiatives which will help you most in your work with men and women farmers.

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7 Suggestions for trainers

If you use this Research Guide in training ...

Generally:

- Distribute handouts (including this Research Guide) to trainees one or several days before your presentation, or distribute them at the end of the presentation.
- Do not distribute handouts at the beginning of a presentation, otherwise trainees will read instead of listen to you.
- Ask trainees not to take notes, but to pay full attention to the training activity. Assure them that your handouts (and this Research Guide) contain all relevant information.
- Keep your training activities practical. Reduce theory to the minimum that is necessary to understand the practical exercises.
- Use the questions on page 4 (or a selection of questions) for examinations (quizzes, periodical tests, and so on). Allow consultation of handouts and books during examinations.
- Promote interaction of trainees. Allow questions, but do not deviate from the subject.
- Respect the time allotted.

Specifically:

- Discuss with trainees about experiences and problems of gender analysis (10 minutes).
- Present and discuss the content of this Research Guide, using the study materials listed on page 3 (45 minutes).
- Conduct the practicals suggested on page 3 (developing checklists, analyzing your own work) in groups of 3-4 trainees per group. Ask groups to present and discuss their findings. (1 hour).
- Conduct informal surveys to analyze gender roles, problems and challenges ($\frac{1}{2}$ day). Follow the recommendations given by Rhoades (1995; see Bibliography). Discuss the findings (1 hour).



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