



# A different kettle of fish?

Gender integration in livestock and fish research

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## 7 A FEAST FOR WOMEN AND MEN: GENDERIZING A FEED-ASSESSMENT TOOL

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### Organizations

ILRI, CIAT, ICARDA

### Species



**Methods:** A tool using focus group discussions and individual interviews

**Summary:** Revising a widely used livestock feed rapid assessment tool to include gender

### Locations



**W**HEN PLANNING research activities or development projects, livestock and fish scientists and development workers frequently need to find out about the availability of feeds and forages in a particular area. Conventional survey methods tend to be lengthy and laborious, and so costly to use, and are often also supply- rather than demand-driven. We needed a simple, quick, cheap tool to focus on livestock feed and factors that affect it.

Over the last 7 years, scientists at ILRI, CIAT and ICARDA have developed such a tool, known as the Feed Assessment Tool, or FEAST ([www.ilri.org/feast](http://www.ilri.org/feast)). This consists of two parts: a rapid, participatory assessment using focus groups, and individual farmer interviews:

- The **feed assessment** is conducted with a focus group of farmers and follows a set of guide questions. It identifies problems and opportunities within a given farming system and identifies potential interventions.
- A subset of farmers is then **interviewed individually** to generate quantitative information that is input into a specialized computer application.

The computer application generates charts and tables that, along with the qualitative information from the focus groups, reveal the overall feed availability, quality and utilization. The solutions coming out of FEAST exercises are demand-driven and provide practical solutions that farmers can easily take up and improve their farming methods. FEAST has gained popularity rapidly: research and development projects and institutions have used it in 16 countries

in Africa and South Asia. There are over 350 FEAST trainers worldwide (74% men and 27% women).

While our national partners have found FEAST useful, they also commented that it was “gender blind”: it did not collect sex-disaggregated data that would enable gender analysis or the development of gender-aware innovations that might enable men and women to improve their productivity, working conditions, and control over assets and income.



We aimed to include gender in FEAST for two reasons:

- **To improve the design of feed interventions** by considering the constraints that households face, such as the labour burden on women and their limited access to and control over resources.
- **To improve the targeting** of the interventions by taking into account the problems and solutions for both women and men.

The process of incorporating gender into FEAST consisted of a series of steps. We discuss each in detail below.

### Familiarization

The team first reviewed the existing tool so the gender specialists could understand what it did and how it was used. We then conducted FEAST exercises in Dodicha and Haleku Gulenta peasant associations (*kabeles*), Adami Tullu District, in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, using the existing, non-gendered, FEAST tool. The aim of these exercises was to identify gaps and areas where gender dimensions could be built in; the only thing we did differently from normal was to hold not one but two focus groups: one with women farmers and one with men.



We learned that men and women differed in their responses, both in the focus group and the individual interviews. We also noted that the women and men expressed their opinions freely when they were in separate groups, and their opinions varied.

### Incorporating gender

Based on our review and the Ethiopia field exercises, we identified two ways of engendering the FEAST tool:

The first one concerned an **adjustment of the procedure**. Possibilities included:

- Holding separate focus-group discussions with men and women.
- Selecting respondents for both the focus groups and individual interviews to ensure all relevant social categories were represented: covering men and women, old and young, and different levels of wealth and type of households.
- Ensuring that both male- and female-headed households were included in the focus groups and interviews.

The second one concerned **revising the content of the questions** in the focus-group guide and interview questionnaire. These revisions sought to include the following gender concepts:

- Differentiation between men and women, and between male- and female-headed households
- The gender division of labour (who does what?)
- Access to and control over productive resources
- Gendered needs and priorities (problems and solutions).

Table 7.1 shows how gender concepts were introduced into three main sections of the guidelines used in the focus-group discussions. The first two columns show the main sections of this tool. The third column shows the gender concepts that we integrated, while the fourth column presents the topics of the new questions.

**Box 7.1     Housing and feeding of livestock**

**Original version**

What is the style of feeding (stall-fed, tethered, open grazing or combination)?

**Gendered version**

What is the style of feeding (stall-fed, tethered, open grazing or combination)?

Type of livestock	Feeding style	Who does it?	How much time is required?

**Table 7.1 Integrating gender into FEAST: How the focus-group guidelines changed**

Section	Original version		Gender concepts integrated		Engendered version
General information	(Mixed groups of women and men)	+	Sex of respondents	→	(Separate groups for women and men)
	Farm size	+	Household type	→	Distribution of farm sizes by male- and female-headed households
	Average household size	+	Sex-disaggregated data on migration	→	Percentage of men, women and youth migrating out of community
	Rainfall pattern	–			No change
	Cropping season	+	Gender division of labour	→	Who does what in cropping activities?
	Availability of water and irrigation	+	Access to resources	→	Who has access to irrigation and water, and for which crops are they used? What constraints are faced in accessing water/irrigation?
	Labour availability	+	Access to resources	→	Costs of daily labour (male and female) for different activities
	Livestock species	+	Access to resources, decision-making	→	Who has access to which animals? Who makes most decisions on which animals?
General farming system	Credit availability	+	Access to & control over resources	→	Who has access to and control over credit (per activity) (differentiating activities, seasonality and formal/informal)?
	Land availability	–			No change
	Availability of crop & livestock inputs	+	Access to and control over resources	→	How accessible are inputs for women? Who has access to and control over inputs?
	Housing & feeding of livestock	+	Gender division of labour	→	Who does what in feeding activities?
Ownership and management of livestock species	Veterinary / animal health services	+	Access to & control over resources	→	Who has access to and control over the types of veterinary and animal health services?
	Livestock reproduction methods	+	Access to and control over resources	→	Who has access to and control over livestock reproduction services?
Problems, issues & opportunities	Major livestock production problems & potential solutions	+	Gender based constraints and opportunities	→	What are major problems & potential solutions (asked to separated focus groups) Who is most affected?

We circulated the newly engendered tool for review by the FEAST technical research team. This team was worried that the new version was longer, so more time, staff and money would be needed to use it. The original tool was popular because it was “quick and dirty”, and the reviewers feared this advantage might be lost.

Box 7.1 illustrates this distinction: where the original version had a single question, the gendered version asked for more precise and detailed information (the style of feeding for each species) in a specific format, and added two new questions: who feeds the animals and how long it takes. The gendered version collected more detailed data, so required and hence implied a longer questionnaire.

## Pretesting

We pretested the gendered tool in November 2015 in Mbulu (Arusha Region) and Karatu (Manyara Region), in northern Tanzania, under the auspices of the SIMLESA Tanzania project. While SIMLESA (Sustainable Intensification of Maize and Legume Systems for Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa) focuses on crops, these are also a valuable source of livestock feed – hence our interest in gathering information on feed availability.

In the focus-group discussion, we tested two levels of questioning: a moderate amount, and extensive probing to explore the participants’ reasons for their responses. The original FEAST tool had only minimal probing.

The research process indeed took longer. In Mbulu, we were not able to conduct individual interviews with any women farmers because the focus groups alone took 4.5 hours to complete, even with minimal probing. We did complete individual questionnaires with a few male farmers. In Karatu, we did not manage to complete any individual questionnaires at all: we probed extensively during the focus groups, so they took 5–6 hours. In both places, we ran out of time, and the farmers were tired after the lengthy focus-group discussions. This contrasts with the original, ungendered FEAST procedure, in which the focus groups and individual interviews together take at most 3 hours 45 minutes of a farmer’s time.

Nevertheless, the gendered FEAST tool revealed some important details that would have remained hidden if we had used the original tool. Women and men had different opinions on various issues. For example, women were worried about feed options that might increase their workload, and also preferred those that would bring income under their control.



**Table 7.2 Time and staff requirements of different versions of the FEAST tool**

Focus groups			Individual interviews			Overall	
Respondents	Probing level	Hours	Respondents	Time per interview	Total hours	Total hours	Staff needed*
Original, “gender-blind”							
Single mixed group: 15–25 men + women	Minimal	3.5	Two interviews at a time, 9 men + women	30 mins	2.5	6	2
Gendered, pretest (Tanzania)							
Two separate groups: 10 men, 10 women	Extensive (Karatu)	6	Four interviews at a time, 6 men, 6 women	45 min†	2.25	8.25	4
	Moderate (Mbulu)	4.5		30 mins	1.5	5.5	4
Gendered, revised†							
Two separate groups: 10 men, 10 women	“Smart”	3.5†	Four interviews at a time, 6 men, 6 women	30 min†	1.5	5	4

\* Excludes translators

† Estimated (not tested)

Conducting separate focus groups for men and women freed up the discussion considerably: women, especially, felt more able to express themselves than in a mixed group. We found that while men seemed comfortable with either male or female facilitators, women were more open if the facilitator was a woman.

## Revision

Engendering the FEAST tool brought to the surface some crucial dilemmas. The engendered tool required more time and staff. To conduct parallel focus groups, we needed twice as many field staff: two facilitators and two note-takers, and because the discussions were held in the local languages, two translators as well. We also found that some of the gender-differentiated questions were not applicable, making the tool long and cumbersome.

Table 7.2 encapsulates this dilemma: the original tool we employed in Ethiopia was fast and easy to use, but was gender-blind: it did not capture the detail needed to detect gender issues that might critically affect feed interventions.



The gendered tool we pretested in Tanzania in theory at least produced the required level of detail, but was too time-consuming to be practical. We need to find a middle way.

After weighing the trade-offs, we agreed to produce a revised gendered tool that will allow a minimum but critical level of gender integration using as few additional resources as possible. We have retained the separate focus groups for men and women, and will conduct individual interviews with men and women. And we are simplifying several questions and trimming the number of questions where we differentiate by gender. We have not yet tested this revised version, but expect it to take only half a day to administer if enough field staff are available. This is significantly quicker than the more elaborately gendered versions. It may even be faster than the original gender-blind version because the extra field staff can get through the individual interviews more quickly.



Staff time is one consideration; another is the amount of respondents' time needed to gather data. This is important because we rely on the respondents' goodwill and willingness to devote time they could spend in other ways (including earning a living). The original tool took 4 hours of each farmer's time if they attended both the focus group and the individual interviews – about half a day. The pre-test version took up to 6.75 hours, or nearly a full day. The revised version we hope will only take 4 hours: the same as the original version.

## **A balancing act**

A proper understanding of gender issues must be based on reliable information on how societies and households manage access to and control over resources, and on the relationships between women and men. We have found that collecting such information via the FEAST tool is possible, and indeed is useful – and that it needs to be carefully balanced against the time and the number of staff needed.

We are now happy with the focus-group discussion guidelines we have developed: they hit the right balance between detail and cost. But still have several steps ahead of us in coming up with a revised FEAST tool.

**Individual questionnaires.** We still need to finalize and test the revisions to the individual questionnaires.

**Reporting formats.** We need to develop a format for the reports generated by the engendered tool. This will include instructions on how to write up the gender analysis (as a separate section, or throughout the report?), and standard ways to present gender-specific data such as:

- An overview of the number of men and women farmers interviewed and their demographic characteristics
- A comparison of the answers of men and women farmers in a category to reveal any differences in their characteristics. For example, do men and women farmers with various herd sizes use different types of feed?
- The allocation of labour and livestock ownership among household members.
- Problems, issues and opportunities identified by women and men focus groups.

**The FEAST application.** Once we have these building blocks, we can revise the downloadable FEAST application that researchers and development workers can use in the field.

**E-learning modules.** We will also update the e-learning modules that users can follow to learn how to use the FEAST application.



*“FEAST is gender-blind and it doesn’t take into consideration gender issues.’ The feeds and forages team took this criticism on board and we began to look at options and think of ways how to engender the FEAST tool and make it better.”*

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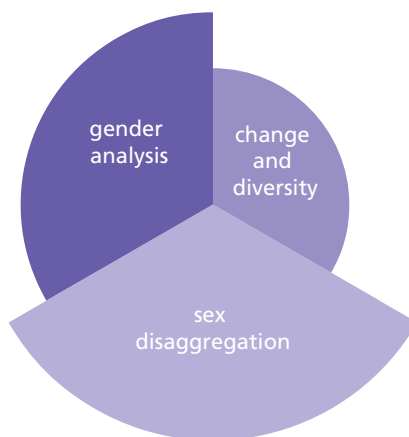


[https://youtu.be/U\\_eH0wPumZA](https://youtu.be/U_eH0wPumZA)

## Situating the research

*This project responds to the question: “How do gender relations affect design, delivery and adoption of innovation, in particular feed interventions?” Integrating gender into an existing, established tool is a powerful opportunity to support research and practitioners to bring key aspects of gender relations to the surface. The engendered tool can assist researchers and practitioners to assess how gender relations affect livestock farming, and especially feeding practices and innovations. The revisions in the tool’s process and content:*

- Contribute to collecting data from both women and men in both the focus-group discussions and the individual interviews. The revisions also seek to collect data about women and men.
- Gender concepts addressed in the tool include: **gender division of labour** in cropping activities, livestock management and feeding; **access to resources** related to water and irrigation, labour, livestock, credit, farming inputs, veterinary and animal-health services, including livestock reproduction methods; **decision-making** on livestock management.
- Diversity is addressed by including women and men from different household types (male-headed, female-headed, female-managed), and asking about differences between these households. It is also addressed by including men and women from different wealth categories and ages.



## References

FEAST website. [www.ilri.org/feast](http://www.ilri.org/feast)

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