

Contact Information:

Patricia Biermayr-Jenzano, PhD
Senior Researcher
PRGA Program Coordinator
Email: p.biermayr@cgiar.org

Claudia X. Garcia S.
Assistant Coordinator
Email: c.x.garcia@cgiar.org

Juliana Aristizábal Gómez
Communications Assistant and Designer
Email: jmaristizabal@cgiar.org

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CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis



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Phone: (57-2) 4450000 Ext. 3131-3109

Phone in USA: +1-650-833-6625 Ext. 3131

A.A. 6713, Cali, Colombia: prgra@cgiar.org; www.prgaprogram.org



PRGA

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The PRGA is currently implementing its phase III (2008-2012), however, the key factors that underpinned the Program's work at the beginning of Phase II (2003-2007) still apply today:

- A majority of agricultural research systems, including in the CG System, still lack a critical mass of participatory-research and gender-analysis practitioners
- There is still little recognition or practice of gender analysis
- There is still an unmet demand for capacity development in gender-analysis and participatory-research methods
- Learning and change need to be institutionalized, so that participatory research and gender analysis can be mainstreamed in agricultural R&D thinking and practice.

The strategic platform for Phase III focuses on three overarching thematic areas: (1) Climate change; (2) Food security, building on the Program's traditional research areas of plant breeding and natural-resources research; and (3) Supporting actions for gender mainstreaming.

Program noteworthy achievements:

- Multiplicity of partners: about 80 partnerships have been developed over the years in the context of research projects.
- Contributed substantially to the development of participatory plant breeding (PPB). Its role has included informal and, in some cases, decisive interactions with plant breeders in the CGIAR, funding of PPB in NARS, convening of PPB thematic workshops, and the elaboration of state-of-the-art reviews.
- Impact assessment is a major strength of the Program. "Impact assessment in the PRGA Program significantly exceeds normal expectations from a Systemwide or ecoregional program and rivals the amount and quality of work conducted in some of the better CGIAR Centers (in this area)."
- Mainstreaming of gender analysis in NARS is another emerging area of programmatic impact. Thus far, that work has focused on capacity-building and advocacy. The focus is now shifting to institutional research.

Since its creation in 1997, the PRGA Program has been guided by its programmatic goal "to improve the ability of the CGIAR System and other collaborating institutions to develop technology which alleviates poverty, improves food security, and protects the environment with greater equity" and its programmatic purpose "to assess and develop methodologies and organizational innovations for gender-sensitive participatory research, and operationalize their use in plant breeding, crop and natural-resource management"



The *objective of the Program* is to improve the competencies of the CG System and collaborating institutions to mainstream the use of gender-sensitive participatory approaches.



The Program is unique with the CG with its focus on PR and GA; it complements the Gender and Diversity Program, which focuses on staffing issues and capacity development among female scientists of many agricultural disciplines. The PRGA Program works alongside partners to develop methodologies that will be applicable over a much wider area, including across sub-region and continents.

Looking Forward

During the following years the Program will be focusing in:

New developments in and institutionalization of participatory plant breeding (PPB) to achieve food security in the face of Climate Change (through a Gender lens)

PPB has proved ideally suited for the staple crops of the developing world's poor, as these crops receive little or no commercial attention. PPB identifies adapted varieties for heterogeneous environments. Agro-ecologies are now changing under the influence of Climate Change. PPB methods should enable 'evolutionary' plant breeding to keep pace with these changes. The PRGA Program continues to have a clear role in helping to improve the institutionalization of PPB through development and adoption of appropriate PPB approaches, methods and associated skills to achieve food security in the face of Climate Change and at acceptable R&D cost. Ensuring recognition of the collective innovation and breeding efforts of farmers, and keeping their materials freely available for use and further breeding form major challenges, as do issues related to seed multiplication and seed policy. The Program has the advantage of being the only Systemwide body with a mandate for PR, and its primary partner in this work (ICARDA) has one of the longest histories of PPB in the System. An alliance will be forged with other interested Centers and their partners to learn wider and robust lessons that catalyze institutionalization.

With a variety of PPB methods at their disposal, and the practice of PPB institutionalized, plant breeders will be able to better target their efforts in variety development for staple crops in diverse, risk-prone environments. Attention to farmers' rights over the varieties developed should enhance the availability of material in a wider context (cf. variety protection imposed by commercial companies); consequently, they should be in a position not only to optimize their yield in the short term, but also to maintain enough variation to meet future changes (many imposed by climate change). This in turn should result in improved livelihoods and food security.

Supporting actions for gender mainstreaming in agricultural research to understand organizational change and promote gender analysis in CG Centers and programs

Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality, though in agricultural research and specifically in the CGIAR and partner institutions is not an end in itself, but a strategy to achieve, through gender equality in research processes, better outcomes and ultimately impacts for both women and men. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities—policy development, research, advocacy/dialog, legislation, resource, allocation and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects. As identified by the CGIAR reform process, gender research is not mainstreamed in most CGIAR Centers—and doing so will require not only systematic policies and activities within each Center, but also support to them in doing so. It is the latest gap that this research will fill. The Program holds the only Systemwide mandate for gender in research. Its physical location at CIAT and CIAT's desire to mainstream gender make CIAT an advantageous choice for pilot work in this area.

Methodologies for assessing gender status should be refined. By working with CGIAR Centers concurrently, alternative methods should themselves be assessed, adapted and published. This should provide the Centers (and eventually other partners) with a choice of methods for gender mainstreaming. In mainstreaming gender issues in their research, partners internalize what they learn, resulting in institutional change. Partners then routinely utilize appropriate elements of PR and GA. With gender at the forefront, research and development activities should better target resource-poor farmers in a gender-differentiated way, ultimately leading to livelihood and food-security benefits for those farmers.