CGIAR Science Groups Evaluations: GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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July 2025

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Acknowledgments

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Table of Acronyms

AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
ARI	Advanced Research Institute
AMD	Asian Mega Deltas
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CRP	CGIAR Research Programs
EiA	Excellence in Agronomy
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GDI	Gender, Diversity and Inclusion
GENDER	Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GEYSI	Gender, Equality, Youth and Social inclusion Initiative
GI	Genetic Innovations
GloMIP	Global Market Intelligence Platform
GTA	Gender Transformative Approaches
IPES	International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food
ISDC	Independent Science for Development Council
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IPES-Food	International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MELIA	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment
MR	Management Response
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NARES	National Agricultural Research and Extension Services
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPU	Portfolio Performance Unit
PRMF	Performance and Results Management Framework
QoS	Quality of Science
RAFS	Resilient Agrifood Systems
SG	Science Groups
SP	Science Program
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
ST	Systems Transformation
TAFFSA	Transforming Agrifood System in South Asia
ToC	theory of change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRA	Technical Reporting Arrangement
WELI	Women Empowerment Livestock Index
WELBI	Women Empowerment in Livestock Business Index
WP	Work Package

Executive Summary

This study was conducted under the umbrella of the independent evaluations of the three CGAR **Science Groups (SGs)** (Portal), in accordance with the umbrella evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR).

Responsiveness to gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI) is one of the 15 standards in the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework. It requires that GDI be fully integrated into the process of developing and conducting evaluations. Other related standards and principles include (1) ethics and equity; and (2) legitimacy and participation. Collectively, they highlight: (1) the importance of incorporating ethical and equity considerations into the design and execution of evaluations; and (2) the value of involving and consulting relevant informants during evaluations to ensure legitimacy, quality, and adequate representation.

CGIAR's Performance and Results Management Framework (PRMF) emphasizes the significance of disaggregating data by gender for relevant outputs and outcomes. PRMF and Technical Reporting Arrangement (TRA) are operationalized through several dashboards and mechanisms, including the CGIAR Results Dashboard, gender equality tagging, and GDI Dashboard.

Several evaluations touched upon Gender equality, GDI and inclusion (GESI) within CGIAR, providing context for the SG evaluations in 2024. The 2021 Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs called reorienting of research designs to better focus on women, the disadvantaged, and those at greatest risk of natural resource depletion, severe climate change impacts, economic deprivation, and conflicts. Several recommendations were concerned with the relevance of GESI for each Action Area/SG. In 2022, the **GENDER Platform** expanded its mandate from focus only on gender equality, to also include youth and social inclusion. The Platform has worked to synthesize and amplify research to enable CGIAR to have maximum impact on gender equality, opportunities for youth, and social inclusion in agriculture and food systems.[1] The 2023 Evaluation of the Platform reinforced existing recommendations and offered news ones for the CGIAR management; they are briefly outlined in the Section 1.1 of this report, and are detailed in Annexes 2-3.

GESI considerations are essential for the SGs, so that women facing food, economic and personal insecurity, as well as youth with low educational enrolment in low-income countries, can be more effectively supported. The transition from SGs to **Science Programs** (SPs) and Accelerators helps to improve GESI efforts with the development of the **GESI Accelerator** particularly playing a key role in the new portfolio 2025-30.

The Study

Under the umbrella TORs, a designated evaluation question on gender effectiveness across SGs was included (see Section 2). This question served as a starting point to identify areas for further inquiry, providing an overview across the SGs and Initiatives in three areas: (1) approach and progress on GESI; (2) examples of achievements and challenges; and (3) lessons learned.

The sub-study of GESI in the SGs aimed to provide a broad perspective across SGs regarding their approach and progress on GESI since the formation of related Initiatives. A specific focus was placed on

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[1] See: https://gender.cgiar.org/about-us.

exploring the 2021 Synthesis recommendations and the use of **gender-equality tagging** (see Table 1). Additionally, the sub-study served as a pilot for evaluating GESI guidelines, which were under development at the request of funders to operationalize the GDI principle within the [CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework](#) (2022). Several related deep-dive and case studies in specific Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS), ST, and Genetic Innovations (GI) Initiatives were carried out (see Table 2).

The key concepts applied to the study included: **gender equality tagging** and **enhanced gender scoring** (see section 3.1). Aligned with the mixed-methods design and in line with the CGIAR Evaluation Framework, each SG evaluation described a gender-responsive process that was inclusive, participatory, and respectful of stakeholders. See Section 3.2 and Section 3.3 for considerations and limitations of the study.

Key Findings

The study's findings are divided into: (1) relevance; (2) coherence; (3) effectiveness; (4) quality of science; and (5) efficiency (see Section 4 for detail on key findings).

Relevance: Gender tagging helped the SG/Initiative to better focus on GESI goals. Targeting women and other vulnerable groups is not consistently done, and when it is, the emphasis tends to be on women. There is no tagging or targeting system for youth and social inclusion. The GI SG made progress in developing tools and processes to increase inclusiveness by defining product profiles that address the specific needs of youth and women. ST and RAFS advanced in strengthening the systematic incorporation of equity issues into research design.

Coherence: Without a gender focal point, concepts such as intersectionality, youth, social inclusion, and gender are interpreted differently by various groups. Consequently, there is no standard way to apply these concepts. That contributes to the differences in how the SG/Initiative view GESI, which diminishes the overall coherence of GESI within SGs.

Effectiveness: There are examples of attention to social inclusion, but gender tends to be the main focus. The lack of standardized reporting on gender analysis work or gender-disaggregated data makes it difficult to evaluate the quality and effectiveness. While There is significant progress in systematically integrating gender into design and implementation processes. Initiatives committed to GESI outcomes are on track to achieve their objectives, with early signs of success. Key factors for their effective implementation include: (1) strong leadership combined with skilled GESI focal points and researchers; (2) a dedicated work package (WP) focused on gender for transformative and strategic research; and (3) a clear GESI strategy.

Quality of Science (QoS): Progress is evident in how GESI concerns are reflected in the outputs, as seen in gender tagging. All Initiatives used gender tagging for all outputs and outcomes, showing an increase in the percentage of outputs and outcomes with a principal or significant gender tag between 2022-23. Significant gender tagging at the principal level is mainly found among knowledge products, with most activities not gender targeted. Many of the reviewed knowledge products are incorrectly labeled, suggesting that the actual percentage of significant or principal gender outputs and outcomes may be lower.

Efficiency: While tracking gender funding can be difficult, solid findings on efficiency have emerged. Specifically, GESI tends to receive less funding and face more frequent budget cuts within Initiatives compared to other areas. GESI is not always funded in each Initiative or funded at comparable levels, and resources and capacity for gender are unevenly distributed across centers and Initiatives. Resources could be allocated more strategically to better meet GESI goals.

Recommendation and Recommended Actions

Several recommendations emerged from the SG evaluations, some echo previously made recommendations. Their aim is to enhance GESI within CGIAR as it enters the next phase of its SPs and Accelerators-the new 2025-30 CGIAR Portfolio (see Section 5.1 for a detailed list of recommendations). The recommendations and lessons learned can be most effectively implemented through the following actions:

- Align work on gender, equity, and social inclusion with the Gender Strategy being developed (Rec. 15)

- Further broaden the internal skills set to include more social scientists, gender, partnerships, and communication experts. (Rec. 7)

From the GENDER Platform evaluation 2023:

- Establish a formal relationship between the GENDER Impact Platform and upcoming SPs to foster collaboration (related to Platform Rec. 10)

- Strengthen partnerships and co-identify and prioritize research gaps and activities with key partners. (Platform Rec. 1 and rec. 25 in 2021 Synthesis)

- Use relevant metrics in individual performance assessments that assess for gender knowledge and skills. (Platform Rec. 8)

- Recognize and support gender researchers by investing in career development. (Platform Rec. 9)

- Track results; employ an experienced monitoring and evaluation (M&E) person. (Platform Rec. 3, related to Rec 30 in 2021 Synthesis)

From the 2021 synthesis the following recommendation still applies

- Improve the coverage of crosscutting themes (e.g., gender, youth) in MELIA by strengthening evaluators' relevant disciplinary skills as applied to evaluation design and implementation. (Rec. 30):

Recommended actions from the sub-study to facilitate implementing formal recommendations:

- For the Portfolio 2025-27, facilitated by the GESI Accelerator, adopt a greater focus on gender transformative research.

- Focus workplan on GESI, along with related Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) components.

- Ensure gender is integrated into SPs, as GESI are cross-cutting and essential for program success.

- Allocate 10-15% or more of the future SPs budget to GESI and ensure the appropriate allocation of GESI specialists to SPs based on their size and complexity of research activity.

- Strengthen CGIAR processes and systems to promote gender equality within the workplace.

- Develop guidance to support capacity building on GESI; provide foundational GESI training and guidance to all scientists to enhance the QoS research outputs related to GESI.

- Create documented requirements and enforceable mechanisms for gender commitments, holding centers, teams and CGIAR accountable for achieving the stated gender goals.

- The social inclusion of marginalized groups and youth should be clearly articulated, supported by well-defined terms, standard indicators, and established protocols to facilitate effective implementation.

- Greater consultation with end users/beneficiaries should be incorporated to ensure their needs and priorities are met and that they are reached and benefited by research portfolio programming.

The following lessons complement recommendations and actions (see Section 5.2 for a more detailed list):

- Supportive leadership, skilled GESI focal points, and gender researchers are crucial for prioritizing, designing, and implementing gender considerations across SG research.

- Allocating dedicated personnel and funds for GESI is essential to effectively address these issues.

- Dedicating a specific work package or Initiative to gender enables effective gender-transformative and strategic research on gender.

- Centers with larger teams of gender researchers and scientists can focus on specific subtopics that further a specialized focus on the GESI research agenda.

- Having fewer SPs (rather than more Initiatives) may be a useful structure in terms of coordination and coherence, particularly for cross-cutting themes.

- Across all SGs, the Initiative structure promoted more in-depth cross-center collaboration and the use of multidisciplinary methods to tackle interdisciplinary issues like GESI.

- At SG level, having a theory of change (ToC) that includes GESI, along with a SG-level GESI strategy, can support the systematic integration of GESI into research design and implementation.

As of February 2024 in the MR Actions Tracker, the status of implementing formal recommendations was largely 'in progress', with mixed evidence on results.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This study is conducted under the umbrella of the independent evaluations of the three CGAR **Science Groups (SGs)** (Portal), in accordance with the umbrella evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR).

One of the 15 standards and principles in the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework is "Responsiveness to gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI): Evaluation design and conduct, the commissioning of teams, and the reporting strive to fully address GDI parameters. Evaluations will consider who is engaged in the work and who benefits from it."[2] Other related standards and principles that speak to the importance of (and requirement of including a focus on) GDI, focus *on **ethics and equity**: "Evaluations consider questions of ethics in research and outcomes and integrate ethical and equity considerations in the evaluation design and implementation,"[3] and **legitimacy and participation:** "Evaluations include relevant informants and use consultative processes to prepare terms of reference and the evaluation matrix. Such processes ensure the quality of the process, including, where appropriate and feasible, representatives of end and intermediate users of evaluation outputs."

CGIAR's Performance and Results Management Framework (PRMF) further underlines the importance of recognizing GDI[6] and states that data should be disaggregated by gender for outputs and outcomes that are related to capacity development, empowerment and inclusion in the agricultural sector, smallholder

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[2] CGIAR Evaluation Framework (2022), page 4.
[3] CGIAR Evaluation Framework (2022), page 4.

farmers' benefit in agriculture, and economic benefits felt by smallholder farmers due to research conducted by CGIAR.[5] PRMF and Technical Reporting Arrangement (TRA) are operationalized through several dashboards and mechanisms.[4]

To date, several evaluations touched upon GDI within CGIAR, providing context for developing evaluation ToRs for the three SGs with Management Response (MR).[5] Weak outreach to the vulnerable poor is highlighted in the Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs, which stresses the need for a reorientation of research designs to focus more on women, the disadvantaged, and those at greatest risk of natural resource depletion, severe climate change impacts, economic deprivation, and conflicts. The 2021 Synthesis made several recommendations regarding the relevance of GD for each Action Area (also known as SG). Specific recommendations for each Action Area/SG related to GDI, as well as three CGIAR-wide cross-cutting recommendations are included with assessment of implementation status.[6]

Rec. 25: Strengthen the systematic incorporation of equity issues into research design and analysis. Diversify partners and skills—including e.g. social scientists and experts from the private sector, sustainable finance, and humanitarian sectors—to better address the root causes of sustainable development challenges. Expand socioeconomic work, including poverty and livelihood assessments, adoption studies, policy and institutional analyses, and in-depth gender and youth studies, with strengthened in-house capacity and/or additional partners.

Rec. 30: Improve the coverage of crosscutting themes (e.g., gender, youth) in MELIA by strengthening evaluators' relevant disciplinary skills as applied to evaluation design and implementation.

Rec. 39: Collaborate with Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs) and the private sector on action research that unlocks access to finance, inputs, and innovation-based enterprise opportunities for women, youth, and other marginalized groups, building on index insurance, blended (public-private and public-private-producer) finance models, and other emerging approaches.

The 2023 Evaluation of the GENDER Impact Platform (2020-22) suggested that historically, gender and the importance of roles that women play in agriculture have not always been fully understood or appreciated within CGIAR. Other issues included a lack of appreciation and advocacy for GDI priorities among CGIAR leadership, a lack of support for gender researchers, and issues related to the GENDER Platform's voice within CGIAR. Interview data suggested that reaching CGIAR leaders and researchers in the biophysical sciences, particularly men, is critical. The evaluation made 11 actionable recommendations to address the challenges, and issued a MR. Seven recommendations for action by CGIAR management are outlined below.[7]

Rec. 6.1 – 6.3: Identify bottlenecks, solutions, and mechanisms to address the uncertainty surrounding funding cycles and/or disbursal timings. Make financial decisions transparent and concrete to the Platform. Provide three-year funding cycles.

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[4] See: CGIAR Results Dashboard – gender-equality tagging, GDI Dashboard, Annual Reports.

[5] Recommendations were subject to Management Response, which is tracked in the MR Action Tracker.

[6] See Annex 6.2 for additional details.

[7] While the GENDER Impact Platform is out of scope of this evaluation, recommendations are presented in light of evaluation design of the three Science Programs. The remaining recommendations to the GENDER Impact Platform are therefore not included in the list.

Rec. 7.1: Expand the GENDER Platform's budget in line with its thematic mandate (youth and social inclusion) to achieve impact.

Rec. 8.1 – 8.3: Use metrics in individual performance assessments that assess for gender knowledge and skills. Ensure that capacity building on gender is valued in general researcher and manager performance assessments, such as gender Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). People and Culture/GDI to develop individual-level indicators that provide useful management information. Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to co-develop with GENDER Platform for the research portfolio to provide useful management information on integrating gender equality into CGIAR research and impact pathways. Engagement indicators per initiative, for example, provide information on stakeholder engagement, which can then be used to inform the Platform's engagement strategies and activities. Include engagement data in the M&E result framework (e.g., stakeholder analysis in relation to event data input, participation, and event data output).

Rec. 9.1 – 9.2: Invest in career development for gender researchers. Make available a professional, strategic, and well-resourced human resource function to all staff to help mitigate the problems associated with a highly diverse multinational organization where gender needs to be prioritized. Maximize the value of human resources by developing career streams that separately identify science and management roles, competencies, and skill level(s), and within that equally reward those with excellence in skills as those with research outputs.

Rec. 10.1: Actively invite and involve GENDER Platform in CGIAR's strategic decision-making processes, to inform critical decision-making points and engage the platform in a timely way so that the platform can adequately Inform and/or participate. For example, if gender is to be substantively integrated, gender equality needs to be addressed when projects and programs are conceptualized.

Rec. 11: Expand where the GENDER Platform is on the Organogram. Consider having the GENDER Platform report at a higher level and/or have a direct link to the executive management team. The GENDER Platform should engage with all three SGs on issues of substance yet remain under a single SG for clarity.

Under the **SG evaluation umbrella** in 2024, three thematic **recommendations** related to GDI[8], and the 2021 Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs include:

Rec. 11: To achieve a stronger focus on poverty reduction across all programs, target the rural resource-poor women and those most disadvantaged. Increase attention to understanding and addressing the equity impacts of policies, shocks, and risks faced by low-income people when adopting technologies and research solutions. (Systems Transformation SG Evaluation)

Rec. 14: Reorient work to focus more on the vulnerable poor, in particular women and the disadvantaged and those at greatest risk from natural resource depletion, severe climate change impacts, economic deprivation, and conflicts. (Resilient Agrifood Systems SG Evaluation)

Rec. 18: Increase inclusiveness in defining product profiles, executing programs, and delivering outputs, to better contextualize variety development and tailor research to diverse agricultural communities and to the needs of children, youth, women, and other at-risk or marginalized groups. (Genetic Innovation SG Evaluation)

As of February 2024 in the MR Actions Tracker, the status of implementing recommendations was largely 'in progress', with data indicating mixed results.

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[8] Recommendations were subject to MR, which is tracked in the MR Action Tracker.

1.2 Context

In 2019, CGIAR issued an open call for a new Gender Equality in Food Systems Research Platform. In 2020, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) hosted the Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results (GENDER) Platform. Following the One CGIAR transition and the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy (the 2030 Strategy), the GENDER Platform began a transition in 2021. It was re-launched as a CGIAR Impact Platform in October 2022 with an expanded mandate focused not only on gender equality but also on youth and social inclusion (CGIAR GENDER Platform Evaluation Report). As of October 2024, the CGIAR GENDER Platform "synthesizes and amplifies research, fills gaps, builds capacity, and sets directions to enable CGIAR to have maximum impact on gender equality, opportunities for youth, and social inclusion in agriculture and food systems."[9]

The Responding to Evolving Megatrends Interim Report: CGIAR Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion Impact Area Report (2023) emphasizes the importance of addressing gender and social inclusion (GESI) in the SGs. These include more women facing food and economic insecurity and experiencing lower levels of personal safety compared to three or four years ago. At the same time, the number of youths not enrolled in education or training (NEET) or employed is rising, particularly in low-income countries. These findings highlight the pressing need to address gender, youth, and social inclusion more adequately.

Since 2025. CGIAR has started the transition from SGs and Impact Area Platforms to Science Programs (SPs) and Accelerators to implement the 2025-30 Portfolio. A merger between the GENDER Impact Platform and HER+ Initiative evolved into the GESI Accelerator. The GESI Accelerator will implement its own agenda-setting research for CGIAR and work with the SPs to create a coherent and relevant GESI research portfolio (CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio Narrative). The focus would include identifying and filling evidence gaps, guiding CGIAR and partners' research agendas, integrating lessons learned, and tracking results from gender research across CGIAR. Each SP is intended to include research capabilities on gender and social inclusion.

2 Scope and Study Questions

This study is conducted under the umbrella of the independent evaluations of the three CGIAR **SGs** (portal), in accordance with the umbrella evaluation ToR. A designated evaluation question on gender effectiveness across the SGs was included in the ToRs: SGs Cluster Evaluations: **How well were the cross-cutting themes of gender and climate change[10] integrated into design and implementation (tagging)?**

The GDI sub-study used this question as the starting point to identify areas of inquiry with additional evaluation questions to provide an overview across the SGs and Initiatives regarding three areas: (1) approach and progress on GESI, particularly in the context of the 2021 synthesis recommendations and gender-equality tagging; (2) highlight examples of achievements and challenges; and (3) understand lessons learned. Table 1 presents ten questions by evaluation criteria, to explore gender and social inclusion as a cross-cutting theme within the SG cluster evaluation.

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[9] See: https://gender.cgiar.org/about-us.

[10] The focus of this report is on gender and social inclusion. Climate change is outside the scope of this report. Separate Knowledge Product for climate change to be available at SG Evaluations Portal.

Eventually: the following questions guided the inquiry: **How well was gender integrated into the design and implementation of SG portfolios for 2022-24?**

Table 1. Questions for assessing GESI across SGs by evaluation criteria

Criterion	GESI sub-study review questions
Relevance	1. To what extent is the SG/Initiative GESI sensitive and responsive to context? 2. To what extent does the SG/Initiative respond to stakeholder needs and priorities, including the most vulnerable and marginalized? 3. To what extent does the SG/Initiative respond to the needs of its target population groups? Are there population groups that should be targeted that are not?
Coherence	4. To what extent does the SG/Initiative co-ordinate and co-operate with the CGIAR GENDER Platform? 5. To what extent do SGs/Initiatives concept of GESI align?
Effectiveness	6. How well was the cross-cutting theme of gender integrated into design and implementation (e.g., tagging)? 7. Is the SG/Initiative achieving its GESI objectives and results, and how? 8. To what extent did GESI stakeholders participate meaningfully[11] in the design and implementation of the SG/Initiative?
Efficiency	9. Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise) allocated strategically to achieve gender and social inclusion objectives?
Quality of Science (QoS)	10. How well are GESI concerns reflected in the outputs? 11. What is the quality of GESI research outputs?

3 Methods and Key Concepts

To answer the study questions above, the sub-study used a mixed-methods approach, including semi-structured qualitative interviews and an analysis of CGIAR's quantitative data (e.g., performance indicators). Understanding key concepts behind the methods and study focus is essential.

3.1 Key Concepts and Focus

The sub-study evaluation of gender and social inclusion in the SGs aimed to provide a broad perspective across Initiatives regarding their approach and progress on GESI since the formation of Initiatives. A specific focus was placed on exploring the 2021 synthesis recommendations and the use of gender-equality tagging. Specifically, the study sought to understand:

- How gender and social inclusion-specific recommendations from the 2021 Synthesis were implemented at SG level and in 33 Initiatives.

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[11] Including equitable representation, agency and rights to contribute to decision-making.

- The extent to which gender was integrated into design and implementation through gender tagging, scoring, and targeting (concepts described in Section 3.2).

- Lessons that can be learned from addressing gender across 33 Initiatives as they transition into SPs.

Additionally, the sub-study served as a pilot for evaluating gender and inclusion guidelines, which were under development at the request of funders to operationalize the GDI principle within the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework (2022).

Evaluating each Initiative under three SGs individually for GESI was beyond the scope of this sub-study. However, several related deep-dive and case studies in specific Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS), ST, and Genetic Innovations (GI) Initiatives were carried out (see Table 2).

Table 2. Deep dive topics for each SG as related to GESI

ST	RAFS	GI
Case study on transformational agroecology-natural group of Initiatives, aligned to the CGIAR Regenerative Landscapes and Agroecosystems (Agroecology, nature-positive solutions, one health, and other approaches) with a focus on the following Initiatives: INIT 31: Agroecology INIT 32: Low emission food systems INIT 26: Gender equality	Deep dive on social inclusion and participatory research processes with a focus on the following Initiatives: INIT 11: Excellence in Agronomy INIT 15: Aquatic Foods INIT 16: Resilient Cities INIT 17: Sustainable Animal Productivity INIT 21: Diversification in East and Southern Africa	Gender Strategy for GI SG INIT 5: Market Intelligence

The following key concepts apply to the study:

Gender equality tagging – it was operationalized and implemented across all 33 CGIAR Initiatives in 2022, forming an anchor for evaluating gender and social inclusion in the SGs. Since 2022 was a transitional year between CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) and the establishment of One CGIAR and Initiatives, the accuracy of gender-equality tagging by the Initiatives was examined at SG level. GE tagging assesses CGIAR **outputs** (capacity sharing for development, innovation development, knowledge products, other outputs) and **outcomes** (capacity change, innovation use, policy change, other outcomes) and assigns them a one of three categories:

- **Not targeted (0)**: The activity has been screened against the marker but has not been found to target any of the CGIAR's gender equality objectives.

- **Significant (1)**: Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the activity.

- **Principal (2):** Gender equality is the main objective of the activity and is fundamental in its design and expected outcome.[12]

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[12] See: https://www.cgiar.org/food-security-impact/results-dashboard/ (See link to Glossary and Results Framework).

While gender tagging has limitations (such as accuracy), the CGIAR-wide tag enables a general understanding of gender activities and results across CGIAR.[13]

Enhanced gender scoring - the Initiative's gender score is determined during the proposal stage by the individuals who developed the proposal. The GENDER Impact Platform then reviews each score and assigns a final gender score based on the quality of gender integration. The categories were adapted from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) gender equality policy marker and requirements: for each score:[14]

- **Gender blind (0):** (1) a gender analysis was conducted; (2) its findings are used to ensure at minimum that the Initiative activities/intervention do no harm and do not reinforce gender inequalities; and (3) gender disaggregated data is collected.

- **Gender accommodative/aware (1A):** (2) gender equality is an objective, but not the main one; (2) the Initiative/project includes at least two explicit gender-specific outputs and (adequate) funding and resources are available; and (3) data and indicators are disaggregated by gender and analyzed to explain potential gender variations and inequalities.

- **Gender responsive (1B):** (2) at least one explicit gender equality outcome; (2) the Initiative/project team has resident gender expertise or capacity; and (3) the Initiative/project includes indicators and monitors participation of and differential benefits to diverse men and women.

- **Gender principal[15] (2):** (1) gender equality is the main objective of the Initiative/project and is fundamental in its design and expected results.

The gender equality tagging system is used for micro-level monitoring within Initiatives. The enhanced gender scoring system tracks CGIAR's focus on gender at a macro-level. Although both use similar scales, they address different CGIAR requirements.

Gender targets and quotas. A **gender quota** is defined as a "positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balance participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or number of seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria."[16] In the context of international development, gender quotas are used to ensure that a specific percentage of program participants or beneficiaries are women. Within CGIAR, respondents referred to gender targets rather than gender quotas. The term gender target was used to express a goal of increasing the inclusion of women. However, the target was not consistently established or based on a specific rationale across or within Initiatives.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Aligned to the mixed-methods design and in line with the CGIAR Evaluation Framework, each SG evaluation described a gender-responsive process that was inclusive, participatory, and respectful of stakeholders.

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[13] A similar gender tagging system is used by several UN organizations as an internal tool to monitor gender integration. For example, UNICEF uses a gender equality marker to track resource allocations and expenditures in relation to program results that promote gender equality.[13]

[14] See page 4 of CGIAR Initiative Annual Technical Reports.

[15] Gender principal is commonly referred to as gender transformative.

[16] European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender quotas* [Glossary]. In *SD Glossary*. Retrieved August 2025, from https://eige.europa.eu

The approach and methodology for each SG engaged various viewpoints, leading to deeper insights into the data, which then informed more robust empirical findings.

3.2.1 Data Collection

a) Document review: a desk review of gender-related materials provided by the SGs and complemented by publicly available documents was conducted, which included reviewing several key documents:

- Proposal or strategy documents (e.g., GI SG Gender Strategy).

- CGIAR Annual Reports 2022-23; and selected Initiative annual reports and inception briefs.

- Initiative level staffing for GDI; plans of results and budgets.

- Three TOCs at the SG level and selected Results Framework or other documents with articulated inputs, activities and outputs, desired outcomes, and impacts (Initiative level).

- Previous independent or other evaluations, studies, and impact assessments (e.g., GENDER Impact Platform Evaluation, Genebank Platform).

Key informants and SG evaluation teams supplied numerous other relevant documents.

b) Key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs): for each of the three SG evaluations, semi-structured virtual and face-to-face interviews were conducted with internal and external stakeholders during field missions, using a gender-focused interview guide.[17] Selected key informants were interviewed about GESI components of the evaluation (see Annex 1 for a list of informants).

c) CGIAR performance and other data: The CGIAR Result Dashboard provides: (1) performance data; and (2) data on gender-equality tagging, which can be disaggregated in several ways, including at Initiative and SG levels. Data from these sources formed the basis of the quantitative analysis. The following data sources were analyzed:

- Key databases, including CGIAR Results Dashboard and GDI Dashboard.

- CGIAR Results Dashboard gender-equality tagging and Initiative results data (outputs, outcomes as part of selected case studies and deep dives).

- GENDER Impact Platform gender-equality tagging review and Initiative proposal review, and GENDER Platform's review on the accuracy of gender tagging.

- Related elements of the PRMS platform .

d) Survey: An online survey conducted with internal CGIAR and external stakeholders (e.g., government–national and sub-national, representatives of National Agricultural Research and Extension/Innovation Systems, university/research organizations) included questions to assess equity and inclusion dimensions.[18]

3.2.2   Data Analysis

The qualitative and quantitative data findings address the primary evaluation question: *How well was gender integrated into the design and implementation of the SGs' Portfolio 2022-24?* Quantitative data

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[17] See SG evaluation reports and Annexes for details.
[18] Survey report: https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/science-groups-evaluations

analysis highlights general features and trends, while qualitative methods provide a more in-depth understanding of these findings. Three primary quantitative data sources were analyzed.

- **CGIAR Results Dashboard** provides data on gender-equality tagging, which was disaggregated at SG and Initiative level to understand better the extent to which gender was: (1) not targeted; (2) significant; or (3) a principal focus of the various outputs and outcomes tracked. Data analysis determined whether certain SGs and/or Initiatives had greater significance or principal focus on gender. Furthermore, an analysis was conducted on internal Platform data, which reflected gender scores on Initiative proposals, and reports that assessed the accuracy of 2022 gender tagging.

- **GDI Dashboard**[19] data were assessed to understand the extent to which "GDI is mainstreamed into CGIAR monitoring, evaluation and learning activities to enhance oversight for GDI mainstreaming."[20] Data were further analyzed to understand the extent to which teams are gender-balanced and include GDI-related experience.

- **Online survey** conducted under SG evaluations, with 350 internal and external stakeholders, included a related question and disaggregation. Results are presented in this report.

The qualitative data included primary data collected through KIIs and secondary data obtained through a document review. Quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources were triangulated to ensure the result credibility.

3.3   Considerations and Limitations

The limitations reflect those of the SG evaluations (Portal) and are also relevant to this sub-study.

- **Inclusion of gender and social inclusion as a cross-cutting theme.** Each SG evaluation included gender and social inclusion as a cross-cutting theme; however, these aspects were only assessed at high (SG level) and detailed (case study or deep dive) levels across all SGs and Initiatives. Given this, this sub-study triangulated information from broader and more detailed levels.

- **Limited research team and time in the field**. The GESI team under SG evaluations consisted of one GESI expert and two experts to cover GESI-related case study and deep-dive.[21] The fisheries' gender and social inclusion expert participated in one field mission to Ghana.[22]

- **Limited questions**. Only one question related to gender and inclusion was asked in KIIs.

- **Evaluation guidance in pilot stage**: One recommendation from the 2021 Synthesis Report was to improve the coverage of cross-cutting themes (e.g., gender, youth) in program Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) by strengthening evaluators' relevant disciplinary skills as applied to evaluation design and implementation. The MR action plan included development of methodological guidelines on designing and delivering evaluations relevant and appropriate to gender and youth issues to be included as part of the new 2022 CGIAR Evaluation Policy. Piloting a beta version of the draft gender and inclusion evaluation guidelines presented an additional

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[19] See: https://www.cgiar.org/how-we-work/accountability/gender-diversity-and-inclusion/dashboards/ accessed May 2024.

[20] GDI Action Workplace Plan (2023-24).

[21] Available upon request from Evaluation Function of the IAES.

[22] See blog: https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/news/insights-ghana-field-mission-cgiar-nares-collaboration.

challenge in evaluating GEYSI and GDI in the CGIAR context, as it was an evolving approach that lacked documented clarity.[23]

Considering the limitations, measures were taken to ensure the robustness and credibility of the sub-study:

- **Study team composition:** The gender and inclusion review team brought extensive experience into GESI**,** represented diverse regions, and offered complementary backgrounds.

- **Triangulation across data levels**. To address the uneven treatment of GESI across SG evaluations, the team used triangulation by systematically analyzing findings at SG level, case study level, and relevant Initiative level. This method enabled the team to develop consistent insights by cross-checking data from multiple sources, thereby improving the credibility of their conclusions.

- **Strategic use of limited field resources**. Although direct field engagement was limited, close coordination with case study experts, along with the use of field notes, transcripts, and debriefings, allowed for a thorough interpretation of findings despite the limited physical presence.

- **Mining data**. Although the interview protocols included only one question specifically about gender and inclusion, the team analyzed responses to other thematic questions for implicit and indirect references to GSI and GDI issues. This broader analysis allowed the team to identify additional relevant data that might have been missed if only explicit responses were considered.

- **Engaging with evolving evaluation guidelines.[24]** Recognizing piloting of the gender and inclusion evaluation guidelines, the team adopted a learning-focused and adaptable approach. They documented challenges, identified gaps and improvements in applying the draft guidelines. At the same time, the team leveraged established good practices from other CGIAR work and external literature related to gender and inclusion evaluation to supplement the developing internal guidance.

- **Maintaining analytical rigor and reflexivity.** Throughout the process, the team engaged in critical reflexivity—regularly questioning assumptions, being transparent about methodological limitations, and differentiating between evidence-based findings and interpretive insights. This approach helped uphold integrity in both data analysis and the final report.

4 Study Findings by Questions

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 To what extent is the SG/Initiative GESI sensitive and responsive to context?

The 2024 SG cluster evaluation found that approximately 80% of both internal CGIAR and external partners agree or strongly agree that CGIAR has clearly articulated its strategies and interventions for system transformation in terms of gender and inclusion. Notably, within the RAFS SG, the evaluation team was unable to identify a clear pattern of response to its specific recommendation. The GESI case study found that social inclusion could be better integrated into research design and programming to reach the poorest. For example, results for youth and social inclusion, although documented in the evaluation deep

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[23] See blog: https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/news/behind-evaluations-science-groups-piloting-guidelines-evaluate-gender-and-inclusion.

[24] To be available on the Evaluation Guidelines Portal: https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/guidelines .

dive conducted in Ghana, were undifferentiated and grouped under the gender tag. The evaluation team found that social inclusion lacked a clear definition, standard indicators, or a conceptual framework.

The ST SG portfolio aimed to differentiate itself from past CGIAR work. They did so by establishing GESI as an overarching priority that Initiatives should intentionally integrate and advance through their work and to more fundamentally re-orient research for catalyzing the transformation of food, land, and water systems toward more sustainable and equitable outcomes. However, like the RAFS SG social inclusion case study, the ST SG deep dive case study noted a tendency to overlook the poorest populations.

Within GI SG's Market Intelligence and Seed Equal Initiatives reflect commitment to GESI, recognizing that different groups may have different preferences for crop traits. As such, gender-related trait preferences are integrated into product development. The [Global Market Intelligence Platform](#) (GloMIP) incorporated 52 gendered development indicators into an offering of over 200 indicators. However, the 2024 GI SG Cluster Evaluation reveals mixed opinions among stakeholders regarding the consideration of GESI in the design of Initiatives. Market surveys collect preference Information from representatives of end-users, but it Is unclear whether the most vulnerable groups are adequately represented.

Gender targeting and tagging

Ensuring that women and other vulnerable groups are reached is an important first step in making programming gender-sensitive and socially inclusive. While some Initiatives conduct gender-targeting, the study identified three inherent challenges in that process. No standard gender target is used and there is no standard method to determine the target across Initiatives. Finally, there is no mention of setting targets related to youth or social inclusion. The following three paragraphs illustrate these three findings.

The study identified a few cases where targets were established for specific groups. For example, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) recognized the need to support widows in participating in the biochar processing enterprise. Some Initiatives under RAFS and ST SGs, suggest that at least 30 to 40% of participants should be women, and in some cases, up to 50% (e.g., OneHealth, SAPLING, the ST Agroecology Initiatives). While targets were set, several Initiatives noted challenges in reaching them.

A few Initiatives conducted preliminary research on gender to guide their targets. An example of a quantitative approach was used in the GI Market Intelligence Initiative, where a 70:30 target was set based on population statistics for men and women farmers in that geographic area.

Some ST SG Initiatives conducted awareness training to support targeting women. For instance, under SAPLING, a social media campaign was launched to promote a positive image of women working in the livestock sector in Tanzania. At the same time, the deep dive case study found that the poorest are rarely involved in research activities for two reasons: they have interests different from the set research activities and/or they lack access to the resources needed to participate in research (e.g., they do not have land or are not part of the community network).

Most respondents perceive that gender tagging of the Initiatives is useful: 77% agreed or strongly agreed that tagging of Initiatives during the design phase helps researchers focus on equity, inclusion, and gender. Additionally, 63% agree or strongly agree that gender tagging directed attention to rural, resource-poor women and those who are most disadvantaged.

Figure 1. Gender tagging of Initiatives
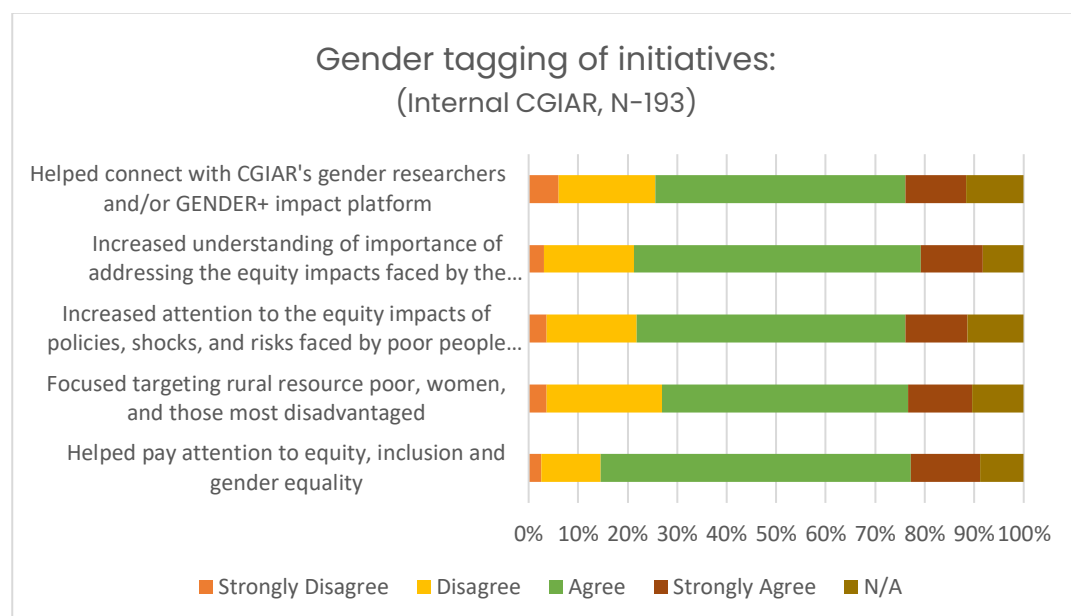
Key Findings and Conclusions

Results show mixed progress in the SG's implementation of the 2021 recommendations on GESI. Findings suggest that gender tagging is perceived as a valuable tool for promoting GESI relevance. Stakeholders believe that gender tagging helped the CGIAR SGs/Initiative to focus more on GESI goals. However, targeting women and other vulnerable groups is not done systematically, and when it is, the focus tends to be on women. There is no tagging or targeting system for youth and social inclusion, and consequently, these areas receive less attention compared to gender, resulting in the exclusion of paying attention to the most vulnerable groups. These findings suggest a disconnect between staff perceptions of how well gender and social inclusion have been addressed and the actual outcomes are achieved in these Initiatives for GESI.

4.1.2   To what extent does the SG/Initiative respond to stakeholders' needs and priorities?

To answer this question, the evaluation team gathered data from three stakeholder perspectives.

- **Decision-makers are the upstream actors** and include funders such as government agencies, national agriculture research services, private foundations, and researchers within large research entities and universities.

- **Implementers are the downstream actors** and include community-based organizations, agricultural extension agencies, national agricultural research services, and the private sector.

- **Beneficiaries are the intended users of the intervention and/or its results**, and include farmers, women, and the poor.[25]

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[25] McGuire et al. (2024) distinguish three types of stakeholders each with a specific role.

Influence of decision-makers and implementers

Survey data gathered from decision-makers and implementers show that a large majority (over 75%) agree or strongly agree that the principles of equity and inclusion guided their engagement. Data strongly indicated that Initiatives should respond to implementers' needs and priorities concerning gender and inclusion. Initiatives described collaborating with partners to understand the local context, support decision-making, and implement tools and research related to GESI. Two examples include:

- Within the ST SG evaluation case study on agroecology, respondents unanimously noted that key stakeholders were involved in the country-level prioritization processes. The case study notes that 1,346 food system actors (42% are female and 58% male) were engaged in co-developing agroecological innovations. Some of the stakeholders involved in the prioritization process included people from beneficiary communities and civil society organizations.

- Within the RAFS SG, Initiatives engaged in demand-driven national stakeholder consultation surveys or processes to co-design research with key stakeholders and partners, including the National Agriculture Research and Extension Services (NARES), the private sector, NGOs, farmer associations, universities, and government organizations and ministries.

Despite some good examples of engaging with gender and inclusion, others tell a different story.

- An SG respondent explained that the group's dependence on donor funding hampers its efforts toward equity and inclusion. They cited an example where donors influence crop choices by funding research on commercial or commodity crops, ignoring the implementers' desire to promote more underutilized crops. Such crops would particularly benefit vulnerable groups and marginalized smallholder farmers. Although donors agree that equity and inclusion are important, their focus on funding commercial or commodity crops is unlikely to support those goals.

- The Gender Equality Initiative held consultative workshops with stakeholders from government, academia, One CGIAR, farmers' association, private sector, CSOs, and international NGOs to understand constraining gender norms. However, the report does not mention any consultation with women beneficiaries directly (Gender Equality Annual Report, 2023).

Engaging Beneficiaries

The last example above, which discussed the Gender Equality Initiative, leads into a conversation about how CGIAR engages with its intended users/beneficiaries to identify their needs and priorities. While the results are mixed regarding engagement, several findings suggest a general lack of data and information on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Some data indicate that this issue is related to insufficient emphasis or capacity to involve vulnerable populations in the research design process. Specific examples are provided below.

- The ISDC Review of Initiative Proposals (2021 and 2022) noted a lack of clarity regarding how women, youth, and other marginalized groups had been or would be consulted directly regarding their needs, capacities, and constraints.

- Within RAFS SG, strategies for including the most vulnerable and resource-poor in scaling had not always been considered (e.g., only farmers of a certain size were considered for a scaling initiative). GI noted a need to continue to build in and refine effective feedback loops between Seed Equal and Market Intelligence Initiatives, to inform product profiles and variety replacement strategies, particularly regarding adhering to the 'do no harm' principle.

- The Ghana deep dive identified that the co-design processes of three Initiatives excluded smallholders, rural women, youth, indigenous people, and other marginalized groups.

- In 2024, two years after the ISDC review, data indicates that the Initiatives did work with beneficiaries selected by the farming communities, community-based farmers' organizations, and partner entities (nucleus farmers, commercial farmers, and aggregators).

- In the Agroecology Initiative, research trials on farms and the beneficiary community provides views/inputs, enabling the participation of traditionally under-represented groups (e.g., women, youth, the poor) in the priority-setting process and subsequent joint research activities.

Notably, while some Initiatives conducted preliminary gender analysis work to understand the context, the inclusion of gender and the most vulnerable groups is largely assumed to occur during the co-design phase with farmers. Some examples include:

- The Digital Innovation Initiative conducted gender research to understand how technology/innovation affects women and indigenous peoples, informing the mainstreaming of gender and inclusion (Agroecology case study, 2024).

- In the RAFS SG, specifically the Excellence in Agronomy (EiA) Initiative, specific gender needs were identified during on-farm trials of soybean varieties with farmers (both men and women) in Ghana.

- SAPLING conducted preliminary gender analysis work and conducted research on youth to understand key differences among young men and women involved in livestock production (e.g., young women and men have a lot of challenges in common initially, but men overcome these challenges as they age).

- GI involves representatives of farmers and end-users to contribute specifically to the identification of market segments and product profile design, recognizing that different groups may value different crop traits (e.g. via a Market Survey). For example, GI identified gender trait preference among rice producers using G+ breeding tools by interviewing men, young men, women, and young women farmers, which indicated gender heterogeneity in relation to varietal and trait preferences (Frimpong et al., 2024). However, the GI evaluation noted a lack of a clear variety lifecycle management strategy, which may particularly affect vulnerable communities (e.g., exclusion of under-utilized crops).

Key Findings and Conclusions

Donors' needs are often met, implementers' needs are frequently met, and beneficiaries' needs are sometimes met, while at times their needs remain unknown. Beneficiaries tend to be indirectly consulted through gender analysis or represented through organized groups rather than involved directly.

Regarding the 2021 Synthesis Report recommendations, GI SG made progress in developing tools and processes to increase inclusiveness by defining product profiles that meet the specific needs of youth and women. ST and RAFS made progress in strengthening the systematic incorporation of equity issues into research design through gender analysis work and consultations with local partners on GESI.

4.1.3 To what extent does the SG/Initiative respond to the needs of its target population groups? Are there population groups that should be targeted that are not?

In designing and implementing the SG portfolio, social inclusion considerations for identifying the vulnerable and marginalized were limited to beneficiaries chosen based on specific criteria, which may have overlooked the most vulnerable individuals. For example, groups without assets are often excluded

from research activities. Below are four concrete examples of how the most vulnerable are overlooked when establishing population groups.

- In Ghana, the Aquatic Foods (AqFS) Initiative consulted with community leadership to select or nominate beneficiaries. The eligibility criteria for beneficiaries included having evidence of permanent residence of at least five years and proof of alternative income-generating activity. Those criteria excluded or screened a large portion of the most vulnerable groups.

- In the EiA Soy Use Case, aggregators, nucleus farmers, and commercial farmers maintained databases of smallholder farmers, aiming to expand their reach to more people within their networks. However, the database may not include marginalized or vulnerable groups.

- The MFS Initiative relied on farmers' organizations in communities to select beneficiaries, leaving out farmers who were not members of these organizations.

- In the EiA and MFS Initiatives, land ownership is a criterion for on-farm trials. In the EiA Soybean Use Case, farm size of no more than one hectare was a criterion for on-farm demonstrations. In the MFS, smallholder farmers with a farm size of three hectares to a minimum of one acre (0.405 hectares) were used for on-farm demonstrations. Furthermore, a Work Package (WP) under the MFS Initiative limited the number of livestock to eight for beneficiary households involved in testing fermented and dried maize stripping as feed. This means that households with less than eight livestock were not included.

Once population groups are established, data suggests that gender is then addressed to varying degrees. Below are two examples.

- In Ghana, the EiA and MFS Initiatives developed approaches that promoted gender equality by providing specific planting dates for women, who are primarily responsible for planting, harvesting, and post-harvest processing. Women prefer soybean varieties that do not mature at the same time as maize, as the early-maturing seeds coincide with maize harvesting.

- However, CGIAR's engagement with partners specifically working on gender did not come up in interviews with RAFS or GI SG stakeholders.

- Within the RAFS SG in Vietnam, it was emphasized that gender is not a primary focus for national and local CGIAR partners, who have limited capacity and lack specific approaches to mainstreaming gender issues. For example, partners involved in country listening sessions provided feedback on four out of five CGIAR impact areas, which overlooked gender.[26]

Key Findings and Conclusions

Evidence is mixed on how well the SG/Initiative addresses the needs of its target population groups. However, findings clearly indicate that certain population groups should be targeted but are currently overlooked.

The inclusion of social considerations for vulnerable and marginalized groups was limited to beneficiaries selected based on specific criteria, which may have excluded the most vulnerable individuals. For example, groups without assets are often excluded from research activities. After defining target populations, their needs were addressed with varying degrees of gender sensitivity. Sometimes, there is a gap between the

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[26] Find blog from Vietnam field work [here](#)

higher levels of gender integration in CGIAR's plans and strategies—such as those incorporated into their work plans—and the less or non-existent focus on these issues among national and local CGIAR partners.

4.2 Coherence

4.2.1 To what extent does the SG/Initiative coordinate and cooperate with the CGIAR GENDER Platform?

Per the current CGIAR structure (as of June 2024), the SGs themselves do not provide specific support or guidance for gender, youth, or vulnerable groups (apart from work done in WPs and by the gender focal points). Instead, this is done *via* the GENDER Impact Platform.

The role of the GENDER Impact Platform is to synthesize and amplify research, fill gaps, build capacity, and set directions to help CGIAR maximize its impact on gender equality, youth opportunities, and social inclusion in agriculture and food systems. The Platform organizes its work into three interconnected modules: evidence, methods, and alliances. The Platform functions as a demand-driven advisory service and supports any Initiative, center, or country.

All three SGs showed meaningful interactions and strong collaboration with the GENDER Impact Platform, which is widely regarded and used by staff and partners as a resource to support capacity development and funding for gender-related work. The GENDER Platform was highly valued as it galvanized a community of practice to exchange ideas and learn about gender and social inclusion. For instance, Initiatives may consult the Platform when considering the use of a gender tool. The Platform also provides funding through grants to support Initiatives working on topics related to GESI. The Platform aims to be fair in distributing support *via* grants, such as avoiding situations where a center wins more than one grant or monopolizes resources. However, that has become more complicated to manage with Initiatives.

Three factors influence engagement between Initiatives and the GENDER Platform. The gender scoring of proposals may have helped support Initiatives' interaction with the Platform. Results from the online survey show that 56% of respondents believe that gender tagging of Initiatives during the design phase has helped them connect with CGIAR's gender researchers and/or GENDER Impact Platform. Some key informants expressed that the Platforms' mandate—specifically that they exist to support the Initiatives—is not clear to everyone, suggesting that understanding that mandate would likely increase interaction. Finally, interactions with Impact Platforms are often personal, dependent on leads and staff within the Initiatives.

The 2023 annual CGIAR GENDER Conference, organized by the Gender Impact Area Platform, also highlighted the need to advance the gender research agenda to boost gender-transformative research and provide solutions to gender inequalities, exacerbated by the climate change crisis and other shocks and stressors.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The Gender Impact Platform is recognized and widely used as a vital resource by Initiatives promoting gender integration, fostering coordinated efforts with the CGIAR GENDER Platform. Internally, all SGs reported meaningful engagement and robust collaboration with the GENDER Impact Platform.

4.2.2 To what extent do the SGs/Initiatives' concept of gender and social inclusion align?

While gender focal points bring similar understandings of GESI concepts, interpretation and application of these concepts vary across different sectors and Initiatives: social scientists often see gender as a culturally constructed role, whereas biophysical scientists tend to view it more simply as female. Historically, CRPs lacked a clear definition of gender, and this ambiguity still exists. The ISDC Review of Proposals (2021 and 2022) showed a wide range in how Initiatives define gender, from using it as a term for women in general to describing women's leadership.

Gender-transformative approaches have a specific definition (page 4 of the Gender Equality Initiative):

> "[applies] gender-transformative approaches to address harmful norms, by bundling innovations for women's empowerment, by leveraging social protection to increase women's access to and control over resources, and by promoting inclusive governance and policies for increased resilience" (*HER+ Initiative Proposal*).

While several Initiatives in RAFS and GI SGs report using gender transformative approaches, they do not apply them according to this definition. For example, some approaches were designed to work around visible gender gaps to reach and benefit women, which is gender accommodative, rather than addressing structural barriers to empower women or transform gender attitudes, norms, and power relations, which would be gender transformative (Cole et al., 2020).

Generally, the understanding of concepts related to intersectionality, youth, and social inclusion was limited to specific Initiatives with gender focal points and dedicated resources for GESI (e.g., (AqFS, SAPLING, Seed Equal, Asian Mega Deltas (AMD)). The ISDC Review (2022) identified gaps in GESI. For instance, the Review noted that "women and youth are bundled together in impact statements although each group may have very different prerogatives…" and "youth could also include men, not just women".[30]

Furthermore, a standard approach to integrating GESI in Initiatives is lacking, and the incorporation of these themes varies considerably. A range of proposed gender scores and related requirements, indicates an absence of focus or a standard method for addressing gender. Additionally, approaches to GESI lack consistency across Initiatives within SGs and between SGs. Only GI SG launched a strategy in 2024 (here), other two did not.

Diverse cultural backgrounds and existing gender research traditions in CGIAR centers also significantly contributed to identifying disparities in how GESI are applied.

Finally, some Initiatives showed a limited focus on intersectionality, mainly through strong GESI strategies. For example, SAPLING recognized young women who experience the intersection of gender and age as a particularly vulnerable group. They made targeted efforts to engage young women veterinarian graduates in developing their businesses.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The lack of clear gender definition under the CRPs continued with the SGs. Without gender focal points, concepts such as intersectionality, youth, social inclusion, and gender bring different understandings to various groups. As a result, there is no standard way to apply these concepts. Findings indicate that the SGs/Initiatives' ideas about GESI often do not align, and there is low coherence of GESI within CGIAR SGs.

4.3   Effectiveness

4.3.1   How well was the cross-cutting theme of gender integrated into design and implementation?

The 2021 Synthesis Report recommended enhancing the integration of equity issues into research design and analysis. This specifically targeted diversifying partners and skills, as well as expanding socio-economic work. Gender tagging is used in Initiatives during both the design and implementation phases through a gender scoring and tagging system.

Gender Scoring

The gender scoring system for Initiatives provides a structured approach to addressing equity issues during the design stage. Of the 33 Initiatives (see Figure 2 and Figure 3), the Gender Equality Initiative is the only one classified as a gender principal Initiative (3%). Meanwhile, three are gender-blind (10%), 13 are gender-accommodative or aware (42%), and 14 are gender-responsive (45%). Notably, ST SG was with the only gender-focused Initiative. Several gender-blind Initiatives are found among RAFS and GI. Most Initiatives fall in the middle range of scores, with most either gender accommodative/aware or gender responsive.

Figure 2. Gender proposal score (N)
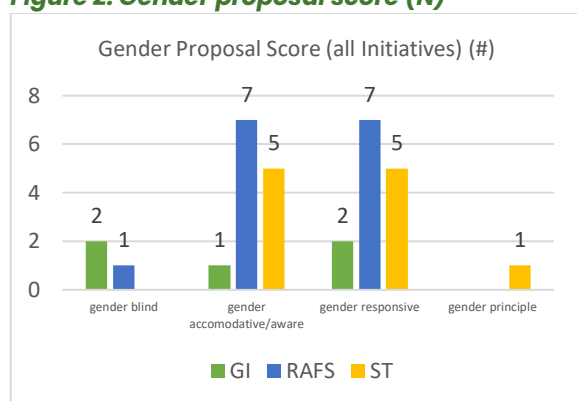
Figure 3. Gender proposal score (%)
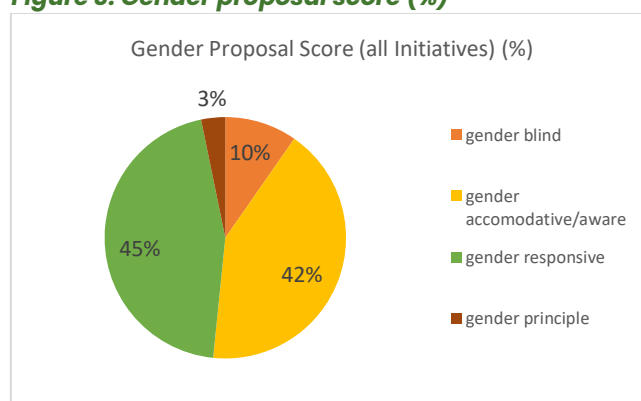
Initiative proposals required gender analysis. Several Initiatives across SGs referenced gender assessments to guide interventions for mainstreaming gender and inclusion. For instance, within RAFS SG (e.g., Planet Health, SAPLING, AMD, Ukama Ustawi, Digital Innovation initiatives), activities included awareness campaigns, understanding the impact of gender norms on women's involvement in livestock, assessing climate adaptation among Khmer women, promoting women's empowerment, identifying constraints and opportunities for women and youth in agriculture, and researching how technology affects women and indigenous peoples. While all three SGs showed examples of quality gender analysis, it was unclear if each Initiative conducted a proper gender analysis or if the quality was consistently high, as no standard gender analysis report was produced.

Analyzing the Initiative's proposals reveals three reasons for not addressing GESI. First, some Initiatives believe they don't need to focus on these issues because another Initiative already covers them. Second, some proposals overlooked GESI during the design phase, resulting in no specific outputs on these topics and, consequently, little emphasis on them during implementation. Third, the absence of standard SG-level indicators to monitor and evaluate progress on GESI led to gender issues being overlooked.

Some Initiatives allocated specific funding, established specific WPs focused on GESI, and/or recruited a gender focal point. Within GI Seed Equal, WP6 (entitled Scaling equitable access to quality seed: reaching the unreached with quality seeds and traits) was added to support gender integration across the Initiative WPs after recognizing the Initiative needed someone to lead streamlining gender work across the other WPs, which are each a different crop. Within RAFS SG, in SAPLING, gender integration is considered across WPs through an integrated research approach analyzing the impact of gender empowerment on the livestock sector, as well as a dedicated WP[27] to lead strategic gender work with a specific research agenda aimed at designing transformative interventions to support all WPs.[28] Similarly, under AMD, gender has a dedicated WP[29] and it is also mainstreamed across other WPs.[30] In SAPLING in Vietnam, gender was planned and integrated into their WPs and was combined with a focus on ethnicity. Synergies were also planned and implemented with the Gender Equality Initiative.

Overall, Initiatives collected gender-disaggregated data, which was a requirement in the proposal's gender scoring system. An *ad hoc* review of qualitative and quantitative analyses suggests that Initiatives generally separated data on men and women. However, it was not possible to find gender data aggregations at SG level. How data and their analysis informed a broader approach to gender at SG level remains unclear. For instance, there were no GESI indicators consistently reported by SGs or Initiatives.

Regardless of its Initiative level gender score, each Initiative output and outcome also received a gender equality tag,[31] essentially a metric assessing how well gender was integrated into a specific activity. Outputs and outcomes are scored as not targeted (0), significant (1), or principal (2).

Results from the CGIAR Results Dashboard indicate an increase in gender equality tagging overall among the SGs.[32] Data from 2022 and 2023 indicates there was an increase in tagging of outputs and outcomes with significant and principal focus, though notably, the majority of outputs and outcomes across the SGs received 'not targeted' scores. The percentage of outputs and outcomes with a principal or significant focus increased from 33% in 2022 to over 40% in 2023 (as shown in Figure 4). The increase in gender tagging is primarily driven by the rise in outputs and outcomes with significant (rather than principal) focus.

Among SGs, ST has the highest proportion of outputs and outcomes with significant or principal gender focus at over 45% in 2023. Gender tagging within GI remains relatively stable over two years, with a slight decline in the percentage of significant and principal focus. RAFS experienced a 10% increase in the rate of outputs and outcomes with a substantial gender focus, and ST saw a 7% increase. ST has the largest percentage of principal tags for both years at just under 20%, compared to RAFS at 6% and GI at 9%.

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[27] WP3 on sustainable livestock productivity for gender equity and social inclusion.

[28] Research questions such as "How women empowerment may unfold?" and "How does a livestock intervention affect the empowerment of women and girls?" are investigated under the dedicated WP.

[29] WP4 on joined-up, gender-equitable, Inclusive deltaic systems governance.

[30] WP1 worked on women agrobusiness models; WP2 conducted research on gender aspects of nutrition-sensitive systems; WP3 considered gender needs in developing climate information services.

[31] Gender equality tag scores are based on the DAC gender equality policy marker.

[32] There are no metrics to track equity and inclusion across Initiatives.

Figure 4. Disaggregating gender tagging across SGs
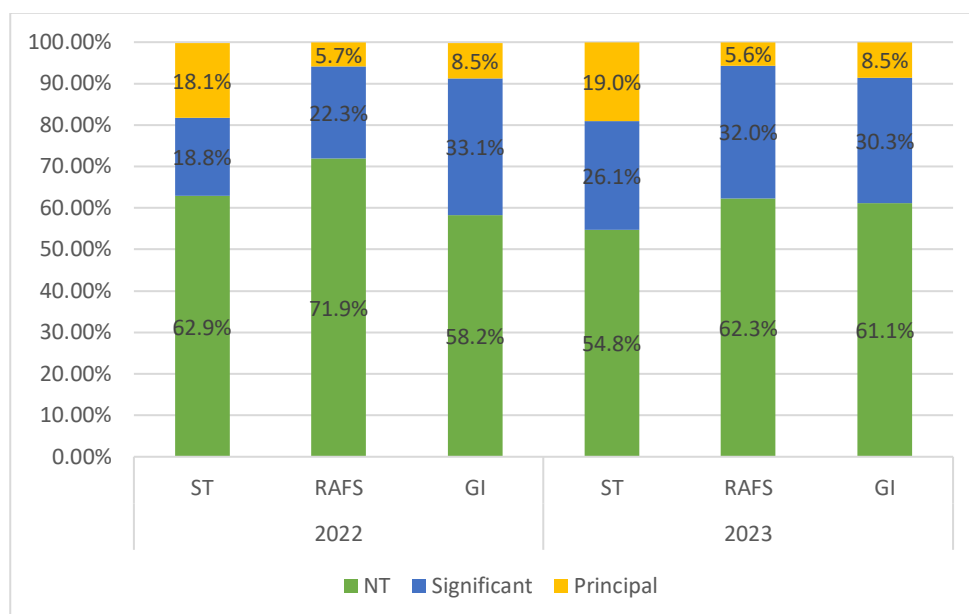
Overall, CGIAR respondents[33] have a favorable view of the effects of gender tagging within the design and implementation phases. Over two-thirds of respondents agree or strongly agree that gender tagging is effective in improving connections with gender researchers, understanding the impacts of equity, and focusing on disadvantaged groups. These data indicate that gender tagging research Initiatives at the design phase is viewed mainly as beneficial and effective.

The GENDER Platform featured standardized methods and tools to support gender integration and guidance in Initiatives (e.g., including gender themes and questions in research tools and questionnaires). Several Initiatives developed or refined standardized research tools to measure changes in empowerment and norms. For instance, SAPLING improved the Women's Empowerment Livestock Index (WELI) and created the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Business Index (WELBI). TAFSSA developed a new tool to analyze data on household food task allocation in South Asia. Notably, all centers use the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), though there is no formal reporting or tracking system in place to record how many times or how many Initiatives use it.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Data indicate that gender is incorporated into design and implementation to different extents.

At the **design phase,** the Initiative's gender scoring system reflects a systematic approach to assessing gender issues across SGs. While there is one gender principal Initiative and several gender-blind Initiatives, most Initiatives across the SGs fall in the middle, split between being either gender accommodative/aware or gender responsive. The Initiative's GESI design varies considerably between and within SGs.

There is no standard method for implementing GESI into Initiatives, with approaches differing widely in how these topics are integrated. Some Initiatives feature cross-cutting WPs, others have stand-alone WPs, and some lack them entirely. The application of the required gender analysis and the collection of gender-

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[33] Questions related to gender tagging were asked to CGIAR respondents only.

disaggregated data suggest a systematic approach to embedding gender considerations into research design and analysis. While examples exist across all SGs, broad conclusions about the consistency or quality of these efforts cannot be made.

During the **implementation phase**, the proportion of gender-tagged outputs and outcomes increased from 2022 to 2023, although most outputs and outcomes do not have a gender focus. While tagging can be helpful for tracking activities with GESI objectives and increasing visibility of these issues, it does not directly improve the quality of integration. Social inclusion is not considered explicitly in either of the tagging mechanisms.

Taking a more holistic view, the use of gender analysis, collection of gender-disaggregated data, and development, along with standardized tools for gender integration, suggest progress in systematically including gender in research design, implementation, and analysis. However, the absence of standardized reporting on gender analysis work or gender-disaggregated data, for example, makes it difficult to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of these efforts. While there are also examples of attention to social inclusion, gender tends to be the focus, likely influenced by requirements of the gender scoring system.

Overall, these findings show significant progress in systematically integrating gender into design and implementation processes. Several mechanisms have been put in place, including assigning gender scores to proposals during the design phase, requiring gender analysis and the collection of gender-disaggregated data, and tagging activities by gender during implementation. However, there are areas for improvement, such as strengthening the collection and reporting of standardized GESI indicators or ensuring consistent reporting of gender-disaggregated data.

4.3.2   Is the SG achieving its GESI objectives and results, and how?

Several Initiatives within each SG were examined to assess their progress on GESI goals. In 2023, GI focused on documenting gender and breeding experiences, as well as evaluating social science capacity. The Initiatives Seed Equal and Market Intelligence scored highest for gender responsiveness in GI. 2023 reports state gender objectives are 'on track'. In Market Intelligence, WP4 included 52 gendered indicators and mapped traits and impact pathways, while WP5 advanced gender-aware decision-making in breeding and developed a gender strategy aligned with the GI ToC.

Another achievement was the publication of a special issue on gender-aware crop breeding, which advances the effort to build a network of partners focused on integrating gender into breeding decisions. In several countries where Seed Equal WP6 is implemented, there was improvement in involving women and youth in seed production and marketing, leading to improvements in research on seed credit models designed to empower women.

Within RAFS, Initiatives are primarily gender aware or responsive.[34] Given that RAFS has 16 Initiatives, only a few are highlighted here. SAPLING is designed to be gender-responsive and has a dedicated WP3 to GESI. The 2023 Annual Report indicated it is on track to meet objectives. WP3 leads strategic gender work (gender analysis that focuses on progress towards gender equality) and coordinates gender integrated

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[34] Six out of fifteen Initiatives are labelled as 'gender responsive' (SAPLING, AMD, One Health, Plant Health, Ukama Ustawi, TAFSSA) and eight as 'gender aware' (AgriLac Resilient, Aquatic Food, Excellence in Agronomy, Livestock and Climate, Nature+, Mixed Farming System, Resilient Cities, TAFS-WCA).

research, (gender analysis that aims to improve livestock systems) which is coordinated and reported within each WP.[35]

The Aquatic Foods initiative under RAFS SG is primarily designed to be gender-inclusive and aware, but it has a specific GESI strategy. One of the main goals of the Initiative is to move toward gender-transformative research to achieve meaningful change and explore intersectionality. This Initiative conducted research to highlight the importance of sex- and gender-disaggregated data in aquatic food systems; examine gender dynamics within these systems; lead gender integration and research activities across different WPs; provide gender capacity development for research teams; and expand the Women's Empowerment in Fisheries and Aquaculture Index. Research also identified key influencers and drivers of gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) within the agricultural research-for-development (AR4D) organization ecosystem.

Within ST SG Initiatives, most are primarily gender-aware or gender-responsive, with one specific Initiative focused on gender principles—the Gender Equality Initiative. This Initiative made significant progress with its ToC. It is on track to achieve or surpass target outcomes at Initiative and WP levels. In 2023, the Initiative accomplished 220 results, produced 129 knowledge products, and advanced 21 innovations (2023 Annual Report). This Initiative trained 15,000 individuals in rural India, Nigeria, and Malawi using innovative tools, social innovations, and policy approaches to empower women in climate-related governance (CGIAR Research Initiative on Gender Equality, 2024).

Another Initiative within the SG, the AMD Initiative, dedicates WP4 to inclusive deltaic food systems governance with a goal that by 2025, policies and strategies of at least three government and/or development partners in AMD regions will be informed by co-designed action research on socially inclusive and gender-equitable natural resource-food systems. Although the WP is delayed, AMD produced several knowledge products and communicated preliminary results to inform policymaking toward socially inclusive and gender-equitable natural resources–food systems management. These knowledge products and communication materials provided evidence on local water resources and management, social inclusion, and implications for local food systems. Finally, the Low Emissions Food Systems Initiative (Mitigate+) developed its strategy for GEYSI to guide the mainstreaming of GESI. Other notable Initiative achievements include the implementation of 19 short-term training programs for 862 individuals (335 women), which strengthened their capacities in agricultural data management and sustainable food system transformation (CGIAR Research Initiative on Low Emissions Food Systems, 2022).

Several factors contributed to the successful integration of GESI objectives and associated results:

- A combination of supportive leadership, skilled GESI focal points, and dedicated researchers is crucial for the successful prioritization, design, and implementation of gender Initiatives across the SGs. For example, GI appointed a gender focal point to support various Initiatives, including market intelligence,

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[35] WP3 made good progress in terms of strategic work, specifically on: (1) Tools and methodologies developing standardized research tools to assess empowerment and norms; a new methodology to assess feminization of agriculture; and an intersectional analysis on gender and cast; (2) Empowerment: providing progress on the theory of empowerment and on effective approaches to support women's empowerment; on the interrelation between gender and caste; and on the link women's empowerment, gender norms and resilience to climate change; (3) Transformative change: providing theoretical progress on transformative change, evidence on gender norms affecting women's involvement in livestock business, and their adoption of genetic innovations, and, evidence on effective transformative approaches; and (4) Youth: exploration of youth-specific challenges and opportunities in livestock production and marketing. 5. Developed a global framework on key gender considerations in livestock development led by ILRI in collaboration with FAO, IFAD and WB.

genebanks, crop breeding, and seed systems. Strong backing from GI leadership and several additional gender focal points supporting specific projects helped embed gender considerations into these Initiatives. Key informant data revealed a cultural shift within GI since the beginning regarding GESI, with social scientists and breeders working together toward shared outcomes.

Previously, breeding focused mainly on performance, but there has been a shift toward emphasizing impact across five areas, including GESI. Dedicating a specific WP (or Initiative, in the case of the Gender Equality Initiative) to support gender-transformative and strategic gender research (e.g., SAPLING, Seed Equal) often meant the Initiative was classified as gender-responsive or gender-principled (the two highest cores). When gender was integrated into WPs, it mainly facilitated targeting of women and collection of sex-disaggregated data, though this was not automatically done nor done across Initiatives. These Initiatives tended to be either gender-blind or gender-aware.

- Having a GESI, whether specific to the WP, Initiative, or SG, facilitated greater integration of gender and social inclusion objectives across Initiatives. GI is the only SG with a dedicated Gender Strategy (2024), and focusing on promoting shared responsibility for integrating gender considerations in work, enhancing team capacity to apply gender analysis in market intelligence, helping GI researchers target feasible areas for gender research, and increasing GI's influence on drivers of gender equality and gender-focused varietal development. The GI SG ToC also integrates gender throughout. In 2023, the Aquatic Foods Initiative developed a GESI strategy, while the From Fragility to Resilience in Central and West Asia and North Africa Initiative produced several documents outlining research priorities on gender equality, climate change, and agriculture in the MENA region.
- Despite missing an overall Gender Strategy for the SG, the Gender Initiative developed its own ToC, with the logical steps and assumptions about how an Initiative will lead to gender equality. It maps out the causal links between activities, outputs, outcomes, and the overall impact on gender equality, often emphasizing both internal organizational changes and external societal shifts.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Overall, findings indicate that Initiatives committed to gender and inclusion outcomes are on track to achieve their objectives, with early signs of success. Key factors for their effective implementation include: (1) strong leadership combined with skilled GESI focal points and researchers; (2) a dedicated WP centered on gender for transformative and strategic research; and (3) a clear GESI strategy.

4.3.3 To what extent did GESI stakeholders participate meaningfully in the design and implementation of the SG/Initiative?

There was a lack of consultation for the One CGIAR Strategy. In 2020, the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) wrote an open letter to CGIAR claiming that there was insufficient diversity among the inner circle that informed CGIAR's reform. At the same time, the letter notes that CGIAR made subsequent efforts to improve gender balance and include staff and board members from the Global South; however, diversity of perspectives was still missing. It recommended re-thinking CGIAR's mission and modalities with a focus on prioritizing the views of farmers, researchers, civil society groups, and governments in the Global South, and supporting transformative, transdisciplinary, agroecological research co-led by farmers and farmer organizations. CGIAR's MR to that letter was not identified.

Key informant data from the Global South indicated that the One CGIAR Strategy appeared to have been developed without adequate consultation of African partners, echoing similar remarks made in the 2020 open letter. These findings suggest that both the quality of participatory processes (e.g., inclusiveness and

diversity) and the outcomes of participation (i.e., that stakeholders are not only involved but also provide inputs, and these inputs are considered for shaping solutions) are experienced by partners in the South.

Consultation for the Initiative's design and implementation with stakeholders varies. The survey shows that 63% of internal stakeholder respondents and 88% of external stakeholders 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that relevant gender, youth, and social inclusion stakeholders participated meaningfully in the Initiative's design and implementation. In comparison, 16% of respondents 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.

Figure 5. Meaningful engagement of social inclusion stakeholders in design and implementation
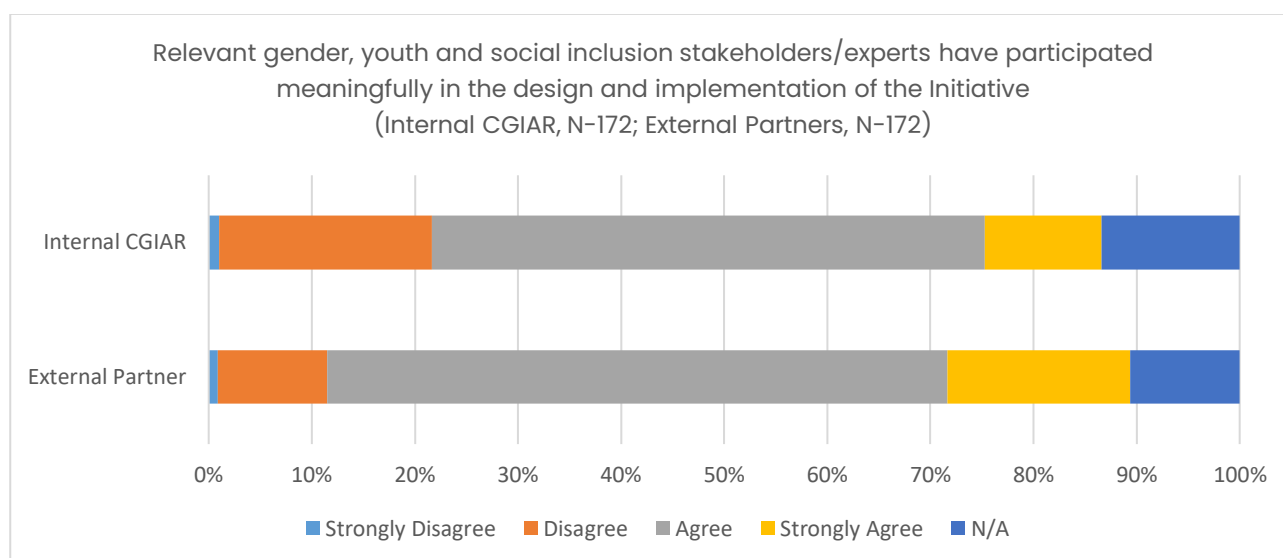
Several ST SG initiatives co-developed research with partners in the I South to align with local priorities, promote local ownership, and enhance the uptake and impact of research findings. The RAFS SG deep dive reveals insufficient emphasis and capacity to involve end-users in the research design process. However, it is possible that smallholder farmers were included in specific co-design phases, such as on-farm demonstrations. In Vietnam, under the EiA Initiative, site selection for field demonstration plots included farmer cooperatives.

The IPES-Food open letter from 2020 recommended diversifying the governance of CGIAR institutions to ensure balanced representation by region and gender, while including independent stakeholders. Page one of the CGIAR GDI Framework (2020) recognizes that "teams that are more diverse and inclusive, consistently problem-solve more accurately and successfully on complex issues than homogenous ones." The CGIAR GDI Dashboard provides information on diversity within the CGIAR workplace and related perspectives on the research agenda. CGIAR employs 9,103 individuals from 125 countries and operates in 73 countries. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) leads with 40% of the workforce by nationality region. Next are Latin America and the Caribbean (20%), Central and Southern Asia (18 %), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (11%), Europe and North America (8.1%), Northern Africa and Western Asia (2.5%), and Oceania (0.4%). In contrast, SSA accounts for 13% of the executive leadership, with the percentage rising in the senior workforce (25%), mid-level (32%), and support staff (46%). Europe and North America lead in executive leadership (52%) and the senior workforce (37%). Representation in global groups shows dominance by developing regions. Employees from SSA comprise 37% of Research, Delivery & Impact, 37% of Institutional Strategy & Systems, and are also present in Communications & Outreach, Regions, Partnerships, and Other Operating Units. Other notable regions include Central and Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. However, only Northern Africa, Western Asia, and Oceania have fewer employees

in global and workforce groups compared to Europe and North America. Males outnumber females by a ratio of 2:1 in both the global and research workforce.

The CGIAR GDI Dashboard displays mixed progress for GDI in terms of women's inclusion in the workforce. Between 2020 and 2023, the percentage of women in research staff increased from 29% to 36%, but the share of women in senior roles slightly decreased from 34% to 27%. In 2023,[32] the GI SG has an above-average representation of women among research staff but below-average representation of women in senior roles compared to the SG average. ST has average or above-average representation of women in all categories, with all categories at or above the 2020 CGIAR averages. Relative to the other SGs, the ST SG ranks highest in terms of women's inclusion in workforce categories. Within RAFS, women are relatively underrepresented in global and senior roles compared to the average across the SGs (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Women's representation in workforce, overall and by SG
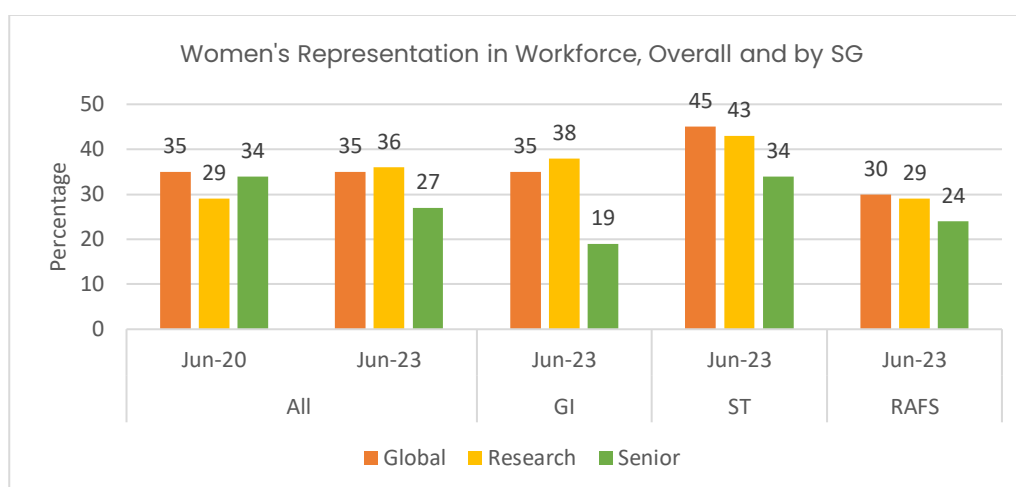
Overall, women are not as engaged as men in upstream leadership roles. In 2023, among the 285 individuals in SG leadership, 115 (40%) were women, while 170 (60%) were men.[36] Women led 12 Initiatives (38%), compared to 20 that were led by men (60%). Co-leadership of initiatives was relatively balanced with 15 women and 16 men. Among the WP leads and co-leads, 88 (40%) were led by women, while 134 (60%) were led by men. The inclusion of women in leadership is significant in the CGIAR context, as increasing the representation of women in top management enhances the performance of organizations that are heavily focused on innovation.[37]

Among all SGs, ST has the highest levels of gender parity (47% women and 53% men), followed by RAFS and GI. In the ST SG, there is gender parity in leadership and co-leadership of Initiatives, with six women and six men leading each. WP leads include slightly more women (30) than men (26), while co-lead positions are mostly held by men (14) versus women (5). On the other hand, GI leadership consists of 34% women and 66% men; and with only five Initiatives in the GI SG, women lead two and co-lead one. Additionally, 42% of WP leads are women, but only 17% co-lead WPs. The breakdown in RAFS SG leadership is similar: 38% women and 62% men. Men dominate Initiative lead roles (11) compared to women (4), but gender parity exists among co-lead roles: women hold 40% of WP lead roles and 35% of WP co-lead roles. Interviews highlighted regional imbalances in gender composition within CGIAR leadership, especially in South Asia.

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[36] See Annex 6.4 for detailed graph for each SG.

[37] CGIAR GDI Framework.

Nationalities of the workforce employed within SGs remained relatively stable over time, and the number of nationalities represented did not change between 2020 and 2023.[38] There are 119 nationalities represented in the SGs (Figures 7 and 8). The most represented nationalities in the CGIAR workforce are those from countries where CGIAR centers are headquartered, indicating that the CGIAR workforce reflects the communities it serves. Additionally, the percentage of the CGIAR workforce from the Global North remains relatively constant at just under 9.2% in 2020 to 9.6% in 2023. The largest percentage of the CGIAR workforce is from SSA (38%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) with 22%) and Central/South Asia (15%) which remained relatively constant.

Figure 7. Workforce nationality by region, overall (2020 vs. 2023)

Workforce Nationality by Region, Overall (2020 vs 2023)
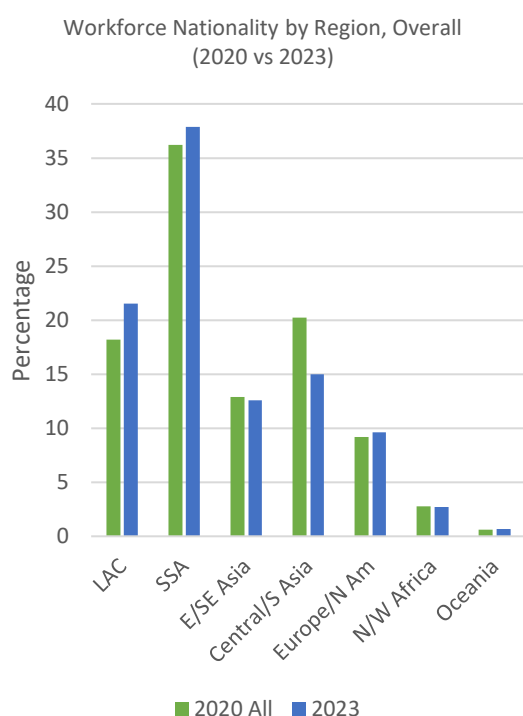
Figure 8. Workforce nationality region, overall and by SG (June 2023)

Workforce Nationality Region, Overall and by SG (June 2023)
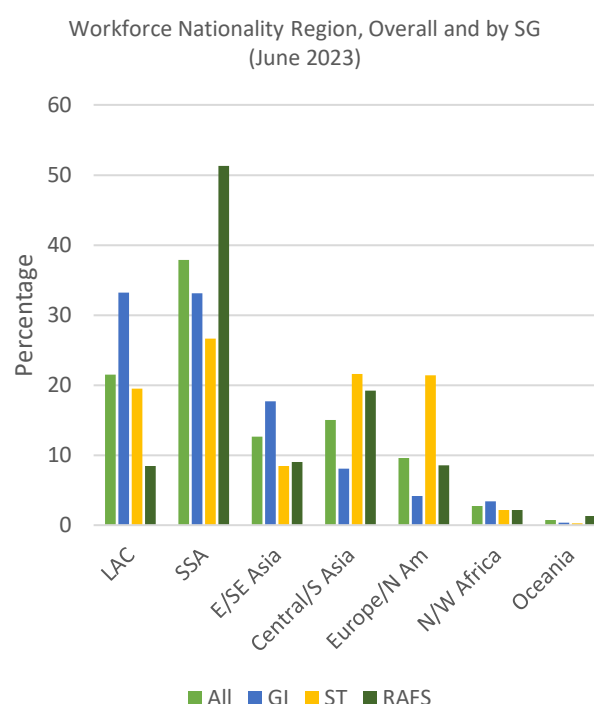
However, there is variation between SG workforce nationalities, which is likely driven in part by center location. For instance, ST employs the largest percentage of European/North American workforce at just over 21% compared to other SGs, which are under 10%. RAFS employs over 50% of its workforce from SSA, while almost two-thirds of GI staff are from either LAC or SSA. Workforce nationality data for the leadership of Initiatives and WPs was not available at SG or Initiative level.

Operationally, there are areas for improvement and areas with progress in GESI for upstream stakeholders in initiative design and implementation. Key informant data and the GENDER Impact Platform evaluation identified that the GENDER Impact Platform's engagement with the Initiatives could be improved by being involved at the appropriate time and engaging more broadly with social inclusion. For instance, GI's GESI strategy was developed in consultation with the GENDER Impact Platform, and while thought leadership stakeholders were engaged, operational stakeholders were not.

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[38] Years with available data.

Generally, the Initiatives' structure encouraged more meaningful participation of GESI researchers (upstream actors), although the focus remains mainly on gender. Specifically, collaboration across the centers regarding gender has grown as Initiatives allow gender researchers to work beyond their own center. While collaboration levels between WPs and within Initiatives vary, the structure facilitated more synergistic and interdisciplinary efforts. Several centers and Initiatives noted an increase in the number of gender researchers over recent years (e.g., AMD, SAPLING), which shows a strong commitment to gender research. Additionally, at least some Initiatives have gender focal points (e.g., SAPLING, OneHealth, AMD, Seed Equal, Aquatic Foods) that help organize, facilitate, and carry out GESI research within each initiative.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The extent to which internal stakeholders in GESI were genuinely involved in the design and planning of Initiatives varies. While the Initiative's structure has encouraged more cross-center collaboration among GESI researchers, this does not always translate into real participation in the design and implementation of Initiatives, and at times, this collaboration even created challenges.

There was mixed progress in GDI within the SGs. Nationality data shows diverse representation in the SGs, although that diversity varies significantly. Overall, women's participation in the workforce has stayed relatively steady over time. Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, indicating that women are not contributing to decision-making to the same extent as their male colleagues.

4.4   Quality of Science

4.4.1   How are GESI concerns reflected in the outputs?[39]

Gender equality tagging was used by all Initiatives for all outputs to indicate the level of gender focus. The assigned labels were not targeted, significant, or principal. As shown in Figure 10, across the SGs, 38% of outputs are tagged as gender principal or significant in 2023, which represents a notable increase in both the total number of gender-focused outputs and the percentage of gender outputs out of all outputs from 2022 (32%). In 2023, 2,278 outputs were tagged as having a gender principal or significant focus, more than doubling the figure in 2022. All SGs increased the total number of outputs with significant or principal gender tags, while RAFS and ST also increased gender-tagged outputs as a percentage of total outputs. However, most outputs are not targeted (68% in 2022 and 62% in 2023).

Gender significant and principal tagging is primarily found among knowledge products across the SGs. Outputs include capacity sharing for development, innovation development, knowledge products[40] and other outputs. In 2023, 50% of all outputs with significant or principal gender tagging were knowledge products followed by capacity sharing for development outputs comprising 20%, innovation development (18%) and other outputs (12%).

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[39] For additional information assessing QoS in the three SGs, read the designated cross-cutting report on the SG Evaluations Portal.
[40] Knowledge products include journal articles, reports, presentations, briefs, blog posts, working papers, book chapters, and videos.

Figure 10. Principal or significant gender outputs across SGs

Principal or Significant Gender Outputs across SGs
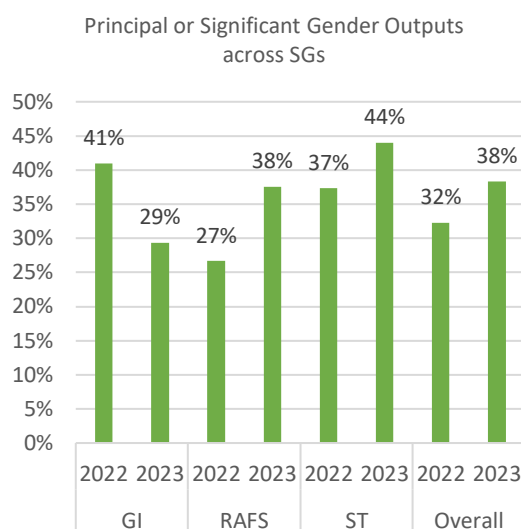
Figure 11. Principal or significant gender outputs across SGs (N)

Principal or Significant Gender Outputs across SGs (#)
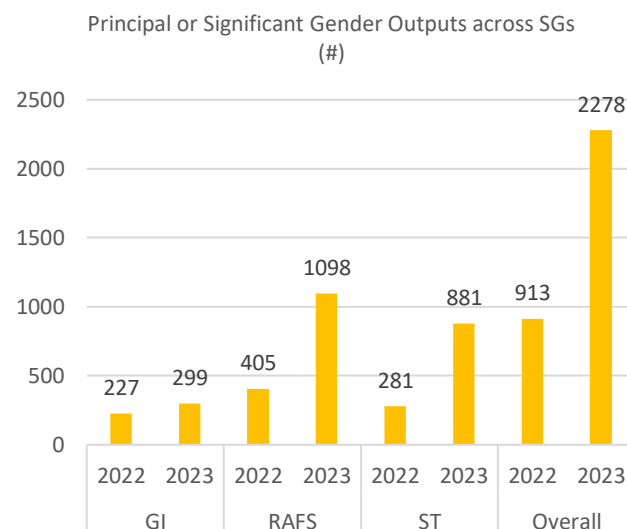
Examining each Initiative output was beyond the scope of the evaluations. Therefore, several key GESI outputs were selected for each SG to provide some understanding of how GESI concerns are reflected in outputs. GI integrated gender throughout its ToC. It is the only SG to have a Gender Strategy that focuses on gender mapping of market segments, a comparative analysis of sex-disaggregated trait preferences across market segments and crops, and prospecting for candidate gender-oriented varieties. A recent output included 21 articles on gender in crop breeding. The collection's goal is to document cases and experiences across crops, geographies, and institutional frameworks to give a comprehensive overview of factors that influence how, when, and why results from gender research can trigger changes in breeding priorities, processes, or decisions. These case studies also helped shape the GI's gender strategy.

Within RAFS, the ToC recognizes disparities in access to innovations, capacity development, and financial, informational, and legal services for women and young people. The Aquatic Food Systems Initiative has its own comprehensive GESI Strategy, which aims to mainstream gender and provides the foundation for conducting strategic gender research within the Initiative. The Initiative on Fragility to Resilience in Central and West Asia and North Africa also developed a gender research strategy outlining priorities and opportunities for gender equality, climate change, and agriculture in the MENA region. The SAPLING Initiative co-created a tool to monitor gender norms in partnership with the Gender Equality Initiative, along with producing several papers on an intersectional approach (which included findings on youth).

The ST SG ToC acknowledges that gender and social inequalities are deeply rooted in global agri-food systems. Compared to other SGs, gender is well integrated into outputs, with ST having the highest percentage of results tagged as significant or principal for gender (44% in 2023). ST has a dedicated Initiative focused on promoting equality for resilience in the agri-food system, known as the Gender Equality Initiative. From 2022-23, this Initiative generated 241 results, including 153 knowledge products. Almost all outputs from this Initiative are tagged as either gender principle (213) or significant (26). Notable outputs include guidelines for measuring gender-transformative change in food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture, along with an innovation called WEAGov—a new conceptual framework to assess women's voice and agency in agri-food policymaking.

Key Findings and Conclusions

There is progress in how GESI concerns are reflected in the outputs as measured through gender tagging. All initiatives used gender tagging for all outputs and outcomes, showing an increase in the percentage of outputs and outcomes with a principal or significant gender tag (38%) between 2022-2023, especially driven by ST and RAFS. Significant gender tagging at principal level is mainly found among knowledge products, with most activities not gender targeted.

4.4.2 What is the quality of GESI research outputs?

The GENDER Impact Platform reviewed the accuracy of gender tagging for knowledge products between 2022-23. When properly tagged, gender equality tags on research outputs and outcomes serve as a proxy for the quality of gender integration and provide a helpful way to evaluate gender integration levels across a large organization like CGIAR. However, if tags are incorrect, especially in large numbers, the gender equality tag becomes less effective as a measure of gender integration quality.

Among the SGs, 31% of knowledge products were incorrectly tagged in 2022, and 76% in 2023. In 2022, the three SGs had roughly the same number of knowledge products that were incorrectly tagged (between 35-40). By 2023, most of the incorrect tagging is concentrated within the GI SG (N-79), compared to ST (N-4) and RAFS (N-1). As a percentage of total knowledge products, GI also has the highest proportion of knowledge products with incorrect gender tagging, with 58% in 2022 and 86% in 2023, showing an increase over time (see Figure 12).[36] The other SGs remain stable over time, with about 17-31% of knowledge products having incorrect gender tags.

Figure 12. Correct and incorrect gender tagging (knowledge products only)
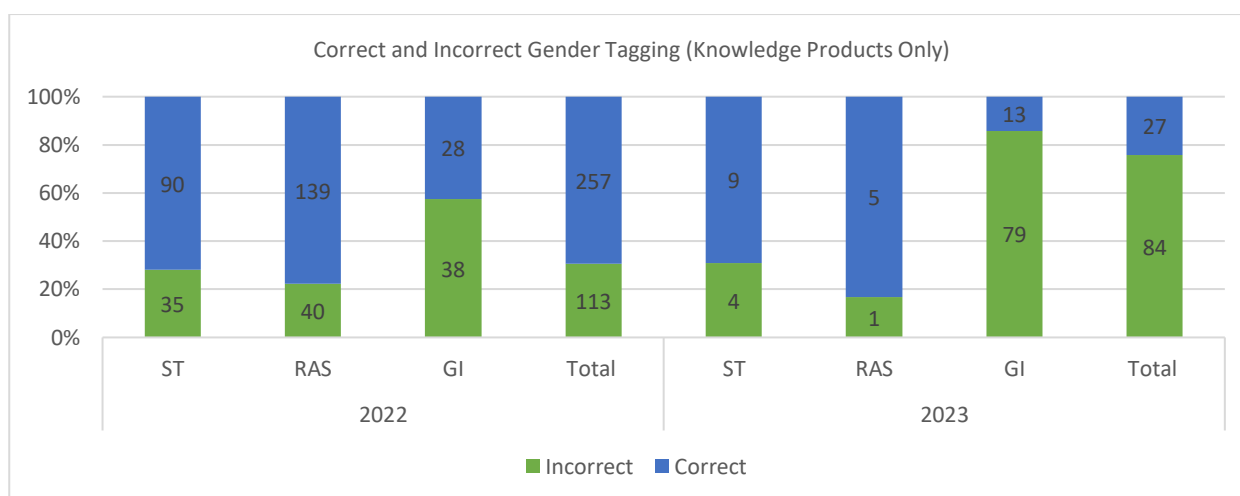
A handful of GESI research outputs were reviewed across the SGs, where examples of high-quality GESI research outputs found in all SGs. Within GI, Frimpong et al. (2023) published an article identifying gender trait preferences among rice producers using the G+ breeding tools, which indicated gender heterogeneity regarding varietal and trait preferences. RAFS published the book A Framework for Gender-Responsive Livestock Development. Contributing to a world free from hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and inequality, ST published Guidelines for measuring gender-transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture.

Key Findings and Conclusions

A quality assessment reveals that a significant proportion of the reviewed knowledge products are incorrectly labeled (more than one-third), suggesting that the actual percentage of significant or principal gender outputs and outcomes may be lower.[36] While gender tagging is a useful tool for tracking gender integration, findings suggest its usefulness as a proxy for the quality of gender integration is somewhat limited by inaccurate tagging. The tag is limited in its connection to GESI because it does not cover social inclusion. As a result, there is no quantitative metric to track social inclusion across CGIAR.

4.5 Efficiency

4.5.1 *Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise etc.) allocated strategically to achieve GESI objectives?*

Although budgetary provisions allocated to gender were set aside, not all stakeholders viewed that funding as enough to meet GESI objectives. Some stakeholders saw resource allocation positively, while others expressed challenges due to insufficient funding, especially those involved in gender research. Among CGIAR online survey respondents, less than half (45%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Initiative's resources were enough to reach equity/equality objectives. Gender focal points reported constraints in performing their roles effectively because of a lack of funding and budget cuts (e.g., SAPLING, Aquatic Foods), which often impact gender Initiatives. Several respondents noted that funding for GESI was often the first to be cut. For example, under SAPLING, budget cuts impacted WP4 dedicated to gender, resulting in the failure to implement on-the-ground interventions.

Figure 13. Perceived sufficiency of Initiative resources by CGIAR internal respondents
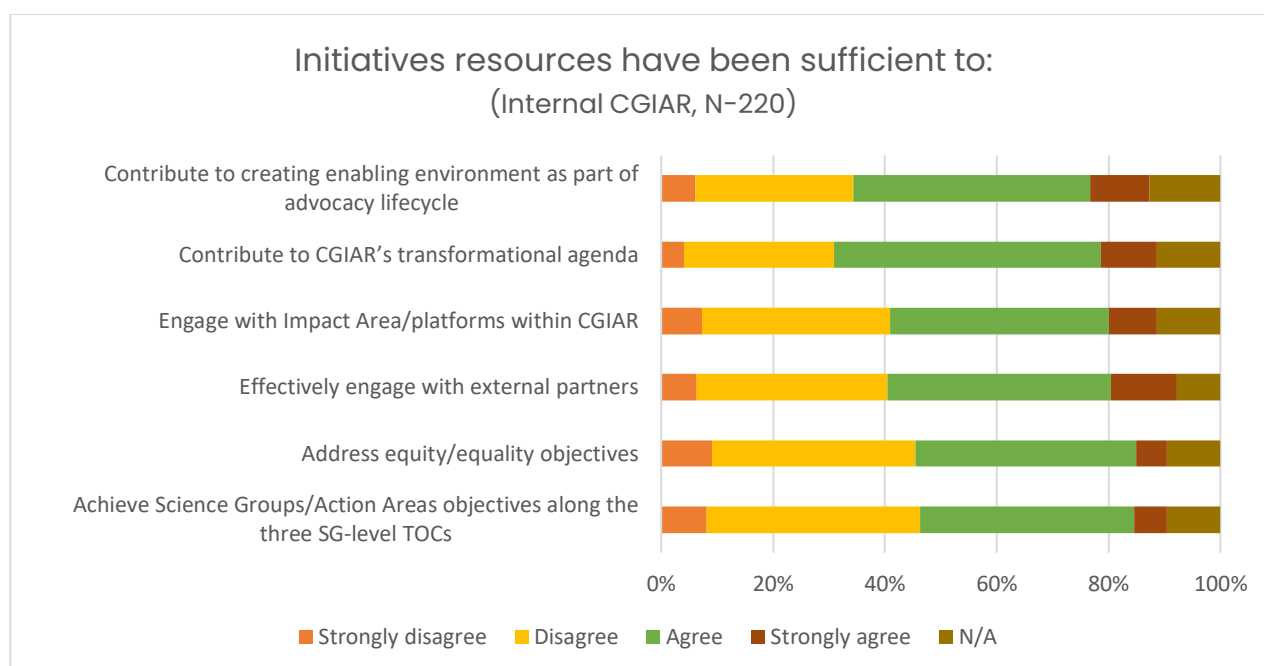
Budgeting poses challenges for gender inclusion. Initiative budgets can be altered mid-year, which impacts the activities carried out, adversely affects the timing of Initiatives, and significantly reduces the

time available to achieve results. For instance, one respondent noted that last-minute requests to shorten timeframes undermine the ability of Initiatives to plan WPs effectively. Within the RAFS SG, budget cuts related to gender were frequently mentioned by stakeholders in the three countries visited (Vietnam, Ghana, Colombia[41]) and during online interviews in other countries. In SAPLING WP, the Initiative experienced a budget cut in May 2023 for that year. Outcomes depended on transforming restrictive gender norms, but progress was slowed due to these budget limitations. Gender-related interventions in Uganda and Ethiopia were mostly eliminated, and in Colombia, stakeholders reported that budget cuts mainly affected gender activities. Similarly, under the One Health Initiative, gender-related surveys were planned but not fully carried out due to budget cuts.[36]

The Aquatic Foods initiative highlighted that further reductions in funding impacted the ability to conduct gender research, integration, capacity building, and share opportunities. For example, although the Initiative developed a gender strategy, it was unable to implement it due to budget constraints. Under SAPLING, budget cuts significantly impacted WP4, resulting in the cancellation of on-the-ground interventions that would have contributed to the final expected gender impact. Similarly, under the One Health Initiative, planned gender-specific surveys were not fully implemented due to budget cuts. [36] The Agroecology case study under ST SG[42] found a lack of dedicated funds for GESI activities, which limited the integration of GSI in the Initiative's interventions.

Tracking overall gender funding is challenging. For instance, each WP must be assessed to determine funding. Gender is not funded uniformly across all Initiatives, and when it is, levels vary. Finally, identifying which part of the work pertains to gender is difficult, especially in social science centers. However, some Initiatives have a dedicated WP for GESI (e.g., SAPLING, AMD) or allocate a specific portion of each WP to these areas (e.g., AMD). Funding for GESI WPs often constitutes a smaller share compared to other WPs. For example, WP6 of Seed Equal received USD 744,710 out of an Initiative budget exceeding USD 10.7 million. The Aquatic Foods Initiative's crosscutting gender and inclusivity budget received 21% of the crosscutting budget dedicated to WPs (about USD 280,000 in 2023), which is roughly 4.2% of the total Initiative budget.

During the CRPs, 10% of Centers' budgets were allocated to GESI. Several respondents highlighted the usefulness of this approach, especially for Centers that lacked capacity in gender. Recently, the RAFS Aquatic Food Initiative developed a GESI Strategy, which recommended such an allocation as well: "at approximately USD 40,000 per year, the budget specifically earmarked for crosscutting gender activities is low and insufficient to realize the objectives articulated in this strategy. As such, GESI research and activities must align with ongoing work in the Initiative, and gender-specific research and activities will need to be covered by WP budgets. In earlier documents, 8% of the total Initiative budget was indicated as appropriate. We propose that 10-15% of each WP budget be allocated for GESI activities or research."

Resources and human capacity for gender work vary widely across centers and Initiatives. For example, some gender focal points within SGs may support multiple Initiatives or coordinate gender activities across WPs for a specific Initiative. Some centers rely on only one gender specialist, making them severely under-resourced and overburdened, while others have more funding and larger teams. ILRI and IRRI employ over a dozen gender researchers, with ILRI having 15 specialists, nine of whom work on the SAPLING Initiative. The Gender Equality Initiative's budget was nearly USD 6 million in 2023. Several respondents highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary WP teams, suggesting that gender expertise should extend beyond just the

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[41] Blogs for each country visit available on SG Evaluations Portal.
[42] Available upon request from IAES.

Gender Equality Initiative or SPs, alongside a need for broader gender training for all staff, not only specialists.

Challenges in demonstrating the value of GESI work include the need for advocacy and proof of impact to secure resources. Gender focal points from all SGs, including those working on specific gender WPs, often emphasized this necessity. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of these Initiatives, the diverse backgrounds of participants, and the difficulty of showing quick results (since budgets are allocated on three-year cycles), respondents highlighted that it is often hard to demonstrate the importance of GESI efforts.

Statistics on CGIAR social scientists are not easily accessible, but other evidence suggests they may be in short supply, especially within certain SGs and Initiatives. According to many RAFS stakeholders, the availability of internal social scientists, partnership, and communication experts is significantly lower than that of technical specialists. This limits CGIAR's ability to address socio-economic, political, and cultural barriers to adopting and replicating technical solutions, as noted in the 2021 Synthesis Review (CGIAR, 2021). The only skill shortage mentioned during the RAFS evaluation concerned gender specialists—scarce but highly valued when present in-country (e.g., Vietnam)—and social scientists, especially those skilled at engaging external partners. The Agroecology case study found that gender focal points or scientists working across Initiatives often face heavy workloads.

The Gender Platform funded some gender-related activities planned within the Initiatives. To address budget issues, the GENDER Impact Platform provided funding to support outputs for Initiatives that experienced budget cuts (e.g., SAPLING) and awarded grants to support gender work across several Initiatives. The small grants offered by the CGIAR Gender Platform increased funding to promote gender and inclusion mainstreaming across Initiatives, although these resources were limited in both supply and amount. The Platform was unable to mitigate the shortened timeframes.

Key Findings and Conclusions

While tracking gender funding can be difficult, there are solid findings on efficiency. Specifically, GESI tend to get less funding and face more frequent budget cuts within Initiatives compared to other areas. GESI are not always funded in each Initiative or funded at similar levels, and resources and capacity for gender are unevenly spread across centers and Initiatives. Findings suggest that resources could be allocated more strategically to better meet GESI goals.

5 Recommendations and Lessons Learned

5.1 Recommendations and Recommended Actions

Several recommendations emerged from the SG evaluations and related actions from the sub-study. Their aim is to enhance GESI within CGIAR in the next 2025-30 Portfolio.

5.1.1 Recommendations

For SPs and Accelerators

1. **Align work on GESI with the GENDER Platform's Gender Strategy (CGIAR, 2023).** While related conceptual frameworks, action plans, and M&E systems should be designed at system level, including issues related to youth and social inclusion of marginalized groups, the Gender Accelerator should translate them into actions within SPs and support inter-SP synergies. SPs should also develop their

own position papers explaining how they contribute to GESI endeavors, and how gender empowerment and equity support advancements toward the programs' outcomes. They should also develop action plans and M&E systems to support implementation and accountability. (RAFS SG Evaluation, Rec. 15)

2. **Strengthen the decision-making role of the GENDER Impact Platform (future GESI Accelerator) within CGIAR.** The 2023 GENDER Impact Platform evaluation valuation recommended to "actively invite and involve GENDER in CGIAR's decision-making processes, to inform critical decision-making points." In the proposed reporting structure outlined in the CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio Narrative, each SP and Accelerator will have a leader who reports to the Chief Scientist. This structure will help ensure the GESI Accelerator is involved fairly, strategically, and consistently across SPs. (GENDER Platform Evaluation, Rec. 10)

Several recommendations from the 2021 Synthesis Report remain valid and pertain to the new portfolio:

1. **Strengthen the systematic incorporation of equity issues into research design and analysis. Diversify partners and skills**—including, for example, social scientists and experts from the private sector, sustainable finance, and humanitarian sectors—to better address the root causes of sustainable development challenges. Expand socio-economic work, including poverty and livelihood assessments, adoption studies, policy and institutional analyses, and in-depth gender and youth studies, with strengthened in-house capacity and/or additional partners. (2021 Synthesis)

2. **Reorient work** to focus more on the vulnerable poor, in particular women and the disadvantaged and those at greatest risk from natural resource depletion, severe climate change impacts, economic deprivation, and conflicts. (2021 Synthesis).

3. **CGIAR should focus more on social inclusion to ensure that no one is left behind as well as address issues of intersectionality, recognizing that women nor youth are homogenous groups**. Engagement with partners working on GESI should also expand to support this effort. Increased consideration should be given to other marginalized groups including persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples. At SP and/or country level: vulnerability mapping assessments should be conducted to identify and classify vulnerable groups under the social inclusion category. Innovative program designs (e.g., outgrower schemes), can also support the participation and empowerment of largely excluded groups (e.g., resource poor, landless). It is recommended to conduct an intersectionality analysis to understand which individual characteristics impact individuals' ability to participate and benefit from programming. A three-year timeline is generally not enough time for the most marginalized, resource-poor, vulnerable groups to benefit; five or more years may be more realistic to achieve meaningful results and impacts.

5.1.2 Recommended Actions

The above recommendations and lessons learned can be best realized through the following actions:

1. **Enhance feedback loops and foster systematic inclusive stakeholder engagement clearly in policies, in particular, end-users (beneficiaries)**. Peddi et al., (2022) states that inclusive innovations are not only produced for marginalized actors but also by them, as the innovation process must be procedural and shaped by their knowledge and perspectives. It is outcomes and agency of marginalized actors in the innovation process, ensuring that they are not just produced for but also by them. This also requires the meaningful participation of social scientists and other downstream stakeholders (e.g., research partners from the Global South) from the inception of the research design.

2. **Enhance internal and partners' capacities on GESI and intersectional analysis.** There remains a need to further broaden the internal skill set to include more social scientists and gender experts, particularly in RAFS and GI.

3. **Build capacity for GESI among partners.** Partnership policies or agreements with intermediary implementing partners can include a clause requiring the inclusion of two gender focal points—one senior and one assistant or junior in training—in a country or local team. It can be achieved by utilizing modules or courses available on the GENDER Platform. Another clause could require local gender experts to demonstrate yearly professional continuous development in GENDER Platform programs, regardless of whether they are involved in projects.

4. **Create a workplan focused on GESI, along with related MEL components.** The workplan can help improve the achievement of GESI goals.

5. **Ensure gender is integrated into SPs, as GESI are cross-cutting and essential for program success.** Gender scientists should help draft these programs. Establish protocols for hiring and managing gender and social specialists to ensure integration and collaboration across programs. This supports coherence, joint research, and links between gender, climate change, migration, and humanitarian efforts.

6. **Allocate 10-15% or more[43] of the future SPs budget to GESI (as was done under CRPs) and ensure the appropriate allocation of GESI specialists to SPs based on their size and complexity of research activity.** Such a minimum allocation would allow for a dedicated focal point(s) for GESI within each SP, and ideally, a dedicated WP for GESI to support gender transformative and strategic work, two success factors identified in lessons learned (see above). More detailed consultations with GESI Accelerator and SP leads can help inform the amount of gender expertise and resources required. A pool of reserve funds may be set aside to ameliorate the impacts of budget cuts and uncertainty, like the role provided by GENDER Impact Platform grants to Initiatives that helped ameliorate budget cuts. For SPs with gender-responsive or gender-transformative goals, the required percentage allocation is likely much higher.

7. **Establish a formal relationship between the GENDER Impact Platform (future GESI Accelerator) and upcoming SPs to foster collaboration.** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar agreement could clarify this relationship and ensure the GENDER Impact Platform is utilized effectively to provide guidance and promote best practices across future SPs.

8. **Strengthen CGIAR processes and systems to promote gender equality, not just gender parity within the workplace.** Transformative change in programs is linked to both understanding and practice of gender equality in professional and personal settings. To achieve this level of change requires encouragement to critically reflect on gender norms and power dynamics, which can prompt individuals to actively challenge and modify their own behaviors and systems. Flexible work arrangements, diverse hiring, pay transparency, mentorship programs, unconscious bias training, and inclusive leadership are some policies and practices that can support GESI in the workplace.

9. **Develop guidance to support capacity building on GESI.** There is a need for greater training and/or guidance on what constitutes 'significant' and 'principal' gender tagging to improve the quality of GESI research outputs (particularly within the hard sciences), to communicate a common definition of GESI within the SGs, to create understanding and application of intersectionality, and to distinguish between gender accommodative versus transformative work.

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[43] UNICEF's Gender Action Plan 2022-25 stipulates a minimum of 15% of all funding received to be earmarked for gender equality priorities. The Aquatic Foods Initiative Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy recommended WPs allocate 10-15% of each WP budget for GESI activities or research.

10. **Provide foundational GESI training and guidance to all scientists to enhance the QoS research outputs related to GESI.** During the CRPs, learning labs contributed to capacity building, especially among harder-to-reach centers; a similar approach could be applied to Initiatives. Other strategies include promoting the GENDER Impact Platform's offerings, such as [CoPs](), peer mentoring, annual events, or joint knowledge-sharing events.

11. **Portfolio 2025-27 facilitated by the GESI Accelerator, should enhance focus on gender transformative, rather than gender accommodative, research (i.e., identifying interventions to enhance women's empowerment in food, land, and water systems and support system change toward more equality and inclusion[44]).** Dedicated, stable budget and personnel, and longer project cycle timelines (e.g., five to ten years), are required to support gender transformative change. While there are notable examples of a gender-transformative research agenda (e.g., the [Gender Equality Initiative](), the [Aquatic Food Initiative Gender Strategy](), and the ICARDA [Gender Strategy]()), this is not the norm.

12. **Create documented requirements and enforceable mechanisms for gender commitments**, holding centers, teams and CGIAR accountable for achieving the stated gender goals. This also requires a certain level of internal alignment regarding how CGIAR defines gender accommodative/responsive versus gender transformative research. It is recommended to develop, collect, and report on standard indicators for GESI. The [GENDER Impact Platform]() (future GESI Accelerator) working across Initiatives (future SPs), is well-positioned to ensure that GESI are consistently considered and included in research design and analysis to a standard, whether through a gender score system or otherwise.

13. **The social inclusion of marginalized groups and youth should be clearly articulated, supported by well-defined terms, standard indicators, and established protocols to facilitate effective implementation.** Consideration should be given to targeting standards and quotas for women and other marginalized groups where appropriate. Relying on asset criteria may inadvertently exclude vulnerable groups, such as the landless, who may need additional social protection programs or longer project timelines to participate and benefit. Identifying non-market interventions, such as social safety nets and other social policy and welfare measures, can help vulnerable groups meet the minimum asset thresholds necessary for inclusive participation.

14. **Greater consultation with end users/beneficiaries, especially the most marginalized, should also be incorporated to ensure their needs and priorities are met and that they are reached and benefited by SG research programming.** Workshops and development of gender guidelines is good, but representation of women and youth at design and farm level assessment is particularly important, as it creates ownership of interventions. Consideration should also be given to the impact of innovation and scaling on GESI outcomes. To achieve this, CGIAR guidelines for inclusion and participation of vulnerable communities in research and development activities at different scales (e.g., national and sub-regional) should be developed.

5.2   Lessons Learned

The following lessons learned complement formal recommendations and recommended actions:

1. **Supportive leadership, skilled GESI focal points, and gender researchers are crucial for prioritizing, designing, and implementing gender considerations across the SGs' research.** Within these Initiatives, gender focal points and WP leads play an important role integrating gender into WPs, coordinating gender activities across WPs and Initiatives, and handling strategic gender-related tasks.

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[44] Example from CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio Narrative. 20th CGIAR System Council Meeting from 12-13 June 2024 in Brazil.

The SG's structure, which is organized around Initiatives, helped promote better research integration and cross-center collaboration, often occurring naturally as joint Initiatives brought together scientists from various centers with shared or complementary research goals. However, interactions were sporadic and overly reliant on Initiative leads and staff, with SG leadership providing little planning for cross-center collaboration, limited efforts to foster synergies at both SG and cross-SG levels, and unclear guidance for engaging with Impact Platforms.

2. **Allocating dedicated personnel and funds for GESI is essential to effectively address these issues.** During the evaluation period, not all Initiative budgets included specific resources for GESI. While this is acceptable for Initiatives with a gender principal score, those that are gender accommodative/aware or gender-responsive face risks. These include the potential lack of allocated resources, the over-extension of existing resources, and the possibility that GESI efforts may be among the first to be cut—this was observed in several Initiatives.

3. **Dedicating a specific WP or Initiative, such as the Gender Equality initiative, to gender enables effective gender-transformative and strategic research on gender.** When gender was only integrated into WPs, it primarily supported targeting women and gathering sex-disaggregated data.

4. **Centers with larger teams of gender researchers and scientists can focus on specific subtopics that further a specialized focus on the GESI research agenda.** Research centers vary significantly in the size of their GESI teams, ranging from a single person in some centers to over a dozen in others. This variation in team size then affects the gender research capacity of their Initiatives, as they are closely tied to the centers.

5. **Having fewer SPs (rather than more Initiatives) may be a useful structure in terms of coordination and coherence, particularly for cross-cutting themes.** The five Impact Platforms held a regular weekly meeting, and while some Initiatives are coordinating well between themselves, it is not replicated across CGIAR. Changing the divisional structure from 33 Initiatives to ten SPs may help facilitate better coordination across CGIAR, which could be beneficial for cross-cutting topics such as gender, inequality and social inclusion.

6. **Across all SGs, the Initiative structure promoted more in-depth cross-center collaboration and the use of multidisciplinary methods—such as social sciences, anthropology, natural sciences, and economics—to tackle interdisciplinary issues like GESI**. For instance, within the Gender Equality Initiative (CGIAR Research Initiative on Gender Equality, 2024), participatory co-design processes combined climate-smart technologies with social innovations to address challenges faced by women farmers involved in small ruminants, poultry, vegetable, legume, and cereal value chains. These efforts involved collaborations with NARS, WorldVeg, and the CGIAR Research Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa) across 11 learning labs in three countries.

7. *At SG level, having a ToC that includes GESI, along with a SG-level GESI strategy, can support the systematic integration of GESI into research design and implementation.* GI is unique because it incorporates gender throughout its ToC rather than as a cross-cutting theme, and it also has a complementary GI Gender Strategy. Together, the ToC and Strategy guide GESI priorities, essentially serving as a high-level roadmap for Initiatives on how to include gender in research design and what outcomes to anticipate. While GI has fewer Initiatives compared to other SGs, each Initiative is designed to complement the others, which may make gender integration more straightforward. This suggests that such ToC and strategy documents can help focus on GESI, likely enhancing coherence across Initiatives.

Annex 1. Evaluation Matrix for Science Group Evaluations Adapted for the Sub-Study

Criterion	Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Data source and analysis methods
Relevance	• To what extent is the Science Group (SG)/Initiative GESI sensitive and responsive to context? • To what extent does the SG/Initiative respond to stakeholder needs and priorities?	Document review, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), case study, QoS, design.
Coherence	• To what extent does the SG/Initiative coordinate and cooperate with the CGIAR GENDER Platform? • To what extent do the concepts of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in SGs/Initiatives align?	KIIs.
Effectiveness	• How well were the cross-cutting themes of gender and climate change integrated into design and implementation (tagging)?[45] • Is the SG/Initiative achieving its GESI objectives and results, and how? • To what extent did GESI stakeholders participate meaningfully in the design and implementation of the SG/Initiative?	KIIs, FGDs, CGIAR Results Dashboard and Performance Data.
Efficiency	• Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise) allocated strategically to achieve GESI objectives?	Documents review (including IA and SG evaluations), KIIs, FGDs.
Quality of Science	• How are GESI concerns reflected in the outputs? • What is the quality of GESI research outputs?	Document review, CGIAR Results Dashboard and Performance Data; KIIs, FGDs, field visits QoS output analysis.

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[45] Terms of Reference: Science Group Cluster Evaluation.

Annex 2. Recommendations by Status of Implementation

2021 Synthesis and Lessons Learned from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs[46]

Rec Action Area (AA)/ CGIAR	Recommendation	Management response (MR)	Action plan	Timeframe	Status
Systems Transformation (ST)	To achieve a stronger focus on poverty reduction across all programs, target the rural resource poor, women, and those most disadvantaged. Increase attention to understanding and addressing the equity impacts of policies, shocks, and risks faced by poor people in taking up technologies and research solutions.	Agreed that poverty reduction as an objective requires more attention. While CGIAR conducted an impressive amount of research that speaks to poverty (in modelling, diagnostic and adoption studies) it has not been well coordinated. The effects of COVID-19 reinforced the importance of addressing poverty for CGIAR.	Initiatives will need to demonstrate how they contribute to poverty reduction. Reviews by Science Groups (SGs) and the ISDC will strive to ensure adequate attention to poverty reduction among the first set of Initiatives and subsequent ones. It is important to ensure CGIAR has the requisite capacity to strengthen research in this area. Enhancing capacity is the responsibility of SG Directors with support from two key Platforms: Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs Platform and Gender Platforms, which have a mandate to enhance quality of research in this area, through application of sound frameworks and methods.	Ongoing throughout 2022-24 business period	In Progress Findings suggest gender targeting is a useful tool to include women, but it is not conducted systematically. Gender tagging is effective in increasing focus to these issues. However, much less attention is given to including the most vulnerable (e.g., landless). This calls for strengthening the capacity of gender specialists in social inclusion analysis and implementation for effective delivery of results. See recs. 2, 7, 10, and 12.
Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS)	Reorient work to focus more on the vulnerable poor, in particular women and the disadvantaged and	The recommendation is addressed by the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy and will be taken on board across Initiatives under Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS).	This focus is part of all selection processes with respect to countries and issues within countries. In the Regional Integrated Initiatives (RIIs) this is a main aspect as they are	Ongoing throughout 2022-24 business plan period	In Progress. See above.

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[46] See: CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service, (2021). Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs.

Rec Action Area (AA)/ CGIAR	Recommendation	Management response (MR)	Action plan	Timeframe	Status
	those at greatest risk from natural resource depletion, severe climate change impacts, economic deprivation, and conflicts.		strongly demand driven and focus on those at greatest risk.		
Genetic Innovation (GI)	Increase inclusiveness in defining product profiles, executing programs, and delivering outputs, to better contextualize variety development and tailor research to diverse agricultural communities and to the needs of children, youth, women, and other at-risk or marginalized groups.	The GI SG will consider several angles of inclusiveness along with breeding goals, in the way plant breeding is carried out.	The focus of GI will be on gender, and gender related traits will be considered in all Product Profiles and Product Advancement Process. For all additional inclusiveness criteria, a 'do not harm' policy will be considered. The positioning/marketing of novel varieties will also use gender considerations as a main driver.	Ongoing throughout 2022-24 business plan period	In Progress GI made progress in developing tools and processes to increase the inclusiveness in defining product profiles for women. However, it is recommended to consider the needs of other vulnerable groups. This calls for strengthening capacity of gender specialists in social inclusion analysis and implementation for effective delivery of results. See recs. 7, 10, and 12.
ST	Strengthen the systematic incorporation of equity issues into research design and analysis. Diversify partners and skills—including, for example, social scientists and experts	Executive Management Team (EMT) and System Board agree with this recommendation and plan to build on many good examples from within CGIAR to enhance our strategic partnerships along the impact pathway and to identify and develop core competences to meet 2030 goals.	Initiative Design Teams were constituted to be diverse in gender, in research discipline and partner type to respond to complex challenges. Socio-economic work will be prominent throughout the portfolio. SGs will formally review Initiatives on an annual basis to assess progress, including on addressing equity issues. At levels	Ongoing throughout 2022-24 business plan period	In Progress While there are many examples of how equity issues are systematically incorporated into research design and analysis (e.g., gender tagging, gender score, gender targeting), there are areas to improve which include meaningfully

Rec Action Area (AA)/ CGIAR	Recommendation	Management response (MR)	Action plan	Timeframe	Status
	from the private sector, sustainable finance, and humanitarian sectors—to better address the root causes of sustainable development challenges. Expand socio-economic work, including poverty and livelihood assessments, adoption studies, policy and institutional analyses, and in-depth gender and youth studies, with strengthened in-house capacity and/or additional partners.		of the Global Director for Partnerships and Advocacy and the Impact Area Platforms, more strategic approaches to collaboration are already being explored with leading organizations in these topical areas (e.g., WFP for humanitarian sectors). Also see response to rec. 11 on inclusion of equity in research design.		engaging stakeholders and building internal and external capacity to improve quality of science. See recs. 8, 11 and 12.
ST	Improve the coverage of cross-cutting themes (e.g., gender, youth) in Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) by strengthening evaluators' relevant	EMT and System Board support strengthened MELIA capacity coverage of cross-cutting issues such as gender and youth in CGIAR.	Methodological guidelines on designing and delivering evaluations relevant and appropriate to gender and youth issues will be included as part of the new CGIAR Evaluation Policy. Additional Gender MELIA expertise is being engaged in 2021 and will contribute to the development of the methodological guidelines.	Ongoing throughout 2022-24 business plan period	In Progress Methodological guidelines were piloted in this evaluation. See also rec. 12.

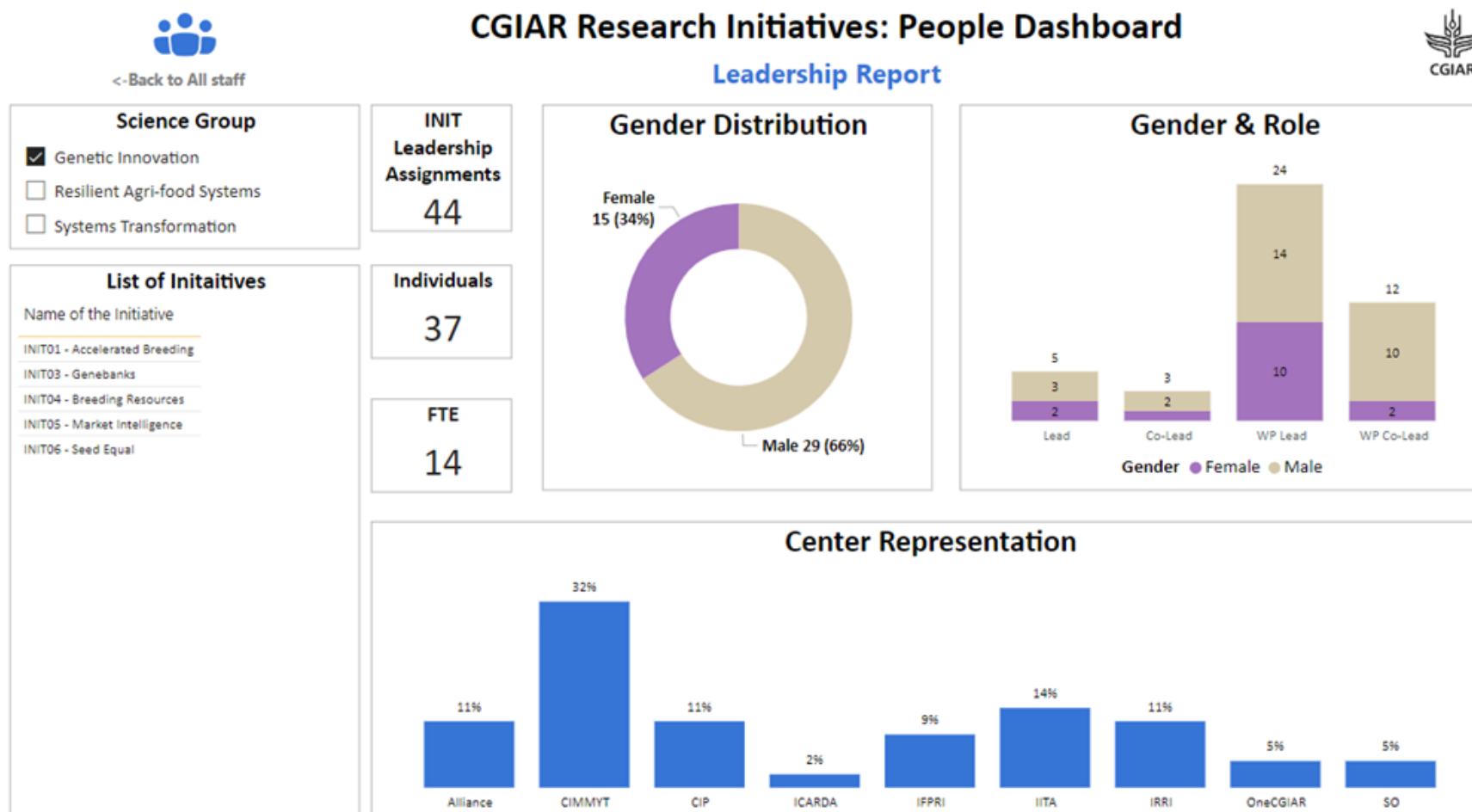| Rec Action Area (AA)/ CGIAR	Recommendation	Management response (MR)	Action plan	Timeframe	Status
	disciplinary skills as applied to evaluation design and implementation.				
ST	Collaborate with Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs) and the private sector on action research that unlocks access to finance, inputs, and innovation-based enterprise opportunities for women, youth, and other marginalized groups. Build on index insurance, blended (public-private and public-private-producer) finance models, and other emerging approaches.	EMT and System Board agree on the importance of finance for fostering the types of transformations CGIAR seeks to contribute to and engagement with the private sector and ARIs in doing so. This will be critical in managing future climate risk, as well supporting the scaling of adaptation solutions. Within CGIAR, expertise was recently developed and forged new partnerships with the financial community (e.g., through CCAFS and Harvest Plus) and have ongoing work on weather insurance and credit arrangements for producers with private sector partners. There is a need to transform ambitions and partnerships with the private sector and international finance institutions as well as to enhance this knowledge and skills within CGIAR.	Action research focusing on access among CGIAR target beneficiaries, especially low-income women, to finance (credit and insurance), financial services and information.	Ongoing throughout 2022-24 business plan period	In Progress There is increased focus on identifying opportunities for women, but much less for youth and other marginalized groups. See recs. 7 and 10.

Annex 3. 2023 GENDER Impact Platform Evaluation Recommendations and Status

Rec #	Recommendation	Manage-ment response (MR)	Action plan	Time-frame	Status
1	Strengthen partnerships to ensure the Platform's cohesiveness, effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency, with a specific focus on NARES.	Fully accepted	Stakeholder mapping to be undertaken with CGIAR Advocacy for Impact. Use stakeholder mapping and the global CGIAR Gender Conference in Delhi to dialogue with partners on evidence and methods gaps. Develop a short note, as part of the strategy on modes of collaboration the Platform engages in, and share with partners.	Q4 2023	On track Completed On track
2	Improve module coherence so that the modules do not operate in silos.	Fully accepted	Finalization of the strategy 2024-30, which will include clear structural mechanisms in place to ensure more coherence amongst the modules and the rest of the Platform.	Q2 2024	On track
3	Track results to tell the Platform's story or guide management and planning.	Fully accepted	Hiring of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) consultant to develop fine tune the MEL system for the Platform. Hiring of a MEL thought leader as one of the staff of the Platform to support levels 2 and 3 above.	System in place by end of year, monitoring ongoing	On track
4	Clarify the Platform's expanded mandate to external and internal partners.	Fully accepted	Develop Platform position papers on youth and social inclusion for the CGIAR, including the Platform, to use in deciding how to integrate these areas of work in their portfolio. Hire a youth expert at 50% to guide the Platform and the CGIAR as to next steps on the youth within the CGIAR Portfolio.	Q1 2024	On track Completed
5	Extend project timeframes to three-year for planning and operation	Partially accepted	Develop an investible strategy for the GENDER Platform covering the two business cycles through 2030.	Q1 2024	On track

Rec #	Recommendation	Manage-ment response (MR)	Action plan	Time-frame	Status
6	Reduce budget uncertainty surrounding funding cycles and/or disbursal timings	Partially accepted	Science Group (SG) Managing Directors (MDs) to explore with CGIAR management counterparts all possibilities to enhance stability in funding and reduce variability in funding to platforms and Initiatives.	Q4 2023	On track
7	Expand the GENDER Platform's budget in line with its expanded thematic mandate (youth and social inclusion) and for the purpose of achieving impact.	Partially accepted	Review plans from the GENDER Platform on broadening scope to cover youth and social inclusion and consider that in funding allocation decisions. Clarify the key roles of the platforms in enhancing impacts from CGIAR research and develop workplans for the GENDER Platform and other platforms.	Q2 2024 Q4 2023	Delayed On track
8	Use relevant metrics in individual performance assessments that assess for gender knowledge and skills.	Fully accepted	Science Group MDs to follow up with People and Culture, gender, diversity and inclusion (GDI) and centers to discuss how individual performance assessments for research staff could be shift towards a stronger outcome and impact focus across the five impact areas, including gender. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in gender research in CGIAR to inform strategic investments. Review the results framework for opportunities to improve incentives for delivering high quality gender research.	Q1 2024 Q4 2023 Q4 2023	Not started Not started On track
9	Recognize and support gender researchers by investing in career development for gender researchers.	Fully accepted	SG MDs to hold discussion with SLT members, including center management, to identify mechanisms that provide career development opportunities and help to retain gender researchers.	Q1 2024	Not started
10	Adopt inclusive decision making by making the GENDER Platform part of strategic decisions.	Fully accepted	Science MDs to establish an explicit role for the GENDER Platform in the development of the 2025-27 Research Portfolio. GENDER Platform 2024-30 Strategy design to explicitly meet CGIAR's needs in improving performance on gender equality, youth and social inclusion across CGIAR's portfolio, in line with the other four impact platforms.	Q3 2023 Q1 2024 Q4 2023	On track

Rec #	Recommendation	Manage-ment response (MR)	Action plan	Time-frame	Status
			Science MDs to establish recurring mechanisms for the GENDER Platform and other Impact Area Platforms to strategically review the performance of the CGIAR Research and Innovation Portfolio against the results framework and theory of change (ToC). As part of evolving matrix management for science between SGs and centers, include the GENDER Platform in design of major new bilateral grants and SG projects.	Q3 2023	
11	Modify the reporting structure to have closer links to the executive management team to inform strategy and policy and to ensure CGIAR cutting edge in the gender and research strategy.		Establish mechanisms for the GENDER Platform and the other impact area platforms to engage consistently with science management to inform decisions on science and innovation.	Q4 2023	Not started

Annex 4. CGIAR Research Initiatives: People Dashboards by Science Group and Overall

CGIAR Research Initiatives: People Dashboard
Leentership Report

<-Back to All staff

Science Group

☐ Genetic Innovation
☑ Resilient Agri-food Systems
☐ Systems Transformation

INIT Leadership Assignments

140

List of Initaitives

Name of the Initiative

INIT07 - OneHealth
INIT10 - Fragility to Resilience in CWANA
INIT11 - Excellence in Agronomy (EiA)
INIT12 - Nature-Positive Solutions
INIT13 - Plant Health
INIT14 - AgriLAC Resiliente
INIT15 - Aquatic Foods
INIT16 - Resilient Cities
INIT17 - Sustainable Animal Productivity (SAPLING)
INIT18 - Asian Mega-Deltas
INIT19 - Mixed Farming Systems
INIT20 - Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia (TAFSSA)
INIT21 - Diversification in East and Southern Africa (ESA)
INIT22 - West and Central African Food Systems Transformation (TAFS-WCA)
INIT34 - Livestock and Climate (LCSR)

Individual

117

FTE

41

Gender Distribution

Female 53 (38%)

Male 87 (62%)

Gender & Role

Lead: 15 (Male 11, Female)
Co-Lead: 16 (Male 8, Female 8)
WP Lead: 75 (Male 46, Female 29)
WP Co-Lead: 34 (Male 22, Female 12)

Gender ● Female ● Male

Center Representation

AfricaRice 4%
Alliance 19%
CIMMYT 13%
CIP 6%
External 1%
ICARDA 6%
IFPRI 9%
IITA 8%
ILRI 14%
IRRI 4%
IWMI 14%
WorldFish 4%

CGIAR Research Initiatives: People Dashboard

Leadership Report

<- Back to All staff

Science Group

☐ Genetic Innovation
☐ Resilient Agri-food Systems
☑ Systems Transformation

List of Initaitives

Name of the Initiative

INIT23 - Climate Resilience (ClimBer)
INIT24 - Foresight
INIT25 - Digital Innovation
INIT26 - Gender Equality (HER+)
INIT27 - National Policies and Strategies (NPS)
INIT28 - NEXUS-Gains
INIT29 - Rethinking Food Markets
INIT30 - Sustainable Healthy Diets (SHiFT)
INIT31 - Agroecology
INIT32 - Low-Emission Food Systems (Mitigate+)
INIT33 - Fruits and Vegetables (FRESH)
INIT35 - Fragility

INIT Leadership Assignments
101

Individual
82

FTE
28

Gender Distribution

Female 47 (4...)
Male 54 (53%)

Gender & Role

Role	Female	Male	Total
Lead	6	6	12
Co-Lead	6	6	12
WP Lead	30	28	58
WP Co-Lead	5	14	19

Gender ● Female ● Male

Center Representation

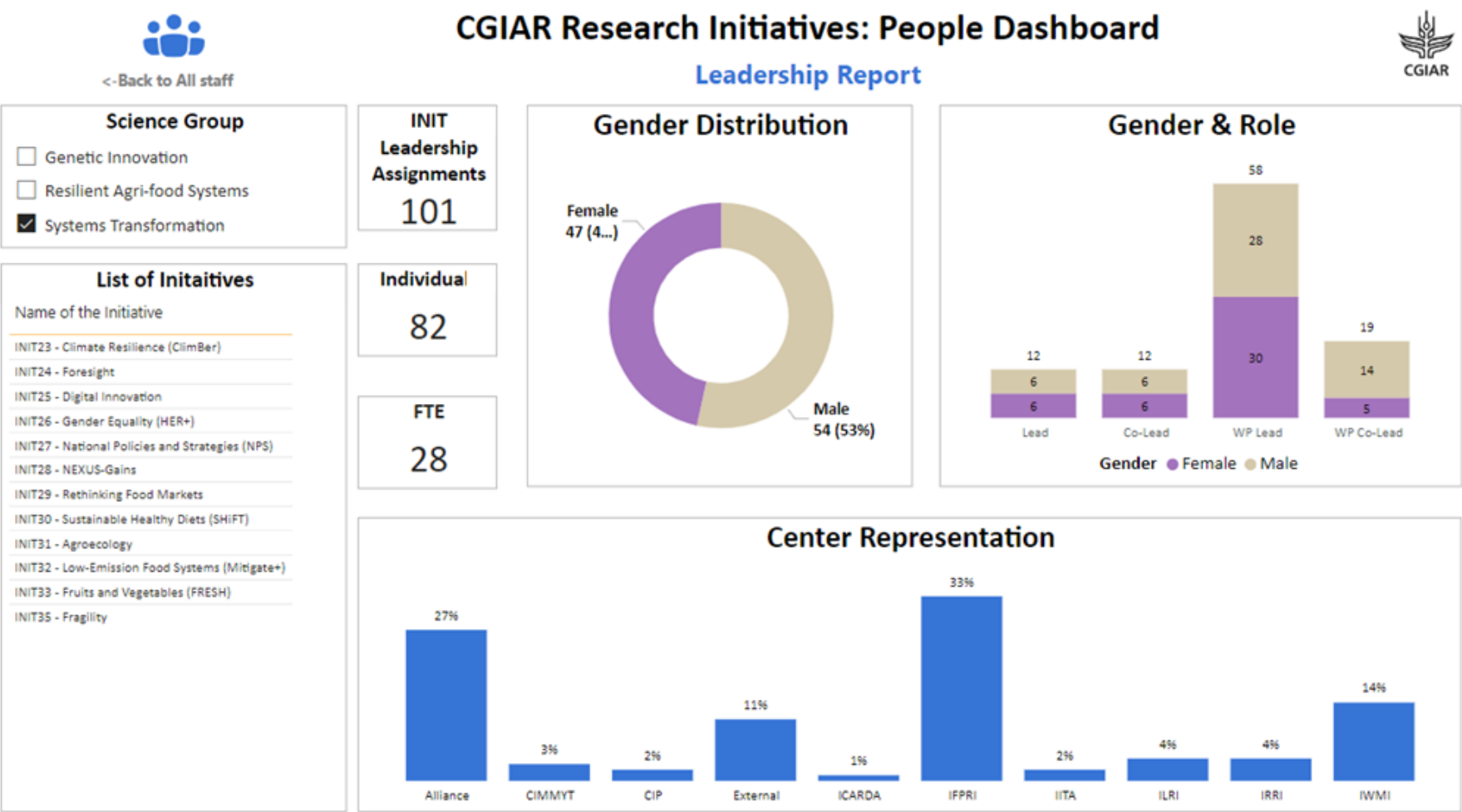| Center	Percentage
Alliance	27%
CIMMYT	3%
CIP	2%
External	11%
ICARDA	1%
IFPRI	33%
IITA	2%
ILRI	4%
IRRI	4%
IWMI	14%

Annex 5. Stakeholders Consulted for the Sub-Study of Gender and Social Inclusion

Name	Organization	Role	Location	Main position/ category	Category	Initiative title	Science Group
Polar, Vivian	International Potato Center (CIP)	Gender, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Market Intelligence WP5 Lead	Peru	Gender, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist; Gender Research Coordinator	CGIAR	INIT26 - Gender Equality INIT5 – Market Intelligence Genetic Innovation Gender Strategy	Genetic Innovation
Gilligan, Dan	IFPRI	Co-Lead	United States	Unit Director, Poverty, Gender and Inclusion	CGIAR	INIT26 - Gender Equality	Systems Transformation
Malapit, Hazel	IFPRI	Co-Lead, Methods Module	United States	Senior Research Coordinator	CGIAR	GENDER Impact Platform	Systems Transformation
Lecoutere, Els	ILRI	Co-Lead	Belgium	Science Officer	CGIAR	GENDER Impact Platform INIT26 - Gender Equality	Resilient Agrifood Systems
Adam, Rahma	World Fish	Focal point – cross-cutting themes[47]	Kenya	Gender, Social Inclusion and Market Scientist	CGIAR	Resilient Aquatic Food Systems for Healthy People and Planet	Resilient Agrifood Systems
Nguyen, Phuong	ILRI	Gender focal point	Vietnam		CGIAR	NA	Resilient Agrifood Systems
Galie, Alessandra	ILRI	WP3 Lead	Kenya	Team Leader	CGIAR	INIT17 – Sustainable Animal Productivity (SAPLING)	Resilient Agrifood Systems

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[47] RAFS SG does not have an Initiative with gender equality, youth and social inclusion as a primary Impact Area.

Name	Organization	Role	Location	Main position/ category	Category	Initiative title	Science Group
Joshi, Deepa	IWMI	WP4 Lead	Sri Lanka	Team Leader	CGIAR	INIT18 – Asian Mega Deltas (AMD)	Resilient Agrifood Systems
Nekesa, Makokha, Jackline	UNFCC	Director	Kenya	National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point for Kenya		PLTA01_Gender	Systems Transformation
Nchanji, Eileen	CIAT	WP6 Co-Lead	Kenya	Co-Lead	CGIAR	INIT6 - Seed Equal	Genetic Innovation
Frimpong, Benedict	CSIR-Crops Research Institute	Gender focal point	Ghana			INIT5 - Market Intelligence	Genetic Innovation
Balie, Jean	CGIAR System Organization	Platform Director			CGIAR	Poverty, Livelihoods, and Jobs Impact Area Platform	

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Additionally, the following briefs, theories of change, and reports were consulted:

Theory of change (ToC)	ST, RAFS and GI ToC
Initiatives Inception Briefs	CGIAR Initiative on Gender Equality: Inception Brief
2023 Budgets	Seed Equal
	Market Intelligence
	Gender Equality
	Aquatic Foods
	AMD
	SAPLING
2023 Annual Technical Reports	Seed Equal
	Market Intelligence
	Gender Equality
	Aquatic Foods
	AMD
	SAPLING