

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Standards for collecting sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis:

A guide for CGIAR researchers

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Given the increased attention to gender issues in research, researchers are often expected to conduct gender analyses, which necessitate collecting relevant data. The present document provides insights on ways to collect such data. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. The CGIAR Gender and Agriculture Research Network recently endorsed these standards, which were developed by Cheryl Doss and Caitlin Kieran, researchers with the CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM). These standards will provide guidance not only for CGIAR researchers collecting sex-disaggregated data but also for the broader research community engaged in gender analysis on agricultural issues.


The authors identify some simple and achievable steps for gathering such data on certain broad research areas. These guidelines raise issues that researchers should consider throughout the research process, such as who should provide information, the unit of analysis, and the research context. In many cases, simple changes in survey design or research methodology can allow for much richer gender analysis. In addition, while ethical issues are a central component of any effort to collect data from human subjects, this document highlights the areas within gender research that require enhanced attention to issues of confidentiality and consent.

The document highlights a common error in attempts to conduct gender analysis, which is to study only women. Such an approach fails to illuminate the relationship between men and women—a key component of understanding gender relations. For example, claims that “less than 2 percent of the world’s land is owned by

women” are meaningless without knowing the comparable percentage of the world’s land owned by men. Gender analysis aims to clarify “differences in the needs, roles, statuses, priorities, capacities, constraints and opportunities of women and men.” It is used to study how the evolving roles and relationships of men and women develop and interact in various contexts and how this affects outcomes. After all, gender norms are not stagnant but result from ongoing negotiation and compromise. Researching this process of change requires longitudinal studies that ideally make use of panel data as well as qualitative methods.

The document clearly states that for gender analysis, it is indispensable to interview both men and women. This does not necessarily mean interviewing twice as many people or that men and women in the same household must be interviewed. For some research questions, it may be preferable to interview one person per household and randomly choose whether it is a man or woman. The key to gender analysis lies in knowing the sex of the people involved in various tasks, such as the owner of the land, the farm manager, the laborer, or the decision maker, and identifying why responsibilities are divided in this manner.

The data collected should also be driven by the context, which would require abandoning a one-size-fits-all approach. Those collecting and analyzing the data need to understand gender roles as well as other dimensions of identity such as religion, race, class, ethnicity, age, caste, remoteness, disability, or sexual orientation. Such an approach would allow researchers to ask questions that are relevant and culturally sensitive, and ensure that the researchers, enumerators, facilitators, and respondents all have the same understanding of the terms included in each question.

The document may be accessed at the following location: www.pim.cgiar.org/files/2012/05/Standards-for-Collecting-Sex-Disaggregated-Data-for-Gender-Analysis.pdf 



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women

and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

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