



Gender and Livestock Production

Background

Women worldwide play important roles in livestock keeping and provision of livestock services. However, a number of challenges face the livestock sector, including ensuring food and feed resources, and livelihood security for poor smallholder producers and processors. It is estimated that women compose around two-thirds of the 400 million poor livestock keepers who mainly rely on livestock for their income (FAO 2011 and 2012).

Many countries still face challenges in translating legislation related to women's access to and control of resources into action at the community and household level, impacting women's capacity to control and benefit from livestock. Women and men have different needs and constraints related to livestock production systems. Thus, a "gender lens" is needed to identify and address optimal outcomes, as well as the most effective use of resources.

Addressing gender in livestock projects means identifying, understanding the relevance of, and addressing the different livelihood needs, priorities, interests, and constraints of men and women along lines of age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and ability. It means maximizing the available social capital through engaging all household members as agents of poverty reduction. Women often have a predominant role in managing poultry, dairy and other animals that are housed and fed within the homestead. Men are more likely to be involved in constructing housing and herding of grazing animals, and in the marketing of products if women's mobility is constrained. Women strongly influence the use of eggs, milk and poultry meat for home consumption, and often have control over marketing and the income from these products, both in pastoral and sedentary societies. Ownership of livestock is particularly attractive and important to women in societies where, due to cultural norms, women's access to land and mobility are restricted.

Production system	Characteristics
Landless industrialized systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial, market-driven production systems Detached from their original land base, commercially oriented, and specialized in specific products Generally associated with large-scale enterprises Small-scale urban-based production units also important in developing countries <p><i>Potential areas for gender concern:</i> labour conditions, mobility, control over production, decision-making power</p>
Small-scale landless systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small-scale landless livestock keepers typically not owning croplands or with access to large communal grazing areas Typically found in urban and peri-urban areas and in rural areas with high population density <p><i>Potential areas for gender concern:</i> access to water, fodder, decision-making control, control over benefits, access to information on disease prevention and control</p>
Grassland-based or grazing systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typical of areas unsuitable or marginal for growing crops Most often found in arid and semi-arid areas Adaptive management practices needed for challenging environmental conditions <p><i>Potential areas for gender concern (depends on scale): large-scale ranches:</i> labour conditions, living conditions such as accommodation, control over decision-making; <i>small-scale:</i> intra-household decision-making, control over benefits, local knowledge, and gendered roles in animal husbandry, disease prevention and control</p>
Mixed farming systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the world's ruminants kept within crop-livestock systems Characterized by relatively low levels of external inputs Products of one part of the system used as inputs for the other <p><i>Potential areas for gender concern:</i> access to and control of inputs (land, water, credit); intra-household decision-making; access to extension services, veterinary services; capacities for scaling up</p>

Table 1. General Characteristics of Different Livestock Production Systems (FAO, WB, IFAD 2008)

Non-traditional fodder project, Egypt

The buffalo is of high economic and social importance for the farming families in Egypt, with women responsible for their feeding, milking and calf rearing. However, a high calf mortality rate was a major problem in the project region, creating severe financial losses for the families. Even with considerable time and financial investment, neither extensionists nor veterinarians could discern the root causes. On behalf of BMZ, GIZ supported the extension service in a totally new approach: to focus on the female farmers and contact them directly through newly employed female extensionists. It did not take long for the female extensionists to identify the real reasons behind the mortality rate. Per tradition, women were throwing away the first milk of a cow (colostrum) due to its consistency and colour, thus depriving the new born

calf of its natural immunity. Also, the female farmers were allowing the young calves to suckle only two or three times a day, in effect starving the newborn of needed nutrition. After a tailor-made extension program targeted the farming women, the calf mortality rate decreased to a normal level. The GIZ supported project noted three main impacts on women: the family's monetary income increased, the overall situation of the household improved, and the social status of women increased as they gained visibility. Furthermore, the extension service now recognized women as an important target group and started to invest in extension services for female farmers and women groups. The higher income generated by decreased calf mortality and increased milk production was spent for the benefit of the whole household. The improved economic position of women also increased their social status and decision-making power both inside and outside the household.

In the gendered division of labour, women perform a variety of tasks, including general agricultural work and raising cattle, alongside maintaining the household and family. Women feed the animals, clean their stalls, compost manure, and are responsible for the breeding and tending to the health of smaller animals. Given the importance and variety of these tasks, women are important bearers of knowledge related to the sustainable use of natural resources, e.g. strategies for adapting to climate change and conserving agrobiodiversity.

Ensuring women's access to and control of resources such as land, livestock, markets, information and credit strengthens their influence and social empowerment. Designing livestock development programs with a targeted gender approach will therefore improve the overall program impact in terms of poverty reduction and food security.

Steps to Action and Best Practices

Promoting gender equality has been a fundamental principle of German development policy for many years. The following steps to action and best practices from concerned projects - implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) - have been proven as successful approaches and helpful starting points in strengthening the roles of women in livestock production.

Build capacity and networks

Women are often left out of male-dominated networks and trainings. Women's networks and groups have been proven to be useful pathways for passing information on to women. Through these channels women have easier access to sharing knowledge, creating funds for saving and input supply (e.g. fodder and vaccination), and establishing small businesses.

On behalf of BMZ, GIZ assists the development of female networks and groups in livestock production through the following activities:

- Provide targeted training of women to support their economic and cultural role in livestock production.
- Focus on poor women to increase their economic and social status in the community and avoid marginalisation.

Develop gender-sensitive livestock activities

Because of a lack of human and financial capital, many countries still face challenges in implementing legislation related to women's access to and control of resources at the community and household levels, which further impacts women's capacity to control and benefit from livestock. Poultry, however, is the almost universal exception: women around the world tend to have control over the poultry they produce and market.

GIZ assists the development of women's control and benefits of livestock production through the following activities:

- Analyse the best entry points for inclusion of women in capacity building activities.
- Ensure activities are implemented in a locally acceptable manner, recognizing the traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women in a given community.
- Identify pathways for enhancing women's skills and knowledge to ensure economic growth and improved livelihoods for the whole family.

Best Practice

Poultry production support, Afghanistan

More than 25,000 female poultry farmers in Afghanistan have received support from the GIZ implemented and World Bank funded Horticulture and Livestock Project (HLP). Since livestock, and especially poultry, is a female domain in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) emphasized support for female farmers and their needs through the poultry program of HLP. Women received layer and broiler chicks, as well as the required input (feeders, drinkers, feed, medicine and vaccines), as a starting kit. Each beneficiary also received three months of adapted training by female trainers in poultry husbandry and marketing. Female farmers then used their own resources to build chicken coops. As a result of the project's activities and the active support of MAIL, women in rural Afghanistan are now able to generate income for themselves and their families. Alongside the additional financial resources, the social standing of the female farmers has also increased. In 2012 alone, the 100 female poultry farmers presently registered with the pilot project produced 987,000 eggs (total value 152,000 Euro) and 22,000 kg of poultry meat (total value 40,000 Euro). HLP is now transitioning into the National Horticulture and Livestock Project. Building on their proven success, support to female poultry farmers will remain high on the agenda in the coming years.

Recognize gender aspects in safeguards to animal wealth and health, and ensure women's access to livestock health services

Men and women contribute to the enhancement of gene flow and domestic animal diversity through local knowledge systems, as well as disease prevention and treatment. However, different groups (men, women, boys and girls) often have different

knowledge and livestock skills according to their roles and responsibilities. Women livestock owners often have cultural, traditional, financial or other restrictive issues limiting access to proper medical treatment for their animals, which may lead to serious production and herd losses. Women also have limited access to improved breeding material and knowledge. Gendered asymmetries in access to livestock and veterinary services do a great disservice to all livestock producers and processors, lowering the potential for sustainable and effective action along a given livestock value chain. German development cooperation actively supports the conservation of gene pools and local knowledge through support to international research and development projects. In dry-land areas, GIZ's Advisory Service on Agricultural Research for Development coordinates with other international agricultural research centres. Activities that support agrobiodiversity conservation include:

- Assessment of dry-land resources and community services
- Cultivation and processing of dry-land plants and animals
- Optimization of traditional resource use and management
- Promotion of the different agrobiodiversity components interacting with each other, their environment and the climate.

Include gender aspects in new livestock technology development

Men and women have different needs, interests and constraints with regards to development and delivery of new livestock technology. As services and access to information are increasingly privatized, women face severe challenges as their access to markets, services, technologies, information and credit schemes is lowered even further, thereby decreasing their ability to improve productivity and benefit from a growing livestock sector. Livestock production scale-up to meet the increasing demand from growing urban populations is not an easy task for women: decisions, income and sometimes the entire enterprise shifts to men, and women tend to go from an employer to employee role. Consideration of the needs of poor women and men when developing livestock technologies will reduce their workload, increase productivity and improve food security: thus, overall income generation will be improved.

GIZ assists the economic empowerment of women by focusing on the following:

- Increase the economic participation of women through targeted livestock activities
- Improve the conditions for women in the private sector and their access to vocational training, as well as development of specific financial products for women
- Dismantle local barriers and promote women's access to credit, e.g. women saving groups.



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Photo left: Indian woman looking after her own herd of cows.
 Photo right: Mixed livestock marketing association in Niger.

Stumbling Steps and Lessons Learnt

- Sustainable agriculture/livestock activities depend on a mid to long-term approach. Sustainable agriculture-based value chains linked to national or international markets especially require long-term efforts, i.e. 10 years and more.
- Livestock projects provide good opportunities for a gender-balanced approach to support a comprehensive, sustainable, social and economic development.
- Projects and initiatives in livestock, agriculture and horticulture sectors are more successful when an existing and successful traditional approach/business activity is scaled-up; e.g. food security is combined with improved self-consumption, or income generation is connected to demand-driven market supply.
- Projects are more successful when based on existing know-how, capacity and experiences of women, according to their traditional roles and activities – and according to well-analyzed demands; aim to both improve food security and support local and existing market demands; organize women in groups and strengthen their social cohesion and mutual support; and emphasize women's participation in project planning and needs assessment of all projects.
- For successful income support, markets with customer demand are needed, including local/urban, national or international levels. Linkages to these markets require professional and highly motivated management skills and engagement.
- The higher the traditional know-how at producer/farmer level, the higher the ownership and probability for sustainability.
- An initial step in a gender-balanced approach is respecting and promoting the productive traditional roles and potentials of men and women.

- The best pathway out of poverty for the majority of the poor, especially women and smallholders, is the use of simple interventions in livestock production. For example, it is better to begin with improving livestock management and fodder supply, rather than with artificial insemination and breeding.

Questions to be answered in gender studies

1. Which strategies best ensure women's access to the new technologies and knowledge transitioning into more intensive livestock systems and markets?
2. What actions are needed to ensure that legislation related to women's access to and control of resources such as livestock is translated into action at the community and household level?
3. What are ways to mainstream gender aspects into project design, ensuring specific awareness of women's role and access to developing their livestock activities with a clear vision of women's demands and benefits?

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