

Online Training on Gender-Transformative Research from Proposal Writing to Evaluation CGIAR Gender Impact Platform 05-02-2025



Ayush attended an online training on Gender-Transformative Research from Proposal Writing to Evaluation hosted by CGIAR Gender Impact Platform on February 5, 2025. He shares his learning experiences here.

CONTEXT

As a research intern at the [Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy](#), Hyderabad, with an interest in gender research and extension, I sought to connect with experts and stay updated on developments in the field. In the process, I discovered the [CGIAR Gender Impact Platform](#) on LinkedIn and registered for this training through their website.



Gender transformative research from proposal writing to evaluation

Presenter's Name: Eileen Nchanji, Cosmas Lutomia, and Eveline Compaore
Gender and Social inclusion expert, Alliance of Bioversity International & CIAT/INERA

The CGIAR Gender Impact platform synthesizes and amplifies research, addresses critical gaps, builds capacity, and sets strategic directions to maximize CGIAR's impact. The specific focus of this training was on gender-transformative research—covering the entire process from proposal writing to evaluation—and on establishing gender-inclusive communication strategies to effectively engage target communities.

PROGRAM AND PRESENTERS

The program was designed and executed by Eileen Bogweh Nchanji, a gender specialist and Scientist II with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. Other key resource persons included Lutomia Cosmas, a senior research associate from the Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT based in Nairobi, and Eveline Compaoré, a social scientist from the Institute for Environment and Agricultural Research in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (INERA/CNRST).

The training was conducted via Zoom, using a PowerPoint presentation enriched with real-world examples and practical suggestions. Each section was followed by a Q&A session, where participants engaged by raising hands, unmuting, or typing questions—assisted by Cosmos Lutomia, who relayed queries to Eileen.

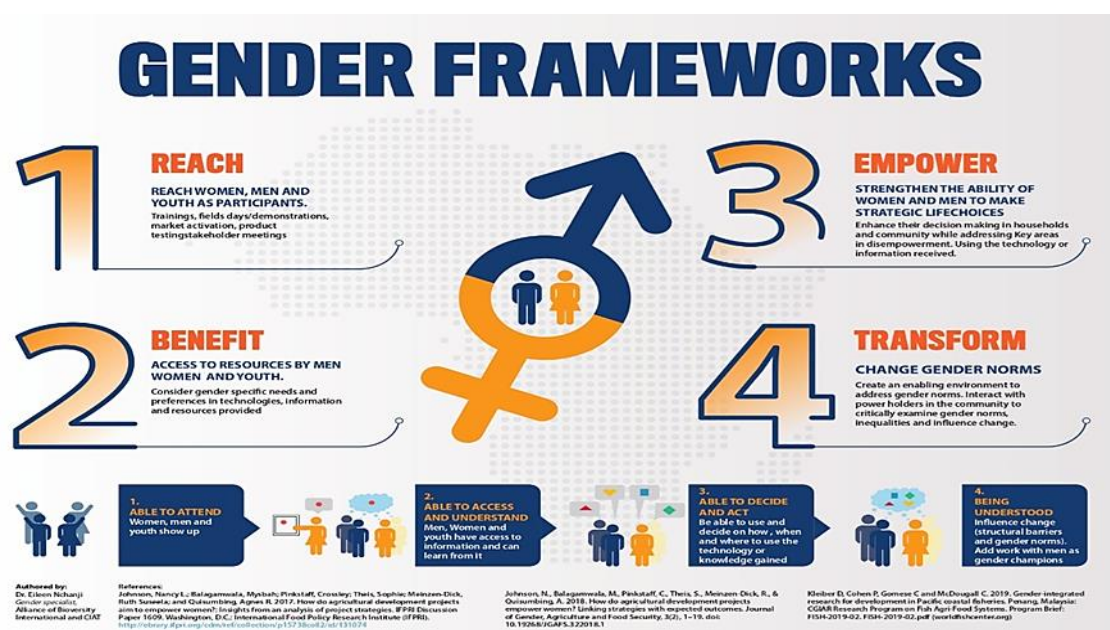
TRAINING CONTENT

The presentation began by underscoring the sobering reality that the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. At the current pace, it could take an estimated 300 years to close the gender gap. The impact of COVID-19, persistent violence against women, and the backlash against women's rights have further deepened existing inequalities. The presenters delivered a powerful call to action, urging the audience to focus on what can be done now to create a better future for the next generation. Below are the key highlights of the meeting.

RBET for Gender Projects

Eileen introduced the **Reach-Benefit-Empower-Transform (RBET) framework for integrating gender in research** developed by her, which offers a strategic tool for integrating gender considerations into agricultural projects and proposals. It provides a clear pathway for moving beyond basic participation toward true empowerment and systemic change in gender relations. Some considerations when using this framework highlighted by Eileen were:

- **Reaching Women:** Just ensures participation without guaranteeing long-term benefits.
- **Benefiting Women:** Improves circumstances (e.g., through resource provision), but are they able to access and control those resources?
- **Empowering Women:** We need to strengthen women's ability to make strategic life choices by addressing barriers such as decision-making, land ownership, and financial access. Supporting this with an example of social-technical innovation, which combines both social and technical solutions to ensure women not only receive benefits but also gain agency in household decisions.
- **Transforming Gender Relations:** which can be done by shifting social norms, policies, and institutional structures to achieve lasting, systemic gender equity.



I learned that when applying this framework to a project proposal, we should clearly define our own interest and explain how it aligns with the donor's priorities, including whether the donor is committed to gender transformation. It is essential to specify the aim and objectives of the project: determine if the focus is solely on empowerment, if it is merely gender sensitive by acknowledging issues without addressing them, or if it aims to create opportunities that enable different genders to participate and benefit. Ultimately, the proposal must clearly articulate the level of gender integration.

Capacity Building and Balanced Research Teams

Capacity-building sessions are essential to equip researchers with the skills required for designing and implementing gender-responsive research proposals. A well-balanced research team is also important. Eileen suggested that the team should include:

- **Gender Expertise:** A dedicated gender expert or advisor from the start to ensure comprehensive integration.
- **Diverse Leadership:** An equal number of men and women in leadership roles to amplify diverse perspectives.
- **Subject Matter Expertise:** A Principal Investigator (PI) chosen for expertise, with gender as one of several important criteria.
- **Intersectional Approach:** Recognition that men, women, and youth are diverse groups influenced by factors such as age, religion, conflict, and socio-economic background.
- **Preliminary Gender Analysis:** Use of secondary data to identify key gender gaps before proposal development.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving marginalized groups and local communities to ground research in on-the-ground realities.
- **Proposal Enhancement Team:** A dedicated group to ensure project outcomes align with donor requirements, especially where gender objectives are mandated.

Integrating Gender Throughout the Research Cycle

Eileen emphasized that gender integration is an ongoing, iterative process that begins with proposal development and continues through data collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination. During proposal development, it is crucial to embed gender considerations into every component. This begins with incorporating gender perspectives into research content by generating ideas, hypotheses, and questions that consider how social norms, roles, and responsibilities vary for men and women.

Researchers should also collect gender-disaggregated data to reveal potential inequalities and differences in impact. Equally important is ensuring equal opportunities within the research team by fostering a gender-responsive working environment that values balanced participation, validates the capacities of both women and men, and promotes inclusive decision-making. Moreover, using gender-sensitive language in reporting and disseminating results will reinforce the commitment to inclusivity.

Varying Donor Expectations and Indicator Development

When dealing with donor expectations, Eileen highlighted that gender integration varies—from basic inclusion to transformative change. By pointing out two donors Global Affairs Canada (GAC) uses a four-point Gender Coding Scale (GE0 to GE3) to assess projects, ensuring accountability by excluding projects lacking gender considerations.

Gender equality code:	Explanation of GE coding:
GE - 3	Targeted - Gender equality is the principal objective of the initiative: The initiative was designed specifically to address gender inequalities and would not otherwise be undertaken. All outcomes in the logic model are gender equality outcomes.
GE - 2	Fully integrated - There is at least one intermediate gender equality outcome which will achieve observable changes in behaviour, practice, or performance that will contribute to gender equality.
GE - 1	Partially integrated - There is at least one gender equality outcome at the immediate outcome level which will achieve a change in skills, awareness, or knowledge that contributes to gender equality.
GE - 0	None - There are no gender equality outcomes.

Gender coding scales of GAC Canada

The Gates Foundation categorizes projects as gender unintentional, gender intentional, or gender transformative, expecting the latter to actively shift power relations and social norms.

Gender Unintentional	Gender Intentional	Gender Transformative
Investments do not recognize impact of gender on the problem, do not integrate a gender lens in the proposed approach, or target gender gaps.	Investments are designed to reduce gender gaps in access to resources.	Investments are designed to transform gender power relations and/or reduce gender gaps in agency over resources.

Gender integration guide of Gates Foundation

To cope with these demands, a [five-step process](#) developed by FAO, IFAD, WFP, and CGIAR in 2023 was suggested and discussed with the aim of developing gender-transformative indicators:

Step 1: Create an Impact Statement

Consider defining the long-term impact by identifying who benefits and how. Here Basing the statement on gender gaps and issues in the target context is very important.

Step 2: Identify Key Challenges

We need to determine root causes of gender inequality (e.g., leadership barriers, decision-making limitations) and also consider intersecting identities like age, socio-economic status, and cultural factors.

Step 3: Identify Who Needs to Change & Sphere of Influence

We should recognize groups whose behaviours, attitudes, or beliefs contribute to gender inequalities. Then define the level of influence (here, the suggestion of engaging intermediaries if direct influence is limited was very important).

Step 4: Develop Outcome Statements

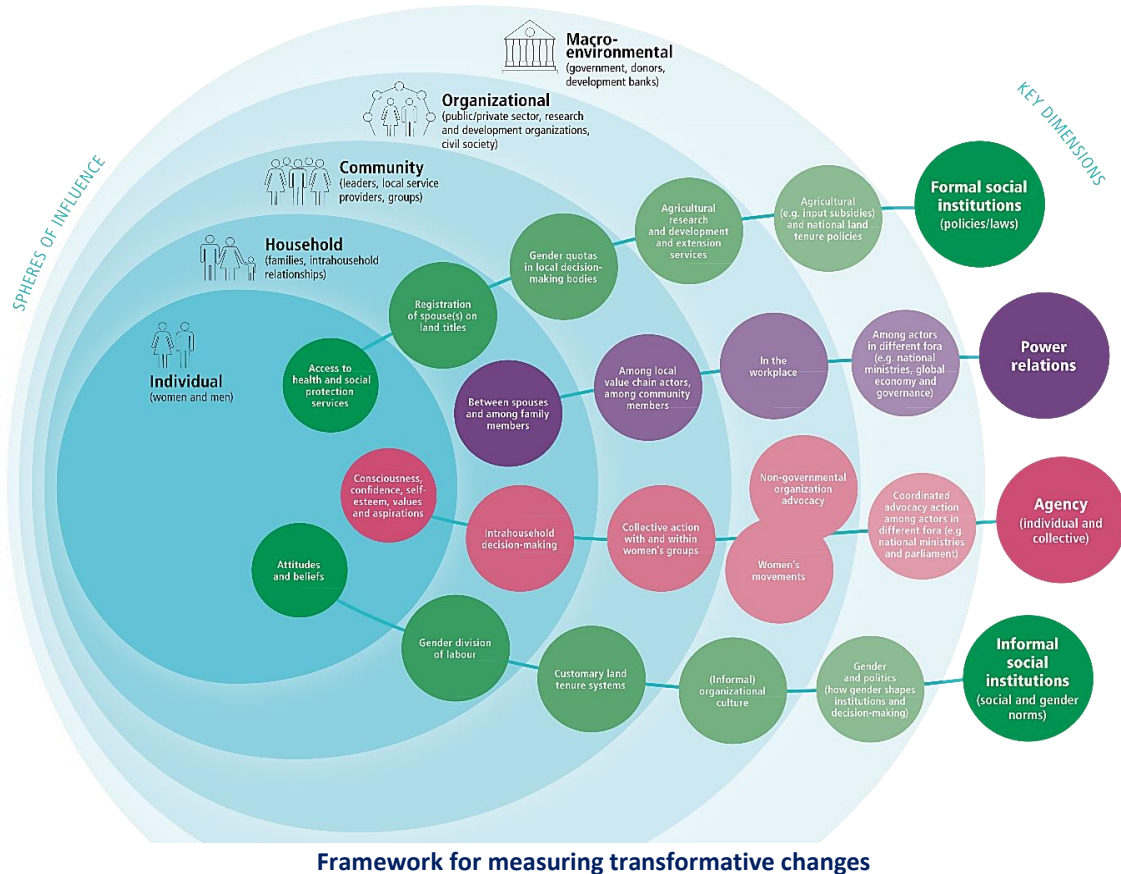
Now, linking outcomes to specific gender challenges and key transformation areas and then aligning them with dimensions of agency, power relations, and institutional change must be considered.

Step 5: Develop Context-Specific Indicators

We also need to consider the timeframes for change: capacity (1–2 years), behaviour (2+ years), and agriculture (crop cycles/seasons). We should also ensure that indicators measure both quantitative (participation, access) and qualitative (perceptions, leadership shifts) changes.

Framework for Measuring Gender Transformative Change

Eileen suggested a **framework** developed by FAO, IFAD, WFP, and CGIAR in 2023 for measuring gender transformative changes. It provides a systematic method for assessing progress within one or across multiple spheres of influence. It can be applied to any program aiming to evaluate gender transformation, offering clear examples of key dimensions and areas of interest within each sphere of influence.



Framework for measuring transformative changes

Case Examples

Digital Payments and Household Financial Dynamics

Eileen noted that in Uganda, women faced a challenge—husbands demanded their earnings upon returning home. To address this, they introduced a digital payment system, ensuring wages were transferred directly to their accounts. Follow-up assessments examined its effectiveness, impact on gender relations, and spousal acceptance. While the system empowered women financially, many husbands felt excluded, highlighting the need for male engagement to foster inclusive financial decision-making rather than merely shifting control.

Vulnerability for livelihood sustainability

Eveline Camporee shared an experience from Egypt, highlighting a framework for livelihood sustainability. In this approach, vulnerability was used as an indicator, as various assets directly influence it. Essential assets for rural livelihoods include natural, financial, human, social, and physical resources. This indicator revealed clear discrepancies between men and women, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive interventions.

I learned that a five-key structured approach ensures that indicators are meaningful, measurable, and sustainable. The indicators must drive gender transformation across key dimensions and spheres of influence.

Ensuring Inclusive and Effective Communication

Lastly, Lutomia Cosmos, along with Eileen, emphasized the importance of inclusive communication. They suggested that effective messaging must ensure equity, representation, sensitivity, accessibility, and participation while remaining free of stereotypes. Further, communication strategies should be tailored to target audiences using a variety of channels—community radio, SMS/mobile platforms, printed materials, social media, digital tools, village meetings, manuscript journals, blogs, multimedia case studies, reports, policy briefs, and dialogues.

Additional key points included in the presentation:

- **Report Writing:** Maintaining clarity and thoroughness.
- **Developing Guides:** Creating comprehensive guides for mainstreaming gender in multi-stakeholder agri-food systems, gender-responsive nutrition programs, and socio-technical innovation bundles.
- **PowerPoint Presentations:** Prioritizing readability with clear, legible fonts.
- **Radio/Audio Scripts:** Using structured formats, as demonstrated by the Women and Land Rights script from the DRC.
- **Poster Development:** Showcasing best practices through visually impactful examples like certified seeds and microfinance initiatives.

Q&A AND DISCUSSION

During the Q&A session, participants asked how to frame research questions to ensure gender equality and social inclusion. To this question, Eileen highlighted the need to focus on identifying gender gaps while considering context-specific challenges—recognizing that a gender-transformative approach must be tailored to local realities, such as caste dynamics in India, class differences in the USA, and issues of religion or conflict in Africa.

Another question compared donor guidelines, noting that while core principles are similar, expectations vary: some donors require basic gender responsiveness, whereas others demand transformative approaches that deeply integrate gender considerations. The discussion also touched on decolonization, emphasizing the importance of understanding historical power dynamics and aligning donor requirements with local cultural contexts. Sensitive topics, such as LGBTQ rights, may face constitutional restrictions in some regions, making it critical to engage in case studies and participatory dialogue to balance donor expectations with local realities.

KEY RESOURCES AND CASE STUDIES

The meeting provided information on the varying expectations of gender integration from particular funders such as [Global Affairs Canada \(GAC\)](#), [the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation \(BMGF\)](#), [the International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#), [GIZ](#), [USAID](#), [IDRC](#), [ACIAR](#), and [Plan UK](#).

It also provided an extensive resource toolkit to enhance project design and implementation:

- [Global Affairs Canada – Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects](#): A practical resource with 13 tools for systematic integration of gender equality.
- [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation \(SDC\) – Gender Strategy \(2021–2024\)](#): Offers insights into empowering women and girls globally.
- [FCDO – International Women and Girls Strategy \(2023–2030\)](#): Focuses on Educating Girls, Empowering Women and Girls, and Ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Examples of successful gender integration in proposals were also shared:

- Beans for Women for Empowerment (Beans4Women) in Eastern DRC.
- BRAINS: Building Equitable Climate-Resilient African Bean & INsect Sectors.

Two case studies highlighted the application of gender-transformative indicators:

- Case 1: [CARE International's EKATA in Burundi \(since 2016\)](#), which focuses on empowering women through leadership, negotiation, and community dialogue.
- Case 2: [Nepal's Government Community Animal Health Worker \(CAHW\)](#) Vocational Training, which provides rural women with job opportunities in livestock management.

For further reference, the recording, presentation slides, and additional materials can be accessed on [the platform's training page](#). Additionally, [the English recording of the entire session](#) is available on YouTube.

MY IMPRESSIONS

The meeting underscored that a comprehensive approach to gender integration must span every phase of the research process. Capacity building and continuous learning within project management teams are essential for staying current with evolving frameworks and donor requirements. Although global challenges remain significant, practical tools and inclusive strategies can drive meaningful change. Overall, the session provided clarity on the challenges of selecting effective indicators and offered practical guidance on tracking and measuring impact. As an agriculture extension researcher focusing on gender studies, I gained insights into designing impactful, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural programs that truly drive gender transformation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I sincerely thank the CGIAR GENDER Platform (Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results) for organizing this transformative webinar and for providing comprehensive resources, expert insights, and valuable materials. I am also grateful to my mentors at CRISP for encouraging me to participate and supporting me in writing this note.

Ayush Emmanuel Lal is a Research Intern at the Centre for Research on Innovation in Science Policy (CRISP). He holds a postgraduate degree in Agricultural Extension and Communication from Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology, and Sciences, Prayagraj. His research interests are adoption behaviour and gender issues in agriculture. He can be reached at ayushlal0712@gmail.com.

AESA Secretariat: Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP)
Road No 10, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India

www.aesanetwork.org

Email: aesanetwork@gmail.com