

# Addressing Social Exclusion in Agricultural Development and Research



“Men from this village don’t like to see women as leaders, as chiefs. They like to see women at the bottom level.”

**Woman in Manica province,  
Mozambique**

## The development challenge

Awareness of social relationships is key to understanding and addressing today’s most complex problems, including food insecurity, climate change and financial instability. Factors of difference (such as gender, age or ethnicity, people living with HIV/AIDS and households headed by children or the elderly) affect the social relationships that determine who has access and control over limited resources, who participates, who is vulnerable and who has a voice. Indeed, social relationships set in motion the very processes of inclusion and exclusion that govern people’s ability to cope and manage their livelihoods.

Gender inequalities are particularly pervasive. In rural areas where agriculture is the dominant source of livelihoods, such as sub-Saharan Africa, women play an intrinsic role in food security and family well-being. However, they are more likely to be hungry and living in poverty and less likely to have access to support or skills to improve their livelihoods. Women’s time and labour is increasingly constrained by the decline of male participation in agriculture through migration, ill health or involvement in other income activities. Women are also affected by these issues.

“I am a widow and have three children. After my husband’s death, his parents moved me from my house and land, which I shared with my husband. I had to start from nothing.”

**Woman from Cabo Delgado  
province, Mozambique**



Social difference also plays an important role in shaping institutions and service delivery. For example, women experience many barriers to acquiring agricultural and scientific qualifications, such as the preference for boys taking science in school, and these contribute to low female representation in agricultural extension, research and government. This makes it all the more important for organisations to build capacity in their staff to provide a gender-balanced and diversity-sensitive service with adequate policies and accountability systems to ensure that equality is promoted at all levels.

“We had a programme where we explained to community members the value of women’s work and how it is unpaid. This has helped women. One day we were in the field and a woman pointed with a big smile on her face to her husband sweeping.”

**Female extension agent, Ghana**

## Our programme

The Natural Resources Institute (NRI) integrates a gender and diversity approach into its programmes and contributes to the body of knowledge of inequality in agricultural development and research. Our approach is contextually based, ensuring that methodologies are focused on understanding the local context, norms and culture that influence people’s well-being in the household, community and wider environment. We also work at an institutional level to identify the

ways in which our partners think and act in relation to gender and diversity.

This information is fed into the design and implementation of our programmes to ensure that an equitable impact is achieved, that opportunities for women and vulnerable groups are promoted and that participation is supported. NRI encourages dialogue and lesson sharing among our partners, with the aim of contributing to a more nuanced understanding of difference and inequality.

## Recent and ongoing NRI activities

### Integrating gender and diversity into value chains

NRI is the lead partner in the Cassava: Adding Value for Africa (C:AVA) project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The project is working in a number of sub-Saharan African countries to support cassava value chains and improve farmer livelihoods. Gender and diversity have been integrated into programme activities to enable the effective targeting of women and vulnerable groups and to encourage participation up the value chain. Activities include:

- Studies examining gender dynamics in cassava value chains and the interrelationships of farmers, processors, traders/intermediaries, service providers and end users
- Gender and diversity analyses at community and household level to guide project interventions, including examination of women’s access and control of resources



- Gender and diversity audits examining the institutional capacity of implementing partners to address gender and diversity, leading to capacity-building activities.

### **Gender, land and natural resource conflict**

NRI is providing advisory services for the Community Lands (ITC) project, dedicated to resolving land and natural resource conflict in three provinces of Mozambique. As part of its involvement, NRI conducted a gender audit of the ITC programme, with the aim of improving project implementation. NRI produced a learning tool, a range of monitoring and evaluation tools and a comprehensive report, and also developed training sessions, all aimed at addressing the gender dimensions of community engagement activities among ITC management structures, service providers and implementing partner organisations.

“There are a lot of problems because of the lack of water. It is very dry. Women have to take water from a long distance.”

**Man from Manica province,  
Mozambique**

### **Strengthening capacity**

NRI plays a lead strategic role in the Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research and Development in Africa (SCARDA) project, which aims to strengthen the capacity of national agricultural research systems. NRI's activities included the development of the SCARDA gender strategy and a four-country study focusing on the constraints and opportunities in attracting women and minority groups into higher agricultural education.



## Gender and climate change

NRI staff began working on the gender dimensions of climate change in 2002 in a study for Oxfam funded by DFID and have followed this in various studies and advisory roles. For example, in 2009–10 a scoping study of the gender dimensions of biofuels was completed, as was a guidance briefing paper for policy makers. In 2009, NRI provided advisory support to UNDP climate change and gender field research in Vietnam, culminating in a policy paper. The gender dimensions of agricultural adaptation in response to climate change were analysed in a recent journal article in Oxfam Gender and Development by NRI staff working with a CCAA programme project in Tanzania. In 2010, a thematic review and annotated bibliography on gender, generations and environmental vulnerabilities was completed for ODI. A study on smallholder agriculture, climate change and gender has recently been undertaken for CIAT-Africa and the Pan-African research

networks (PABRA), and this study fed into a strategic planning workshop in Arusha, which took place in 2010.

## Urban livelihoods and social inclusion

NRI is a partner in the EC-funded Sustainable Water management Improves Tomorrow's Cities' Health (SWITCH) integrated project, contributing to social inclusion and urban agriculture work packages at demonstration sites in Accra and Alexandria. The project seeks to establish a new paradigm in integrated urban water management, using a 'learning alliance' approach in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia.

NRI developed and ran a training course on social inclusion for partner organisations, designed and implemented social inclusion and water access research at demonstration sites in Accra and Alexandria, and wrote papers on social inclusion, urban water management and participatory governance and budgeting.

"It is not easy for any youth to 'make it' in the village. We need to make ends meet ... and this cannot be achieved by staying in the village to continue farming. This is the same occupation that our parents have been doing for decades, and it hasn't brought them any major gain; they cannot even send us to school, and some of us who attended school could not finish due to lack of funds."

**Member of a youth group in Ondo State, Nigeria**

"Women are most affected [by food insecurity] because the whole family depends on them and expects a meal. Men stay away from the home for long periods to avoid being confronted to provide. In such seasons, men may even steal to feed the family; people look for extra work, beg and reduce food portions and frequency of serving meals."

**Man from Rachuonyo district, Kenya**

## Selected publications

Forsythe, L., Mangheni, M. and Martin, A. (2010) 'Attracting women into agricultural education: Constraints and best practice'. *SCARDA Briefing Papers*.

Mangheni, M., Ekirikubinza-Tibatemwa, L. and L. Forsythe (2010) *Gender issues in agricultural education within African universities*. Gender Background Paper for the Ministerial Conference on Higher Education in Agriculture in Africa.

Martin, A. and Albright, K. (2003) 'Integrated pest management: Gender sensitive and participatory approaches to IPM' in M. Jacobs and B. Dinham (eds.), *Silent Invaders: Pesticides, Livelihoods and Women's Health*. London: Zed Books. 280–291.

Martin, A., Verhagen, J. and Abatania, L. (2008) 'Urban agriculture and social inclusion'. *Urban Agriculture Magazine*, **20**: 17–19.

Nelson, V., Martin, A.M. and Dramé Yayé, A.D. (2008) 'Gender and diversity in sustainable agricultural research and innovation: Issues, challenges and the way forward'. *SCARDA Briefing Papers*, **3**: 33–45.

Nelson, V. and Stathers, T. (2009) 'Resilience, power, culture, and climate: A case study from semi-arid Tanzania, and new research directions'. *Gender and Development*, **17**(2): 81–94.

White, J. and Morton, J. (2005) 'Mitigating impacts of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods: NGO experiences in sub-Saharan Africa'. *Development in Practice*, **15**(2): 186–199.



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**FS 54723**  
**ISO 9001**



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