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A Community of Practice for Gender-Transformative Research Methodologies

By Anne Rietveld, Hom Gartaula, Cathy Rozel Farnworth, Diana E. Lopez, Arwen Bailey, Jon Hellin, Eleanor Fisher, Berber Kramer, Bela Teeken, Gaudiose Mujawamariya and Afrina Choudhury

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ABOUT CGIAR GENDER IMPACT PLATFORM
Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER) is CGIAR's impact platform designed to put equality and inclusion at the forefront of global agricultural research for development. The Platform is transforming the way gender research is done, both within and beyond CGIAR, to kick-start a process of genuine change toward greater gender equality and better lives for smallholder farmers everywhere. gender.cgiar.org

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Abstract

The Community of Practice on Gender-Transformative Research Methodologies (GTRM-CoP) builds on work conducted by international gender researchers at CGIAR and partner organizations. The community of practice is committed to gender-transformative change processes, and aims to co-create socially just and gender-equitable futures in food, land and water systems. The GTRM-CoP aims to promote the transformative ambitions of CGIAR, its partners, and interested organizations and individuals, by creating safe spaces for innovating, sharing and scaling gender-transformative research methodologies. The community of practice is part of the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform and housed under the Methods module of the Platform.

A Community of Practice (CoP) is an ideal mechanism for promoting rapid, interactive and creative learning. Four initial topic groups have been identified to begin knowledge exchange and co-creation: gender-equitable masculinities, intersectionality, transformative research processes and data, and mobilizing GENNOVATE data and tools.

The GTRM-CoP aims to accelerate learning and action that fosters gender-transformative change in food, land and water systems, through the interactions within and between the topic groups, following a set of principles and values and in a spirit of humility and learning. These lessons will be available to others within CGIAR and beyond as part of a global movement toward gender equity and achieving Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10).

Keywords: *nutrition, assessment, children, women, gender, empowerment*

1. Introduction

Ongoing fundamental change processes within CGIAR reflect its embeddedness in, and responsiveness to, wider shifts in the mainstream international development sector. Its ambitions include moving beyond prioritizing economic growth and technological innovation to a deeper consideration of how CGIAR can contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10).

CGIAR has a strong record on researching gender. CGIAR gender research and its ambition to achieve impact on gender equality are supported through an architecture consisting of the CGIAR Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER) Impact Platform, a CGIAR Research Initiative focused on Harnessing Equality for Resilience in the Agrifood System (HER+), and gender research teams and individual gender researchers conducting research through CGIAR Centers and Initiatives (see Annex 1).

CGIAR is increasingly exploring ways in which gender-transformative change, and changes in food, land and water systems, are mutually reliant. However, it has produced relatively fewer publications on how it conducts gender-transformative research.

Gender-transformative research methodologies aim to catalyze gender-transformative and socially just change processes during the entire research process—from design and implementation to monitoring, evaluation and learning. These methodologies emerge from understandings of gender-transformative change, gender-transformative approaches and gender-transformative research—key concepts for this paper, whose descriptions follow.

The Community of Practice on Gender-Transformative Research Methodologies (GTRM-CoP) brings together international gender researchers at CGIAR and partner organizations. The community of practice is committed to gender-transformative change processes, and aims to co-create socially just and gender-equitable futures in food, land and water systems. The GTRM-CoP is part of the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform and is housed under the Methods module of the Platform.

1.1 Key concepts for gender transformation

Gender-transformative change (GTC) is change which moves toward gender equality. This change can be conceptualized as a process with three key dimensions: (1) building agency, (2) changing unequal power relations, and (3) changing discriminatory structures (DeMerritt-Verrone and Kellum 2021). At the core of achieving gender-transformative change is the understanding that "lasting change requires engaging with deeper barriers. These refer to the underlying, and often unrecognized, structural causes of inequalities that are embedded in natural resource management and food systems, in particular: informal barriers (norms), formal barriers (laws and policies) and semi-formal barriers (such as national statistics and data systems)" (McDougall et al. 2021, 368). Gender-transformative change involves "fostering examination of gender dynamics and norms and intentionally strengthening, creating, or shifting structures, practices, relations, and dynamics toward equality" (ibid., 368). Gender-transformative change emerges from critical consciousness and a normative understanding of equality as being beneficial to human beings and their flourishing (MacArthur et al. 2022; Rottach et al. 2009). Hillenbrand et al. (2015, 11) argue that "transformation grows more cooperative forms of power and relationships (power with) that affirm diverse people's critical awareness and dignity (power within) and their capabilities and aspirations (power to)." These multiple manifestations of power are linked to agency, which is at the heart of the empowerment process (Kabeer 1999; van Eerdewijk et al. 2017).

Gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) aim to catalyze gender-transformative change, whereby normative and structural barriers to gender equality are removed allowing more equal power relationships to emerge (FAO, forthcoming). Gender-transformative approaches reshape gender dynamics by redistributing resources, expectations and responsibilities between women, men and non-binary gender identities, often focusing on norms, power and collective action (MacArthur et al. 2022). These approaches encourage critical awareness among women and men of gender roles and norms, promote improvement in the position of women, challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between women and men, and address the unequal power relationships between women and others in the community (Rottach et al. 2009).

Gender-transformative research (GTR) draws upon decades of experience in action research. It seeks "to not only build knowledge but acknowledges that research itself has the potential to transform societies—both through the process and the results of research" (MacArthur et al. 2022, 2). Njuki et al. (2022) define gender-transformative research as "action research that addresses the root causes of gender inequalities and creates the conditions for lasting social change at the household, community, and institutional levels, and generates evidence on both the processes and outcomes." Gender-transformative research is participatory, reflexive, action-oriented and involves collaborative integration of research and practice—the latter melded into a united approach (ibid., 9). Gender-transformative research "requires a shared and contextualized understanding of an objective of profound gendered change for a specific program and setting" (ibid., 7). As a first step it demands personal and professional transformation, which in turns demands personal reflexivity (Hankivsky 2014; Nazneen and Sultan 2014) and a commitment to decolonizing approaches to development and research (MacArthur et al. 2022, 9).

Gender-transformative research methodologies (GTRMs) aim to catalyze gender-transformative and socially just change processes during the entire process—from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. A review of six gender-transformative change case studies identified principles that are necessary for gender-transformative research to lead to changes in gender equality (Njuki et al. 2022). These include "conducting a deep, intersectional gender analysis to understand context and the multiple dimensions and layers of inequality and power; meaningfully engaging with and building capacities of local actors to drive and sustain change processes; combining action to influence change with research on how change happens; and a focus on how norm and structural change can happen at scale" (ibid., 19).

1.2 Ambition and vision

Many researchers scattered across different organizations and projects are actively developing and implementing gender-transformative research methodologies, with varying success. The GTRM-CoP enables researchers to share their research struggles and insights, and to contribute to the collective understanding of how these methodologies work and what outcomes they have for different target groups. Researchers working toward gender-transformative change need both formal and informal ways to compare results and learn from one another. Providing adequate support and space for systematic and serendipitous learning across a critical mass of researchers and their partners is important.

The GTRM-CoP is designed as a community of like-minded researchers with whom to share challenges, successes, knowledge and data to help investigate these issues. Gender researchers will be able to 'work out loud' as they adapt and develop gender-transformative research methodologies, learning from others who have developed experience in these topics, and co-learning while advancing research together. The GTRM-CoP can be understood as an 'innovation playground' where researchers have a safe space for exchanging ideas and work-in-progress, accessing relevant expertise, problem solving, connecting to others to develop theory and practice, and creating joint products such as scientific articles.

For CGIAR gender researchers, participation in the GTRM-CoP should place them and their Research Initiatives[1] in a better position to achieve the goals in the Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion Impact Area, while contributing to the conditions for wider social transformation which is the ultimate goal of CGIAR. Non-CGIAR research partners in the CoP are expected to accrue similar—organizationally relevant—benefits through their participation. Expected benefits to the CGIAR Research Initiatives, CGIAR as a whole, and partners and other organizations, are accelerated learning processes about what works or not in gender-transformative research methodologies.

1.3 Strategic objectives and results

The primary aim of the GTRM-CoP is to contribute to the CGIAR Impact Area on Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion, and to the global commons. It will complement and support the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform's objectives to advance gender research, with a focus on gender-transformative research methodologies. First, it is expected that gender researchers will be better able to embed these methodologies in their work, research frameworks, policy dialogues and institutional cultures. Second, it is expected that participation will contribute to efforts to improve theory and practice in the development and implementation of gender-transformative research methodologies in research and development settings. The core objectives of the GTRM-CoP are to:

1. Convene and share knowledge on gender-transformative research methodologies between gender and non-gender researchers to accelerate progress toward gender-transformative change and socially just outcomes.
2. Co-create and share, experiment with, adapt, learn, critically comment upon, aggregate and scale new and existing gender-transformative research methodologies.
3. Assess the impact of gender-transformative approaches.
4. Encourage and facilitate CGIAR Research Initiatives to move beyond diagnosis to action to challenge and transform normative and structural constraints on gender equality in food, land and water systems.
5. Share and inspire uptake and scaling of gender-transformative research methodologies through the CGIAR Research Initiatives, in collaboration with their partners. The GTRM-CoP will provide a platform for sharing methodologies for use by stakeholders.
6. Monitor and assess the best project designs to facilitate the development and implementation of gender-transformative research methodologies.
7. Develop and test monitoring, evaluation and learning indicators and processes to capture gender-transformative change processes. Monitoring, evaluation and learning processes are expected to involve all partners, particularly those whose lives are expected to be the most impacted by using gender-transformative research methodologies.

The GTRM-CoP is expected to result in:

- An evidence base on what works in research methodologies for gender-transformative change.
- Gender-transformative research methodologies ready for sharing with the global community.
- Collaborative research papers, research-practice innovations, guidance notes, manuals and other impact-oriented tools and resources.

1. CGIAR Research Initiatives are prioritized areas of investment that bring capacity from within and beyond CGIAR to bear on well-defined, major challenges. See more here: https://www.cgiar.org/research/cgiar-portfolio/

- A community of gender researchers with refined skills in gender-transformative research methodologies and an expanded network for supporting further growth.
- Resulting gender-transformative change in food, land and water systems.

1.4 Rationale for a Community of Practice approach

This paper is inspired by a conviction among a group of gender researchers within and outside CGIAR that the current CGIAR reform process (OneCGIAR), in which interdisciplinary teams from multiple research organizations are being constituted for action on global and regional challenges, is a strategic moment to 'up the ante' regarding gender-transformative research in food, land and water systems. Hybrid workshops with gender researchers across CGIAR as well as external bodies including Advocates for Social Change Kenya (ADSOCK), the Nordic Africa Institute, Cornell University, Trias, Oxfam Novib, Digital Green, and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), held in July and October 2021, demonstrated that gender researchers are keen to work together and share their knowledge on how best to conduct gender-transformative research, and to deepen the evidence base on 'what works and why' for gender-transformative change in food, land and water systems. However, gender researchers currently lack mechanisms for coordinating their separate efforts in an innovation space within which they can work with each other—and with partners—to develop, share, experiment, adapt, critically comment upon, and aggregate and scale gender-transformative research methodologies in a supportive learning environment.

From these lessons, we created the Community of Practice (CoP) for Gender-Transformative Research Methodologies (GTRM). The ambition is that the GTRM-CoP be a managed learning and sharing space for the co-creation and scaling of gender-transformative research methodologies for long-lasting, deep change in gender equality—particularly women's empowerment in food, land and water systems. Membership of the CoP is open to CGIAR researchers, their partners and other institutions. Operational details are provided in Annex 2.

CoPs have been defined as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al. 2002, 4). Fundamentally, a CoP provides a space where bold and innovative ideas may emerge. The core elements of a CoP are: (1) its domain or purpose, such as the motivation that acts as a unifying call for action; (2) its practice, that is, the actual tools, methods, frameworks or narratives that the CoP develops and uses; and (3) the community itself, representing people who are passionate about and committed to the domain, and want to improve their practice.

We envision the core elements of the GTRM-CoP as follows:

- **domain:** improving gender equality and social equity
- **practice:** understanding, developing, testing and using tools and methodologies for gender-transformative research, and gathering evidence with and about the methodologies
- **community:** researchers who are passionate about and committed to exploring and understanding gender-transformative change, centered around—but not exclusive to—CGIAR

2. From theory to action: how the GTRM-CoP works

The development and operationalization of the GTRM-CoP will initially be achieved in four topic groups; more may be added. The four topics are described in detail below. The aim is to create a dedicated space for CGIAR researchers, various partners, academic colleagues and others to share, learn and try out gender-transformative research methodologies, which in themselves create gender transformation.

The GTRM-CoP is housed under the Methods module of the GENDER Platform. It is open to CGIAR researchers and their international, national and local partners, including research collaborators, government, civil society organizations, universities, private sector and multi- and bilateral partners.

2.1 Guiding principles

During the two workshops that took place in 2021, a set of principles were developed which will guide the operationalization of the CoP.

The GTRM-CoP should:

1. Develop research methodologies in gender-transformative ways, following the (feminist) action research tradition.
2. Identify and address multiple forms of intersectional exclusion, including age, disability, ethnicity, caste and others.
3. Strive to create an internal environment which stimulates collaboration and mutual learning.
4. Promote transdisciplinary research (box 1) as a model for non-hierarchical collaboration between CGIAR researchers, partners and end users.
5. Create and encourage good models of partnership through developing research alliances with traditional (e.g., national agricultural research systems [NARS]) and new partners (e.g., men's organizations for gender transformation, Indigenous groups and private sector partners).
6. Contribute to the global commons by sharing tried and tested gender-transformative research methodologies and research outputs (e.g., peer-reviewed papers, blogs, extension manuals and other knowledge products) to the global scientific community, government partners, civil society organizations, private sector actors, local communities and others.
7. Ensure that data will be made publicly available in a semi-open access format after full anonymization, in accordance with ethical principles to safeguard human subject integrity and security, and applicable privacy protection acts and policies.
8. Develop new ethical protocols that go beyond the principle of informed consent, to ensure all research partners are committed to the principles of gender-transformative research.

Box 1. Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinarity brings diverse forms of knowledge together to design comprehensive approaches that address complex phenomena across food, land and water systems (see for instance, Lopez and Ludwig 2021). The importance of transdisciplinary skills for fostering innovation in CGIAR research has been noted by the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC 2021, 1). A transdisciplinary perspective contributes to deepening understandings of heterogeneous (cultural, economic, environmental, religious, etc.) relations and negotiating their relevance for fostering gender equality in agricultural and natural resource management contexts (Lopez and Ludwig 2021). A transdisciplinary approach calls for collaborative work among individuals from different disciplines (such as sociology, anthropology, economics, breeding, engineering and management), from distinct backgrounds (including between formally trained and non-formally trained researchers), and between different ways of knowing.

Collaboration between biophysical and social sciences can contribute to developing scientifically excellent, demand-driven, people-centered solutions. A transdisciplinary approach to gender-transformative research methodologies enables such scientific collaborations to engage in meaningful sharing and learning with local knowledges, in ways that ensure local realities and needs are at the core of gender-transformative research initiatives.

Often, knowledge is dominated by single frames of reference that rarely consider differentiated standpoints, which can lead to the marginalization of different needs and realities as well as missed opportunities to tackle complex socioecological challenges (Ludwig and El-Hani 2020). This is also the case with knowledge about women's empowerment and gender equality (Carnegie et al. 2019; Wendoh 2007). A transdisciplinary approach can reveal what empowerment means for local women and understand and operate at a comfortable pace for the women involved in such studies. This aids design methods to effect change by working with and through communities as a whole, not just with a few women, in ways that strengthen the entire system, improving women's place and status in the community and how they contribute to and benefit from the system (see for instance, Flintan 2008).

2.2 Living libraries and an evidence base

The GTRM-CoP will develop a living library of gender-transformative research methodologies that are ready for testing, or tested and ready for further use, adaptation and scaling. A foundational compendium of methodologies with a record of fostering gender-transformative change, compiled by a Working Group under the GENDER Methods Module, will serve as a starting point for methodologies with potential for further investigation (publication under review). The GTRM-CoP will provide learning spaces to share what we know about these methodologies.

2.3 Moving forward: adapting, scaling and co-learning

Accelerated learning and scaling of methodologies are expected to happen through interactions within the smaller research topic groups within the GTRM-CoP. Researchers can participate in multiple topics, which provides one route for cross-learning and scaling. Researchers may wish to start by trying out and adapting gender-transformative research methodologies which have already been developed. Conversely, they may opt to co-develop new methodologies through interactions with colleagues. We anticipate that sharing in the CoP will happen in a variety of ways, including via established mechanisms for communications such as webinars and hybrid workshops, but also through informal bilateral conversations between community members digging deeper into a topic. Dissemination of

methodologies, lessons and findings will be text based (e.g., articles and blogs), multimedia (e.g., videos), hybrid (e.g., interactive manuals and tools) and conversational (e.g., discussions between researchers). Within the CoP, spaces will be open for learning between different CGIAR Research Initiatives and bilateral research projects, different research institutions and between different topic groups (figure 1).

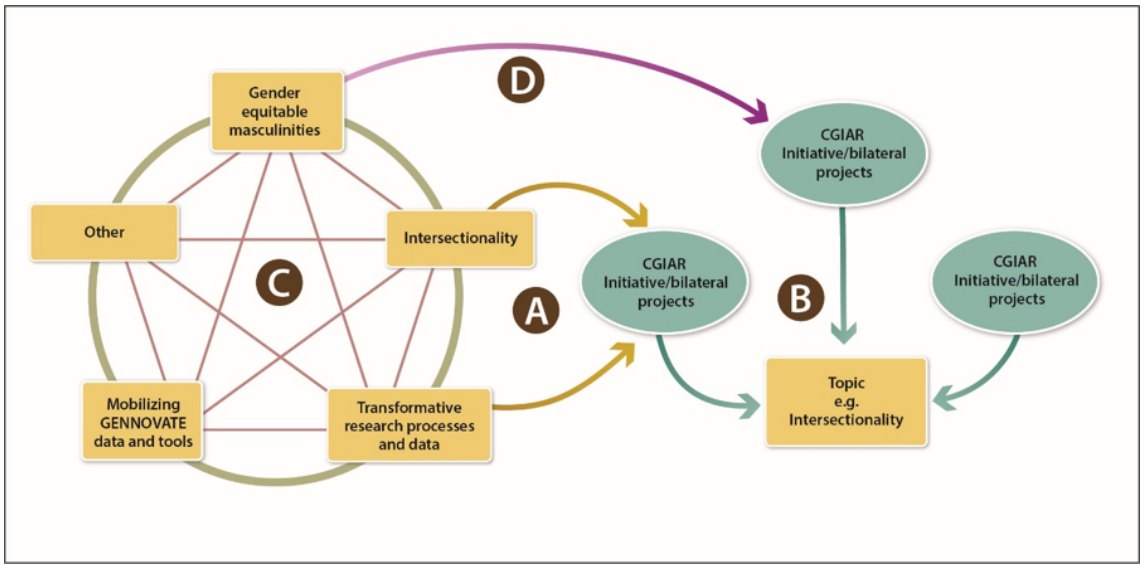

Figure 1. How does accelerated learning and scaling happen for increased impact?

A. Researchers in a CGIAR Research Initiative adapt, develop and explore one or two methodologies in their research.
B. Lessons, data, challenges, successes and products across different Initiatives are shared within the topic groups.
C. The topic groups interact for cross-learning purposes, sharing data, successes, approaches and advice.
D. The cross-learning between topics is fed back into the original Initiative and into future Initiatives.

3. Topic groups

To be effective, the learning spaces need to be at a level at which lessons can be grounded in actual ongoing research trial and error. CoP members prioritized four topics for co-learning: (1) gender-equitable masculinities, (2) intersectionality, (3) transformative research processes and data, and (4) mobilizing GENNOVATE data and tools. The list of topic groups is flexible and might change over time with new topic groups emerging and others being disbanded.

3.1 Gender-equitable masculinities

Relevance. This topic group is about developing and using gender-transformative research methodologies to develop a better understanding of how masculinities—as a systemic phenomenon—link with and influence attempts to move toward women's empowerment and gender equality in food, land and water systems. It is recognized that people gendered as men and boys also face impacts, inequalities, injustices and vulnerabilities (Ahmed and Dery 2022) and, therefore, that the strategic needs of men and boys need to be addressed.

What it means. Masculinities comprise the various ways of enacting oneself and acting as a man, and are the specific expectations and values attributed with being and becoming a man in a given society (OECD 2021).Masculinities are relational and express complex relations of power between women and men, and between men. 'Restrictive masculinities' (ibid.) describe masculinities which limit men to their traditional role as the dominant gender group, thereby constraining men's life choices and undermining women's empowerment and gender equality. Restrictive masculinities operate by defining roles for men in two associated ways. First, men are expected to express attitudes and behaviors that confirm locally accepted norms about masculinities. This may influence men to make choices different from those that they may have made in different circumstances. Second, men who do not conform to these norms may face social sanctions or ostracization. In contrast, 'gender-equitable masculinities' are supportive of women's empowerment and gender equality. They allow men to express a wider range of attitudes and behaviors. Gender-equitable masculinities are important to transform the existing social and gender norms that are governed by patriarchy and normative masculinities.

What it builds on. This topic group will build on critical studies of men and masculinities in a variety of sectors, including food, land and water. Partnering with civil society groups, including members of MenEngage[2], Promundo/Equimundo[3] and other NGOs and civil society groups, is important.

What it will do. This topic group will identify new and existing gender-transformative research methodologies working with men and masculinities. The goal is to 'unblock' gender-discriminatory norms and structures, and to facilitate gender-equitable masculinities for more socially inclusive and just food, land and water systems. As part of this, men will be considered not only as agents of change, to help contribute to women's empowerment, but also as leaders and beneficiaries of gender-equitable research processes.

Box 2. Gender-transformative research methodologies on masculinities

WorldFish developed a gender-transformative approach to address gender constraints within a project aiming to reduce post-harvest fish loss in the Barotse Floodplain, Zambia. It developed a gender-transformative research methodology using drama skits, embedded within an action research process. The drama skits aimed to build critical consciousness among women and men around gendered performances of masculinities and femininities. The focus was on creating a critical consciousness of unequal gender norms, gender-restrictive masculinities, attitudes and power relations at community and other levels.

Consequent monitoring, evaluation and learning found that women became empowered through the process. A large percentage of fishing gear ownership shifted from men owners only to joint ownership with their spouses. Women reported having significant input on decisions about how to spend fisheries income, on which they previously had little influence.

The researchers conclude that challenges underlying post-harvest fish losses are technical and social in nature. However, technical innovations are more successful when they develop methodologies which "explicitly challenge and seek to address prevailing unequal gender norms, attitudes, and power relations. By tackling the technical and social constraints in value chains in tandem, small-scale fisheries have greater potential to contribute toward enhancing the food, nutrition, and economic security of all people who depend on their natural resources" (Cole et al. 2020, 60).

2. https://menengage.unfpa.org/en
3. https://www.equimundo.org/

3.2 Intersectionality

Relevance. This topic group aims to achieve a better understanding of how intersectional gender-transformative research methodologies link with and influence attempts to promote women's empowerment and social justice in food, land and water systems.

What it means. Feminist scholars and social justice advocates have long sought to integrate intersectionality—the recognition that there are multiple intersecting and overlapping forms of social difference, tied to structures of privilege and inequality—into research and action (Keddie et al. 2022). Kabeer (1994, 65) says that "while gender is never absent, it is never present in pure form. It is always interwoven with other social inequalities such as class and race and must be analyzed through a holistic framework if the concrete conditions for life for different groups of women and men are to be understood." Hankivsky (2014, 3) stresses that "human lives cannot be explained by taking into account single categories, such as gender, race and socioeconomic status. People's lives are multidimensional and complex. Lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together." When conducting transformative intersectional research, it is important not to focus on the characteristics of people (e.g., their age, race, class, gender identity) but rather on how structural processes (racism, classism, patriarchy, ageism, etc.) create and perpetuate intersectional inequalities (MacArthur et al. 2022, 8). Different forms of intersectionality can layer disadvantage upon disadvantage resulting in multifaceted discrimination (Farnworth et al. 2022; Rietveld et al. 2020). At the same time, it is important not to rely on "deficit models of identity, which fail to recognize how delineating difference can be a source of solidarity, empowerment and resistance" (MacArthur et al. 2022, 8). In other words, (aspects of) identities can be celebrated and promoted. Also, people can experience power and disempowerment simultaneously (Hankivsky 2014, 3).

What it builds on. The topic group will work with existing methodologies, and design and test new methodologies. The concept of intersectionality draws from critical race theory and feminist activism; the term itself coined by Crenshaw (1989). It provides a means to analyze systems of power. Intersectional analysis can help identify how different social identities and social categories come together as an expression of forms of marginalization, disadvantage and disempowerment. Intersectionality research is rare in food, land and water systems, though Tavenner and Crane (2019) highlight recent examples. Useful manuals include *Making Sense of 'Intersectionality': A Manual for Lovers of People and Forests* (Colfer et al. 2018) and *Methods of Intersectional Research* (Misra et al. 2021).

What it will do. This topic group will identify existing and create new intersectional gender-transformative research methodologies, to understand and interrogate participants' perceptions of the impact and interaction of different aspects of identity and social power in their lives (MacArthur et al. 2022, 9). The relative importance of a particular category or structure cannot always be predetermined; their salience becomes apparent during the course of investigation (Hankivsky 2014). Other scholars acknowledge that much intersectional research is inductive but note that intersectionality can also inform comparative and quantitative projects (Misra et al. 2021). In this topic group, it will be important to work with women's movements and networks, and with other civil society partners working on intersectionality. This topic group recognizes that "Intersectionality is explicitly oriented toward transformation, building coalitions among different groups, and working toward social justice" (Hankivsky 2014, 3). Building in personal and group reflexivity is essential. "Scholars, researchers, policy makers, and activists must consider their own social position, role and power when taking an intersectional approach. This reflexivity should be in place before setting priorities and directions in research, policy work, and activism" (Hankivsky 2014, 3; see also, Potts et al. 2022).

Box 3. Gender-transformative research methodologies on intersectionality

A program in Peru funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) focused on strengthening Indigenous health outcomes in Peru. It worked with the concept of 'intercultural health', which blends Western and Indigenous concepts of health. The local interdisciplinary research team recognized and prioritized Indigenous concepts, cultures and practices in their work. They used participatory methods to engage community leaders, women's groups and other important community members to generate case studies on maternal health, train nurses and improve food sovereignty and security.

Bringing together local practitioners, community members and decision-makers from local and national bodies helped create changes in perception and recognition of the importance of intercultural training on health. One important change was moving away from implicitly blaming mothers for providing poor nutrition to children (which had led to communities fearing health and other community workers) toward working with them to create nutritionally balanced meals using local traditional foods. A second change involved training nurse technicians through an Indigenous civil society organization. This process enabled women to use their own language and bring in their traditional knowledge on birthing and care.

Equitable polices and governance mechanisms were introduced, including adding knowledge of Indigenous languages and intercultural training to recruitment criteria of healthcare personnel, and an intercultural guide to food education was approved by the Peruvian Society of Nutritionists and recognized by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development.

Source: Njuki et al. 2022.

3.3 Transformative research processes and data

Relevance. Conventional research processes tend to be vertical and data-extractive, even when anchored in participatory and inclusive principles (McAlvay et al. 2021). Community or local empowerment about the research process and the data it generates is rapidly becoming a key area of interest across fields, from participatory methods in development (i.e., Cinnamon 2020; Steiner and Hanks 2016) to open science, big data, citizen science and digitalization in food, land and water systems (see for instance, Beaulieu and Leonelli 2021; Feldman and Shaw 2018; McCampbell et al. 2022). A gender research agenda anchored in critical reflexivity that advances horizontal dynamic processes between different actors and shared data ownership, thus promises to transform conventional research processes. Such an agenda has the potential to make research processes and the data they generate empowering for local women and men across food, land and water systems.

What it means. Transformative research processes demand that researchers critically reflect on their positionality and research choices, and the potential (positive and negative) impacts these choices may have on the lives of diverse local women and men. Critical reflections on the concepts, theories and methods used, and their (Western, liberal, middle-class, technocratic) origins, are expected to produce explorations of plural theoretical and methodological frameworks and ways of engagement. This will ensure that gender research is context specific, people-centered, and driven by just and reciprocal exchanges between actors, thus leading to meaningful changes in modes of researching, collaborating on and intervening in gender work across food, land and water systems. Data sovereignty is an important aspect of transformative research processes as it advances the rights of local people to own, control, access and/or possess data that derive from them (Walter et al. 2022). Supporting community self-sufficiency in research is thus a way of enacting reciprocity and an effective way to ensure research accountability.

What it builds on. Transformative research processes and data build on participatory approaches promoted since the 1980s as a response to top-down interventions and research in rural development projects, as well as to failures of the transfer-of-technology model (Leeuwis 2000). However, transformative processes extend beyond these as they uphold a critical viewpoint in the codesign, coproduction and co-ownership of the research process. Significantly, transformative research processes and data acknowledge the role of the researcher as a knowledge broker and mobilizer for change (Shaxson et al. 2012). They aim to strategically use mixed methods, social activism, culturally responsive inclusion and other methodologies and approaches (see Mertens 2021) to address research–researched power dynamics and tensions resulting from differences in expectations, objectives and benefits (Wilmsen 2008) or from different cultural values, knowledges and meanings (Boogaard 2021). Processes for gendered data sovereignty in development, and specifically in food, land and water systems, have yet to be developed but lessons can be derived from promising advances in other fields. For instance, in the recent book *Data Feminism*, D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) show how embedding intersectionality in data science and data ethics can ensure that power differentials in knowledge production are acknowledged and addressed. Similarly, advances in Indigenous data sovereignty can provide relevant insights into how data can become a source for gender empowerment (see box 4). In food, land and water systems, ongoing efforts toward gender-inclusive digital solutions (see for instance, Muller et al. 2022) could become important areas to incorporate gender-transformative research methodologies focused on gendered data sovereignty.

What it will do. The goal is to inform and (continuously) improve gender-transformative research methodologies in ways that increase researcher accountability, as well as the quality of research engagements. This topic group seeks to develop shared understandings, good practices, guidance notes and standards to embed 'relational accountability' (Reo 2019) across gender-transformative research in food, land and water systems. That is, to ensure continuous reflection on the researchers' responsibility to those they work with and benefit from, and to engage in critical discussions about potential consequences of gender research. It aims to kickstart discussions about gendered data sovereignty.

Box 4. Gender-transformative research methodologies for transformative research processes and data

Transformative research processes

Carnegie et al. (2019) is an example of a transformative research process that a group of diverse stakeholders, including Australian researchers, partner organizations and communities in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, undertook as they coproduced a methodology for community-based indicators of gender equity. Kickstarted by critical reflections on the role of economic incentives as the dominant pathway to women's empowerment and gender equity, the researchers sought to explore alternative viewpoints. Eventually, they opted for a mix of participatory, feminist, diverse economies and strength-based approaches to codesign a research methodology and indicators more attuned to local women's and men's lives. The resulting indicators were grounded in local meanings and realities, included distinct ways of participating, and encompassed important relationships across all spheres of life—including the non-economic. The indicators were useful for the different stakeholders including community members, who could use them to identify aspirational goals for gender equity. They also provided an opportunity for community members to pace, track and measure their own progress toward these goals in ways that were coherent with their own customs and social dynamics, while the researchers managed to capture such progress to inform policymaking and to share their lessons and methodology with the research community.

cont.

Transformative data
Processes for gendered data sovereignty are still being developed. Indigenous data sovereignty provides valuable insights into how data can empower.

Example 1: Indigenous data sovereignty
The Native Nations Institute (NNI) of the University of Arizona collaborated with First Nations women and men throughout the United States to develop a set of recommendations for researchers to protect Indigenous Peoples' right to be consulted and to retain data sovereignty, through various open-source software and web-based platforms which are in use today (NNI 2021). The NNI maintains that Indigenous data sovereignty principles must be employed throughout the life of a project—from designing objectives and methodologies to validating research results, disseminating results, storing data and ensuring access to the data after the project is over.

Example 2: Biocultural Labels and Notices
Biocultural Labels and Notices are a mechanism developed to address community interest in biodiversity and genetic resources (Anderson and Hudson 2020). The Biocultural Labels (for use by Indigenous Peoples and local communities) and the accompanying Notices (for use by researchers and institutions) are an initiative focused on accurate provenance, transparency and integrity in research engagements with these communities. The Biocultural Labels are data markers that help define community expectations and consent about appropriate and future use of research data. Data markers provide a practical application for access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources (per the Nagoya Protocol). They support international expectations around the disclosure and origins of community data used in research contexts.

3.4 GENNOVATE data and tools

Relevance. GENNOVATE was an unprecedented study at CGIAR—in its scale and comprehensiveness—for examining the interlinkages between gender norms, agency and innovation. It paid attention to women's and men's situated experiences and realities and emphasized capacity development and training on qualitative methodologies for its research partners (see also Annex 1). Also, multiple researchers built on the GENNOVATE methodology (or elements of it) after the GENNOVATE study and created new methods and tools which form a resource in themselves. GENNOVATE data and tools can inform new gender-transformative research methodologies and action research designs.

What it means. GENNOVATE encompasses a methodology and a dataset. The GENNOVATE methodology is a qualitative and comparative field research methodology which explores interactions between gender norms, agency and agricultural innovation (Petesch et al. 2018).

What it builds on. The GENNOVATE dataset consists of qualitative and numerical information from 137 case studies conducted in 26 countries and represents the largest qualitative dataset on gender and agriculture within CGIAR. While many publications (scientific articles, reports, guidelines and briefs) came out of GENNOVATE, the database and insights from GENNOVATE have not yet been exhausted. More and different uses can be made of the existing data.

What it will do. The topic group will work to adopt and adapt GENNOVATE research methods to create new ways to research, assess and monitor gender-transformative change. The topic group can also explore how the existing database can be mined to inform CGIAR Research Initiatives and other research and policy purposes (Figure 2).

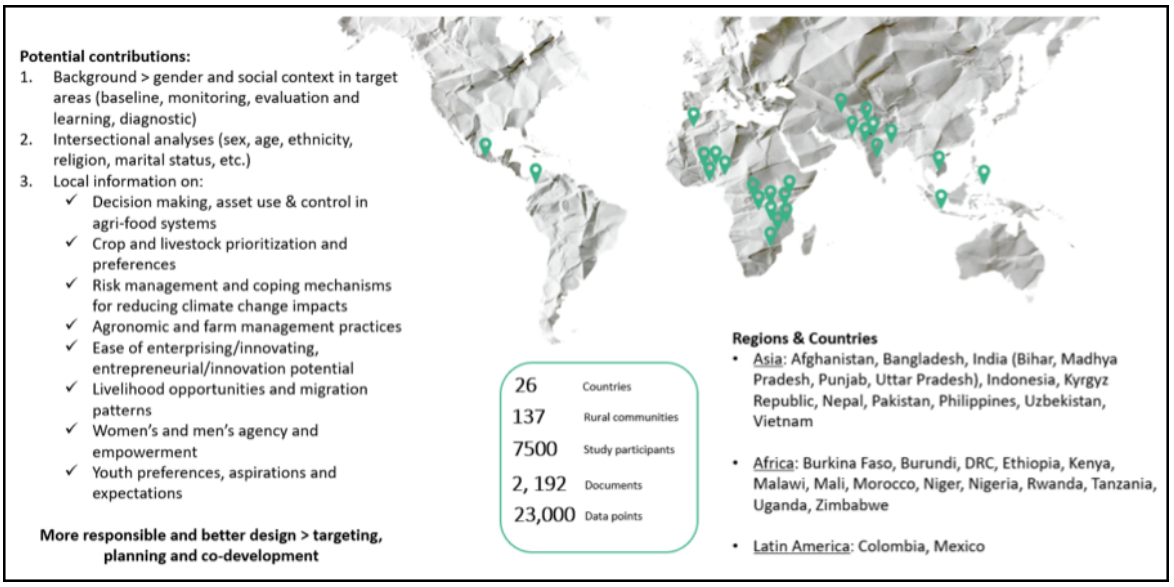

Figure 2. GENNOVATE data: potential contributions to gender work in food, land and water systems

Source: elaborated by Diana E. Lopez as part of a workshop "GENNOVATE: taking it forward", October 2021, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

4. Conclusion

Gender-transformative research methodologies aim to catalyze gender-transformative and socially just change processes during the entire research process—from design and implementation to monitoring, evaluation and learning. The Community of Practice on Gender-Transformative Research Methodologies (GTRM-CoP) is a community of researchers passionate about and committed to exploring gender-transformative change in food, land and water systems. The GTRM-CoP is designed to be a safe space for co-learning, developing, testing and using gender-transformative research methodologies to advance gender research together. The GTRM-CoP, in its infancy in 2022, aims to accelerate learning and action that fosters gender-transformative change in food, land and water systems, through the interactions within and between the topic groups, following a set of principles and values in a spirit of humility and learning. These lessons will be available to others within CGIAR and beyond as part of a global movement toward gender equity and achieving Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10).

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Annex 1. Gender-transformative research within CGIAR

CGIAR and its partners have contributed to improving public knowledge on how to understand and address food, land and water crises facing the world. The impacts of these crises are socially inequitable, hence a commitment within CGIAR to challenge social and gender inequalities, and to propose socially just and gender-equitable solutions.

Ongoing CGIAR gender research is supported through an architecture consisting of:

- Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER): the CGIAR Impact Platform designed to put gender equality at the forefront of global agricultural research for development. GENDER is articulated through three intersecting modules focused on Methods, Alliances and Evidence.
- Harnessing Equality for Resilience in the Agrifood System (HER+): a CGIAR Research Initiative focused on ensuring gender equality and social inclusion through pinpointing effective strategies across global agriculture and food systems.
- Gender research teams and individual gender researchers conducting research through CGIAR Centers and Initiatives, whose work will contribute to the goals of the Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion Impact Area across different food, land and water systems.

Recent examples of CGIAR gender research include: examining gender dynamics in plant breeding (Polar et al. 2021), climate-smart farming (Huyer and Chanana 2021) and aquatic systems (Cole et al. 2020); indices for quantifying gender gaps in empowerment (Galiè et al. 2019); measuring transformative change (Morgan 2014); and inclusive scaling of agricultural innovations (McGuire et al. 2022). Other important sources of innovation in defining and assessing gender-transformative change include research and development by non-CGIAR organizations. Oxfam, Oxfam Novib, the Helen Keller Foundation, Promundo and CARE are prominent examples. CGIAR has, on occasion, partnered with one or more of these and other organizations in its research and drawn upon their analyses.

The GENNOVATE Initiative (2014–2018) helped to catalyze critical reflections toward gender-transformative work at CGIAR. GENNOVATE was a global comparative research initiative which examined how gender norms and agency influence how and if men, women and youth adopt agricultural and natural resource management innovations. Principal investigators from eight different CGIAR Centers conducted 137 case studies in 26 countries across three continents. GENNOVATE focused on describing and understanding the underlying causes of gender gaps in innovation. Experience in rolling out the GENNOVATE methodology prompted a series of reflections on how to advance more socially equitable research (Elias et al. 2018; 2020; CGIAR-IEA 2017). These reflections have influenced current CGIAR gender research and inspired the approach of this CoP on gender-transformative methodologies.

Annex 2. GTRM-CoP roles and responsibilities

The CoP is coordinated by an Organizing Committee comprised of CGIAR and non-CGIAR gender researchers, with specialist Community Management support. Membership of the Organizing Committee is open to any gender researcher with the requisite passion, experience and time. Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating the topic groups internally and externally, with the rest of the CGIAR architecture (GENDER Platform, HER+).
- Monitoring progress, listening to needs and suggesting adaptation.
- Developing and nurturing the community membership.
- Energizing, galvanizing and stimulating activities within and across topic groups, with topic co-convenors.
- Managing a small budget and the implementation of activities leading to knowledge products and practices.
- Co-developing knowledge products with topic co-convenors and members.

Topic Co-convenors are volunteers with personal interest as well as proven experience in the proposed topics, who convene members around mutually agreed objectives within a topic for a specific period. We expect to have one to three co-convenors collaborating per topic. At least one topic co-convenor per topic should join the Organizing Committee to ensure internal communication. Responsibilities include:

- Leading the topic group to set its own objectives, including methodologies to work on, initiatives to work in, ways of engaging with each other, desired knowledge and concrete deliverables to work toward.
- Listening to and working with members to ensure their needs, contributions and aspirations are addressed.
- Following up on agreed objectives and co-convening discussions among topic members.
- Connecting members to each other and helping to build networks.
- Liaising with other topic co-convenors and with the Organizing Committee to make sure that insights and developments are shared and communicated in both directions.

CoP Members work together to build on and develop, pilot and scale gender-transformative research methodologies, trying them out in their own research, sharing their experiences and documenting their journey. The aim is to ultimately create gender-transformative research methodologies that successfully achieve gender-transformative change within specific research contexts. Responsibilities include:

- Agreeing in the topic group on which methodologies to work on, and how to engage in ways that allow space for sharing knowledge widely and support for a deep dive approach—engagement modes can include email, voice calls, shared documents, and more formal collaboration modes (DGroups and Teams).
- Documenting the process and sharing within the topic group periodically.
- Collaborating with others to accelerate learning, to share challenges, weaknesses, successes and strengths, and to help others with challenges.
- Suggesting new topics around which to convene and becoming occasional co-convenors when passion, needs and expertise combine.

Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER) is CGIAR's impact platform designed to put equality and inclusion at the forefront of global agricultural research for development. The Platform is transforming the way gender research is done, both within and beyond CGIAR, to kick-start a process of genuine change toward greater gender equality and better lives for smallholder farmers everywhere.

gender.cgiar.org

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food secure future dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security, and improving natural resources.

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