

Barriers and solutions to Gender Integration in Agriculture, Climate Change, Food Security, and Nutrition Policies: Guatemalan and Honduran reflections for the enhancement of CSA related policies

Authors: Fanny Howland¹, Mariola Acosta¹, Juliana Muriel¹, Jean Francois Le Coq^{1,2}

1: Alliance Bioversity and Ciat

2: Cirad

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Technical University of Munich and EAFIT University

Medellin Colombia

Abstract

Gender mainstreaming has been associated to the creation of an enabling environment for CSA. Indeed, gender mainstreaming is considered, at international level, as critical to achieving national development goals and addressing key global challenges such as climate change and food and nutrition insecurity in the agriculture sector. However, despite multiple international commitments on gender issues, having gender-labeled policy and governmental gender bodies, gender mainstreaming in the policy cycle is lagging. In this communication for the CSA workshop, we propose to identify and analyze the barriers leading to poor gender mainstreaming and potential solutions in policies for CSA in Guatemala and Honduras.

Indeed, within the gender and development literature has been extensively researched and emphasized the importance of considering the nexus between gender, agriculture, food security and nutrition (FSN), and climate change (CC) not only to reduce gender inequalities, but also to address CC and FSN issues. However, few studies address the process of gender integration in the policy cycle related to the nexus of gender, agriculture, FSN, and CC, the critical policy nexus to create a CSA enabling environment. No specific methodology has been developed to assess gender integration in CC, FSN, and agricultural policies either. This study seeks to bridge this gap.

We developed and conducted a methodology based on the three concepts of policy integration, policy mix and policy translation. We rely on the ‘policy integration’ concept to capture the level of integration of gender issues. Policy integration refers to the incorporation of an issue in policy making and policy evaluation and is often used interchangeably with mainstreaming. We consider integration at all stages of the policy cycle from elaboration, to implementation and evaluation. The concept of ‘policy mix’ captures the interactions between relevant policies affecting a boundary spanning challenges in a specific space and time. It also enables us to the analyze the coherence of the interaction of policy instruments (instruments mix) to achieve a specific goal. We considered gender equity as our boundary-spanning challenge, and the scope of our analyzed policy mix includes the policy domains of gender, CC, FSN, and agriculture. Analyzing policy interactions can furnish a more holistic understanding of how policies included in the policy mix affect gender equity.

As the issue of gender integration has been promoted by international arena toward national or local arena, especially in less developed countries (Acosta et al., 2019a), we also mobilize ‘policy translation’ concepts as it is one of the processes affecting policy integration. Considering two different countries, incorporating the policy translation concept enables us to better

understanding of the potential barriers to gender integration in policies related to CC, agriculture, and FSN during this translation phase.

Through policy document analysis and key informant interviews, we examine the barriers that result in poor gender mainstreaming in CC, FSN, and agricultural policies and explore possible solutions, using a case study approach applied to Guatemala and Honduras. Guatemala and Honduras were selected as very relevant cases to address gender mainstreaming issue. On the one hand, the two countries have made international commitments related to gender integration in policy, and their governments have elaborated gender policies at national and sectorial levels (e.g. agriculture) and created gender bodies in charge of coordinating gender mainstreaming/gender policy implementation.

Results show that, despite having made multiple international commitments on gender issues and having gender-labeled policy and governmental gender bodies, gender mainstreaming in the policy cycle is lagging. There are multiple barriers of a different nature and at different levels that explain the lack of gender integration in the policy cycle, related and linked to: (1) policy translation from the international level; (2) structural policy barriers at national level; (3) behaviors and corruption; and (4) lack of knowledge and capacity.

At policy translation level, although gender is integrated in sectorial and national policy, it is not sufficient to observe a change in bridging/closing the gender gaps.

At structural policy level, there is a gap between the creation of policies and their implementation. The lack of gender integration also comes from the way governments operate, divided by sectors and not used to working on cross-cutting issues. Additionally, we establish a link between the country's structural poverty and the lack of gender integration in policies. Finally, the weakness of the gender institutional framework in terms of human resources staff capacity constitute an additional barrier.

Behaviors and corruption barriers refer to state corruption, patriarchal culture, and the lack of interest by politicians that affect the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming.

The lack of knowledge and capacity barriers correspond to the lack of gender awareness. This leads to the coexistence of different definitions of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in policies and, consequently, different conceptions of how to achieve it. Besides, the technical approach given to CC issue results in ignoring its social aspects and thus the lack of gender inclusion.

Solutions to address these barriers have been identified. Some of the solutions mentioned by interviewees in both countries and in policy documents are consistent with literature findings such as the need to keep building capacity on gender, to produce scientific evidence on gender to inform policy, to push for more law enforcement, to foster women access to property, and to improve policy and project design.

Additionally, our study shed light on the level of discouragement and feelings of powerlessness of key informants on the situation they shared, to which they saw no solution, as was particularly the case in Guatemala. Furthermore, there were no references to the need to strengthen sectorial gender units and civil society (both financially and in terms of capacity). We also highlight the importance of considering the nature of the relationship (purely technical and/or political) between governments and international cooperation actors to evaluate the level of gender integration in policy.

Neither in this study (interviews and policy documents) nor in the literature were concrete solutions proposed to overcoming the barriers related to structural racism and machismo, religious extremism, power groups, and censorship of civil society.

Based on these findings we find interesting to further discuss, the role of research for development organizations as well as the wider international cooperation in addressing those barriers. We find interesting to start discussing how to address complex barriers of structural racism and machismo, religious extremism, power groups, and censorship of civil society from science and/or other modes of action.

We hope that these findings can help the reflection on how to build enabling policy environments to achieve CSA goals which is underpinned by gender inclusion in all policy cycle.