

Perspectives on Gender-Responsive Participatory Action Research



Aden Aw-Hassan
Cali, 17 June, 2010

Outline

- State of Participatory & gender research
- Why Participatory and gender?
- Gender is lagging in Plant breeding, livestock, NRM
- Changes that make gendered research more pressing
- Gendered research “a must in era of climate change”
- What is lacking in gender research approaches
- Research gaps



Substantial advances in participatory research in agriculture

- In the last 2 decades substantial advances has been made in PR applications
- Several PRGA organized international conferences
- PPB guidelines have been developed
- Specialized participatory breeding training courses have been conducted
- Methods and types of participation are described
- Literature on the subject has quickly grown and available

Justification of PPB

The main motive applying participatory methods in plant breeding were:

- to gain efficiency (shorter lags, better adoption),
- Impacts of PPB were conducted and supported this argument (for example Lilya and Aw-Hassan)

Another justification was that participatory plant breeding is more adequate for harsher environments where high degree of market-based homogeneity is not the goal but rather more diverse material suitable for different tastes, preferences and micro-environments (Sperling, et al. 2001, Ceccarelli et al. XXXX).

Gender dimension lagged behind

- However, in spite of the wide application of participatory plant breeding, the gender dimension of PPB has been recognized much later.
- It is clear that, women and men farmers contribute to distinct and complementary activities therefore they have different knowledge, skills, trait preferences and needs (Farnworth and Jiggins 2003).
- The PRGA documentation of some 70 participatory plant breeding programs reveal that women favor:
 - Labor-saving attributes of crop varieties,
 - Early maturity to avoid seasonal hunger.
- These indicators can be used to set breeding priorities in the direction of poverty alleviation.

Gender and livestock

- The clear gender differentiations of roles in livestock sector is well documented
- This calls for strong gendered research in livestock improvement research
- In general, the failure of livestock improvement programs in developing countries is attributed to lack of user participation.
- Lack of women participation in livestock improvement would be a further setback and lost of opportunity if not recognized timely.
- There are some efforts underway on this



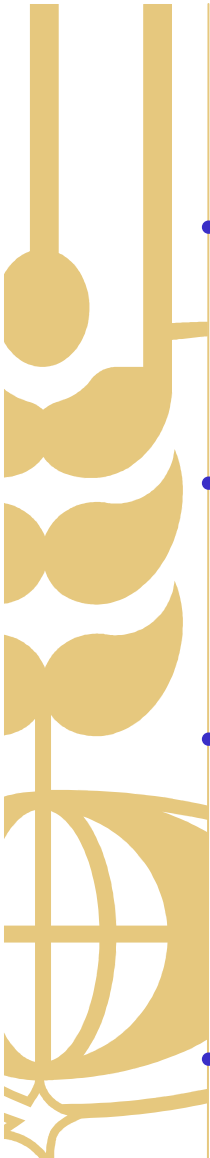
Progress is made in Gender and NRM


- Much work has been done on the gender dimensions of natural resources that shed light on:
 - Roles and divisions of labor in using natural resources
 - Time spent on water and wood collection
 - Access and control.
 - Lack of women's property rights and inheritance rights
- What is lagging is more problem solving approaches of gender research (more later)



Climate change

- It is understood that the most vulnerable and marginalised will experience the greatest impacts of climate change (see IPCC 2007),
- All social attributes that determine the capacity to cope with climate change are gendered, thus gendered research essential for developing equitable strategies for adapting to CC.
- Understanding the causes of current gender-based inequalities will help to understand how climate change may exacerbate inequalities and how adaptation measures can be targeted to avoid such scenario.
- In spite of all these, women have shown strong adaptive capacity (see Mitchell et.al. 2007, and Brody et al. 2008).
- It is important to understand the underlining factors of these successes and develop guidelines for out-scaling them





Gender and agriculture source book (WB, FAO, IFAD 2009) highlighted why gender should be a vital consideration in crop agriculture:

- 1) women play vital but unrecognized roles in crop production, household food security, and household nutrition,
- 2) manage complex, species-rich production systems,
- 3) have limited access to agricultural services and inputs, are more likely to lack assets, and grow more subsistence crops,
- 4) are not only engaged in “food security” but they are very active in “commercial” agriculture, and
- 5) Crop production is the primary employer of women in most countries.

What this book shows is that:

1. Three major agricultural development organizations are still pointing out to **the basics** of why gender should be considered
2. This is remarkable, and clearly indicates that the issue is far from **being resolved**,
3. It also shows that these institutions are putting gender as an **important element** in development projects and the book provides programmatic support for that
4. The research has strong **development ally** to link with in disseminating results of gendered analysis

Agricultural systems are **changing** thus gendered-analysis is **essential to keep up with the** **effects of the changes:**

The more recent changes include:

- Markets (domestic and export)
- Technologies,
- Household composition/lifestyle/outlook/
expectation
- Environmental degradation and resource
scarcity
- Migration of the male members
- Communication (information revolution)

What is lacking in gender-sensitive research ?

- What is lacking is more **active problem-solving** approaches that engage in
- a gender-sensitive **analysis of the change process** through which
- change **theories are tested, paradigms are challenged** and new development thinking emerges and operationalized, so it
- accelerates the **uptake of innovations** leading to more lasting **impacts with equitable access and sustainable** use of natural resources.



Gender-sensitive research should have clear **impact pathway**

Gender sensitive participatory **action research** focused on **problem solving**

Analyzing **not just** what are the gender roles and interactions within the social organization of rural and agricultural activities

BUT

Also **how** the intended and unintended **changes** modify these interactions and vis-versa

and **what supportive measures** were successful or could be successful to achieve **greater welfare goals**



GA should go beyond description to action research for change

- Descriptive analysis aims to :
present the produced knowledge about a subject without actively modifying it (Patton 1980).
- Action-oriented research (Dick 1999), on the contrary, is an approach where:
theoretical assumptions and experience in the field inform one another in a circular learning process.

The appropriateness of the research is enhanced by regularly adjusting methods, conceptual framework and research focus to empirical evidence.
- **Descriptive analysis is necessary but not sufficient to bring about change-or solve the problem**

Research gaps:

The research presented here include those suggested by Brody et al. (2008) for DFID:

- *Identify barriers and solutions to participation in decision-making,*
- *Identify gendered impacts, coping strategies and adaptation priorities of women and men in contexts of under-researched areas:*
 - *farmer associations,*
 - *Market value chains,*
 - *intensification of production,*
 - *access to finance,*
 - *different traits of crops and animals,*
 - *crop choice,*
 - *introduction of new crops, such as medicinal and herbal plants,*
 - *Alternative income sources, farm processing and value addition activities,*
 - *water scarcity,*
 - *migration, etc.*



Research gaps II:

- *Assess the impacts of climate change on gender roles and relations at the household level,*
- *Evaluate best practices for gender-sensitive responses to climate-change related disasters, conflict and displacement,*
- *Investigate the gender implications of long-term drought.*
- *Identify gender-sensitive institutions and policies and their impacts on agricultural development and empowerment*





Thank you for your attention