

# **GENDER NORMS, AGENCY AND INNOVATION** in wheat based systems and livelihoods:

Synthesis report of four  
community case-studies  
in Ethiopia

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## **Executive summary**

This report summarizes Ethiopian findings from a global qualitative comparative research initiative, GENNOVATE, examining how gender norms and agency shape, and are shaped by, local innovation processes in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). In Ethiopia, 275 farmers — 138 women and 137 men — from wheat-growing households<sup>1</sup> participated in the research across four sites, each forming a case study. Data collection occurred from late 2014 to early 2015.

Food insecurity is one of several concerns Ethiopia faces in the 21st century. Food insecurity is a defining characteristic of poverty, with up to 10 million people in the country depending on humanitarian assistance.<sup>2</sup> Wheat is important to the nation's food security. Ethiopia is the largest wheat producer in sub-Saharan Africa and has about 0.75 million hectares of durum and bread wheat. Wheat is one of the major cereal crops in the Ethiopian highlands with an annual estimate of more than 4.5 million farmers engaged in its production.<sup>3</sup>

The key driver behind GENNOVATE is the notion that specific evidence from CGIAR research programs about how gender norms influence local-level development dynamics, including agricultural technology uptake processes, is relevant and useful for wheat research for development (R4D) decision-makers. This information is useful in relation to theories of change and specific intervention strategies, as well as targeting and priority setting.<sup>4</sup> With robust data about gender dynamics, agricultural development projects can better reach those who are meant to benefit from them and more effectively impact farming families.

This report illuminates how gender norms and agency work together to shape access to, adoption of and benefits from agricultural innovations at the local level.

The findings are divided into three core areas:

- Ladder of Life, which relates to poor men's and women's perceptions about their community poverty line, what this means and how it has changed over the last ten years
- Ladder of Power and Freedom, which includes how middle-class adults and youth understand decision-making and how gender shapes these decisions, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> A "wheat-growing household" is defined as a household where more than 50 percent of the household's income comes from wheat.

<sup>2</sup> AfDB (2011).

<sup>3</sup> Gebremariam, H. (1991). Wheat Production and Research in Ethiopia. In: Gebremariam, H., D.G. Tanner, and M. Huluka (eds.) *Wheat Research in Ethiopia: A Historical Perspective*. p. 1-5. Addis Ababa. Ethiopia: IAR.

<sup>4</sup> Badstue, L., Petesch, P., Williams, G., & Umantseva, A., with Daniela Moctezuma (2017). *Gender and innovation processes in wheat-based systems*. GENNOVATE Report to the CGIAR Research Program on Wheat. GENNOVATE Research Paper. Mexico City, Mexico: CIMMYT.

domestic violence. It includes the 'state of' gender norms and roles by reviewing local perceptions of the qualities of good wives, husbands and farmers.

- Agricultural innovations and gender, where poor and middle-class adults and youth share their understandings of innovations and their gendered dimensions.

In order to address the GENNOVATE research question, additional information is included under each area recommending how to improve theories of change and gendered project design.

Through the **Ladder of Life** (participants construct the ladder using sticks with most ladders having five steps, although a few had more steps, as determined by the participants). Three out of four villages reported a positive trend out of poverty, while the fourth village had divergent opinions between male and female respondents. Overall, the findings show that norms governing household relations are becoming more supportive of gender equality with rising access to information, education and awareness of rights as well as enforcement of local laws. Improvements in wellbeing, a decline in poverty and increased agency were reported in the four study villages.

In one of the villages, Gobado, male and female respondents referred repeatedly to Community Conversations (CCs), a program run ten years ago by a local NGO, as the primary force for gender social norm change. Respondents in Gobado frequently mentioned this program in their focus groups discussions, suggesting CCs need to be restarted for the younger generation. CCs helped create awareness about the need to respect people's rights, gender relations and the importance of social cohesion. This, in turn, has paved the way for increased collaboration between males and females in undertaking farm activities as well as household chores.

The Ladder of Life exercises found that households in all villages reported improvements in village wellbeing between 2005 and 2015 by reallocating the proportion of households along their community-defined Ladders of Life steps.

- The differences in men's and women's perceptions of households along the Ladders of Life demonstrate the importance of sex-disaggregated data collection and show that gender has some influence on the results. While the reasons for this are unknown, it may be because men have greater mobility around their communities to view changes and may have more time to discuss and debate changes or see enhancements others have made to their homes. At the same time, perhaps women's perceptions are more realistic. Men may be biased to over-report movement out of poverty as, normatively, men are the ones responsible for lifting their own households out of poverty.
- When asked to describe what resulted in the improvement of household well-being, respondents routinely mentioned agricultural knowledge, innovations, model

farmers and enhanced farming practices. This demonstrates the positive attitude these participants have toward agriculture-related programming.

Through the **Ladder of Power and Freedom** participants were asked to imagine a five-step ladder and score their level of power and freedom accordingly. The findings revealed that gender segregation and fixed gender roles are persistent despite a broadening range of responses between young women and men as well as between adult men and women. It was noted that, although both males and females are invited to extension events, some married women may not be allowed by their husbands to participate. Women's productive contributions continue to be framed as "helping their husbands." It was reported that men support women in backyard vegetable cultivation when they are no longer busy with farm tasks, particularly on holidays. Women, however, are regularly responsible for supporting men with on-farm activities.

Male and female respondents across the four villages provided a mixed portrait of decision-making. Women feel they have increased decision-making powers and have some influence over household decision-making. However, they still report strong normative expectations that limit their mobility. Men's decision-making has been recently clouded by a variety of factors, including agricultural innovations, the speed of innovations, economic dynamism and greater access to information. Some responses indicated that men's ability to take risks has been curtailed sharply now that women have to co-sign all documents that could be implicated in risk-taking, such as credit agreements and collateral offered.

Poor adults were asked about what qualities make a good wife or husband. Collecting opinions about what makes a "good wife" or a "good husband" helps capture gender norms around household division of labor, roles and expectations. The results around this demonstrate both current practices around agricultural and household labor as well as attitudes about the direction of gender norm change. Agricultural development projects could reinforce these normative expectations and further entrench gender stereotypes or seek to transform them.

- Both sexes described their importance to the household in terms of the role they play within it.
- While both male and female participants confirmed stereotypical roles of women working in care roles inside the house with men working in productive roles outside the home, both demonstrated that "good" is defined by husbands and wives as people who work hard to improve the household, inside or outside the home.
- Social control appears to be a strong component of a "good wife." Those characteristics include avoiding being talked about, not gossiping about the husband and staying out of the community. A "good husband," on the other hand, is someone who is engaged in the community, seeks information from others and is a facilitator

in resolving disputes. Agricultural development project theories of change should understand the realities of social norm control in intervention areas and place what they are asking women to do outside of the home within this context. Sensitization of the community and partners should likely be a component.

- Regarding gender relations, both male and female focus groups described marriage partnerships based on love, respect, the ability to listen and understanding the other person. These descriptions should encourage any agricultural development programming to include gender sensitization as an essential component of the project design. The qualities of a good wife and a good husband can be used as a baseline to inform future project designs.

A gender wage gap is prevalent in both agricultural labor and non-agricultural labor. Women who work outside of the home are generally frowned upon and often do not work in their own community. Domestic abuse is also present, though reducing in prevalence.

Agricultural projects should include these dynamics and understand that women are not able to access shared labor pools as easily as men and are traditionally barred from selling bulk items or livestock.

The youth focus groups revealed that while young people feel their decision-making power is increasing, they are acutely aware of constraining factors. Young women articulate this through the lens of gender, saying that they cannot do what they want because they will be sanctioned by their parents or communities based on expectations for women. Their male counterparts feel the future weight of being a decision-maker but are primarily constrained by the older generation; if a father figure is present, he holds all decision-making authority. In summary, young women feel constrained by their gender, while young men feel constrained by their age.

**Agricultural innovation and gender** explored the factors that support or hinder innovation. Male and female respondents listed a number of factors for not adopting and/or for dropping out at different stages of the agricultural technology adoption process. These factors include the high cost of improved seeds and fertilizer, lack of labor and increased costs of hiring labor, ownership of smaller plot sizes than the required standard for adoption and severely degraded plots, mostly owned by female-headed households. Gender restrictions, such as limited physical mobility, household chores and related responsibilities were mentioned as restrictions for women's capacity to innovate.

- All four female focus groups independently listed "information, knowledge and skill training" as the supporting factor for innovation. Three of them reported confidence and both material and financial support as supporting factors. Family support and observation and exposure were listed by two of the four groups. For middle class women, it appears that meaningful programs would include two core elements:

technical knowledge and exposure buttressed by confidence-building in the women and garnering their families' encouragement. Three of the four female focus groups independently reported that a lack of exposure and discouraging words, typically from their spouse and/or family members, hinder their innovation.

- Meanwhile, their male counterparts listed four factors that best support innovation. Three out of four groups independently listed having good role models, incentives for successful adoption, money and access to agricultural extension services. The relative absence of confidence and family support from the men's perspective demonstrates the importance of gendered project designs. Men reported that their main barrier to innovations was financial constraint, which was listed by three out of four focus groups. Half of the focus groups reported laziness, suspicion of the innovations and old-fashioned thinking.
- Women would be best assisted in agricultural innovations by programs that offer sensitization to husbands, extended families and communities partnered with investment in women's knowledge and access to resources. The fear of what others could say could possibly be mitigated through popularizing successful female innovators and offering holistic services to help prevent innovation failure. Men may be best motivated by repeated demonstrations of agricultural innovations partnered with access to financial support.

All focus groups were asked to name which two innovations are most important for male and female farmers.

- Assuming that innovations targeting women will garner more support from their husbands if the husbands also see value in the innovation (and vice versa), agricultural development project designers should consider targeting the innovations that have shared support.
- Men and women have a shared interest in women having poultry and vegetable gardens. Males and females agree that improved seed, farming methods and row planting are important innovations for men.
- Women appear to be most interested in poultry and local dairy cows, yet their male counterparts believe women need hybrid chickens and cows. Interestingly, women desire improved seed and farming methods, while men did not mention women needing seeds. This could be due to presumed gender roles.
- Across all respondents, most people believe that women are in need of poultry projects and hybrid chickens. At the same time, hybrid cows and vegetable gardens also received strong support as important innovations for women. However, it is important to note that women themselves did not voice an interest in hybrid cows but rather in the local dairy cow.
- When describing the factors that hinder or support women's innovation, women reported factors along two key themes. The first was the actual knowledge, finances

and ability to implement the innovation. The second was more focused on sensitizing their partners, family and community members to support them in their innovation endeavors. This research has shown that women are more likely to suffer dire social consequences or experience other ramifications for failure. Agricultural program design should take these dynamics into account and develop multi-component programs to support women's innovations.

- Only two innovations accounted for nearly half of all answers for men: improved seed and row planting.
- However, it is important to note that while improved seed and row planting appear important for men, men also reported that the factors that constrain their innovation relate to financial constraint, suspicion or doubt of the innovation and old-fashioned thinking. They reported innovation would be best assisted by model farmers, incentives for success, money and access to extension services.

Future R4D programs should undertake research to explore questions such as:

- Why do men and women rate the wealth of their respective villages so differently?
- Why do men report higher rates of poverty reduction than women, despite variations in declining poverty rates across villages?
- How can we understand divergent perspectives on poverty reduction?
- What are the proxies of gender equality in villages? What proxies appear robust across villages, and what are examples of village-specific proxies?
- How can the qualities of a good husband and wife be translated into action?
- Why was there no overlap between the top two innovations rated by men's and women's focus groups?

Issues relating specifically to female-headed households also need to be fully understood. Further research on gender and social differentiation in areas with wheat-based livelihoods is needed, including on labor and household economics, experiences of male and female innovators and institutional innovations for agricultural development. A better understanding of these issues could help identify opportunities for expanding the benefits of wheat-related innovations to more women and poor households.

## **Table of Contents**

Executive summary .....	ii
List of tables .....	viii
List of figures.....	ix
List of acronyms .....	x
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Study Approach.....	3
3. Community profile .....	7
4. Ladder exercises assessing poverty dynamics and empowerment .....	9
5. Ladder of power and freedom (Instruments D and E).....	36
6. Agricultural Innovations and Gender .....	87
7. Overall Conclusion .....	98
8. Annexes.....	103

## **List of tables**

Table 1: Key administrative words and concepts .....	xi
Table 2: Glossary of key terms and concepts .....	xi
Table 3: Overview of GENNOVATE sample and data collection instruments.....	6
Table 4: Sample size used in the different activities for each village .....	7
Table 5: Summary profile of the four villages.....	7
Table 6: Community Poverty Lines (CPL) .....	10
Table 7: Qualities of a Good Wife and Good Husband .....	24
Table 8: The good woman and man farmer, poor male and female focus groups .....	26
Table 9: Gender wage gap across the four villages in 2014.....	32
Table 10: Differing Perceptions of who holds decisions-making power.....	85
Table 11. What Innovations are Most Important for Women?.....	91
Table 12. What Innovations are Most Important for Men? .....	93



## **List of figures**

Figure 1: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (A) and women (B) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Gobado .....	12
Figure 2: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (a) and women (b) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Badero.....	14
Figure 3: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (A) and women (B) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Chala .....	16
Figure 4: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (A) and women (B) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Akella .....	18
Figure 5: Movement out of poverty in % based on male and female perception in the four villages (2005-2015).....	20
Figure 6: Ladder of Power and Freedom .....	36
Figure 7: Ladder of power and freedom mean step for majority of own sex in A is Gobado and B is Badero.....	39
Figure 8: Ladder of power and freedom mean step for majority of own sex (C) is in Chala and (D) is in Akkela.....	41
Figure 9 : Ladder of Power and Freedom mean step for majority of own sex (Youth) Gobado (A) and Badero (B) .....	83
Figure 10: Ladder of Power and Freedom mean step for majority of own sex (Youth) Chala (C) and Akkela (D).....	84
Figure 11: What all respondents believe women need as an agricultural innovation .....	92
Figure 12: What all respondents believe men need as an agricultural innovation .....	94
Figure 13: Factors that support innovation, men’s and women’s FGDs, all villages .....	95
Figure 14: Factors that hinder innovation, men’s and women’s FGDs, all villages .....	97

## **List of acronyms**

AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
CC	Community Conversation
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CP	Community Profile
CPL	Community Poverty Line
CRP	CGIAR Research Program
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHH	Female-Headed Household
GENNOVATE	Enabling Gender Equality in Agricultural and Environmental Innovation
Ha	Hectares
HH	Household
Km	Kilometers
LoL	Ladder of Life
LoPF	Ladder of Power and Freedom
MHH	Male-headed Household
MoP	Movement out of Poverty
NRM	Natural Resource Management
R&D	Research and Development
R4D	Research for Development

**Table 1: Key administrative words and concepts<sup>5</sup>**

<i>Woreda</i>	Sub-districts in Ethiopia
<i>Kebele</i>	Municipalities and the smallest administrative divisions
<i>Gere</i>	A local unofficial structure below the <i>kebele</i> with up to 30 members
1-5 Structures	A grouping of 1-5 development/change agents that operate below the <i>gere</i> ". 1-5 team members with 1 team leader.
How it works: Community profile informants	The <i>kebele</i> has three zones. The zones are divided into 32 <i>gere</i> (development groups) that are divided into 1-5 (change agents). The <i>kebele</i> is administered by a cabinet. When there is a need to communicate with the community, the cabinet members will communicate to the <i>gere</i> in their zone. The <i>gere</i> will communicate to the 1-5. Information from the bottom is communicated back to the <i>kebele</i> via the same route. Then, the <i>Kebele</i> will communicate with the <i>woreda</i> . Communication facilitation has advanced the past several years through mobile phones. People can call the <i>kebele</i> at any time for any emergency and will receive an immediate response.

**Table 2: Glossary of key terms and concepts<sup>6</sup>**

<i>Timad</i>	0.25 ha
<i>Gotera</i>	Wheat storage made of maize straw after the amount to be retained for consumption has been determined. Built in the compound. This is no longer used because, due to theft, people now store wheat in their homes in sacks.
Model farmer	Farmers who often try out innovations first. In most cases, they are considered to be the best-performing farmers.
<i>Wonfel</i>	A traditional form of reciprocal labor.
<i>Hulegeb</i>	Multipurpose cooperative service that provides services such as distributing fertilizer and seeds, collecting crops from farmers at fair prices and distributing consumable products such as sugar and salt. They provide dividends to members every year.
<i>Mahiber</i> (sometimes also known as <i>tsewamahiber</i> )	Groups of mainly Orthodox Christian women who are grouped under the name of a saint. They celebrate the saint every month and every member of that group has a turn to prepare the feast. Membership can also be mixed or for only men or women.
Community conversation	CC is a facilitated interactive process that brings people together. Its purpose is to empower communities and individuals to identify and address issues that are important to them and enable them to explore the underlying causes. It focuses on generating action plans and has an explicit problem-solving agenda. It aims to encourage critical thinking to enable people to formulate solutions to local issues. CC is a process for dialogue and decision-making

<sup>5</sup> This section is taken from Farnworth, C ( 2016) WHEAT synthesis case study exploring agency, norms and innovation in village Chala which is located in Tiyo woreda of Oromia Region (draft).

<sup>6</sup> This section is taken from Farnworth, C. (2016).

	for communities to investigate the deep causes of problems in their lives and generate their own solutions. <sup>7</sup>
<i>Equb/Iqub</i>	An informal money-saving group where members take turns collecting money from members every week/month in rotation. In rural areas, mainly women are involved in <i>equb</i> , but it is possible for men to be members or organize their own. In Arsi Negele, there are <i>equb</i> for butter among women. Members contribute butter for a woman who needs money. She will take the butter and sell it or use it as she wishes, and she will in return contribute butter when the time comes.
<i>Edir</i>	<i>Edir</i> is a funeral society run on a monthly basis. Members contribute money and in return can access resources such as tents, money and so on during bereavement or weddings. Members are both male and female. It can also be for only men or women. A type of <i>edir</i> common among women in Arsi Negele involves members contributing five <i>birr</i> every month. Membership is usually 25 to 30 people in one area and they take turns preparing food. A household will prepare the feast about every two years. During hard times, the members help each other in any way they can.

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<sup>7</sup> This section is taken from Farnworth, C. (2016) and Tekletsadik, E., Fantahun, M., & Shaweno, D. (2014). Is Community Conversation Associated with Human Immunodeficiency Virus Voluntary Counseling and Testing Service Uptake in Rural Communities in Ethiopia? A Comparative Cross-sectional Study. *North American Journal of Medical Sciences*, 6(2), 7783.

## 1. Introduction

This country report is a summary of the Ethiopian findings from a global qualitative comparative research initiative known as GENNOVATE. This report examines how gender norms and agency shape, and in turn are shaped by, local benefits from agricultural innovation and NRM. This study, conducted in late 2014 and early 2015, aims to build greater knowledge about the connections between gender equality and agricultural development. In Ethiopia, 138 women and 137 men from wheat-growing households participated in this research across four villages.

According to the World Bank, Ethiopia is a country that achieved a double-digit growth in GDP over the last 12 years, making it the fourth fastest-growing country in the world. If Ethiopia sustains its current pace of growth, it will become a middle-income country by 2025.<sup>8</sup> Despite many successes, Ethiopia still faces challenges. The 2015 Human Development Report ranks Ethiopia among the poorest group of countries in the world (174th out of 188 countries. Up to 10 million people depend on humanitarian assistance and 48 percent of reproductive-aged women have no formal education.<sup>9</sup> Ethiopia is ranked 129th out of 155 countries on the 2014 Gender Inequality Index (GII), which measures gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity.<sup>10</sup> Ethiopia scored lower than Rwanda and Uganda, which are ranked at 80 and 122 respectively. Gender inequality is a particularly pertinent challenge given the linkages between women's empowerment, agricultural development and food and nutrition security.<sup>11</sup>

Wheat is important to Ethiopia's food security. Wheat and wheat products represent 14 percent of the total caloric intake in Ethiopia, making wheat the second most important food behind maize. In terms of the gross value of production, wheat is ranked fourth, after *teff*, *enset* and maize and is approximately tied with sorghum. Ethiopia is the largest wheat producer in sub-Saharan Africa with about 750,000 hectares of durum and bread wheat. In 2012, the estimated cultivated area of wheat was more than 1.5 million hectares of land

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<sup>8</sup> Moller, L. (2015). Ethiopia's growth miracle: What will it take to sustain it? Blog. Retrieved from <http://blogs.worldbank.org/african/ethiopias-growth-miracle-what-will-it-take-to-sustain-it>.

<sup>9</sup> Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (2014). Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

<sup>10</sup> Human Development Report (2015). Work for human development: Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report. Ethiopia.

<sup>11</sup> Arimond, M., C. Hawkes, Ruel, M.T., Sifri, Z., Berti, P.R., Leroy, J.L., Low, J., Brown, L.R. and Frongillo. E.A. (2010). Agricultural Interventions and Nutrition: Lessons from the Past and New Evidence. In *Combating Micronutrient Deficiencies: Food-Based Approaches*, edited by B. Thompson and L. Amoroso. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and CAB International. 41–75.

with annual production of nearly 3 million tons.<sup>12</sup> In 2013, Ethiopia produced 4 million tons, making Ethiopia the leading producer of wheat in sub-Saharan Africa and third on the continent, after Egypt and Morocco.<sup>13</sup>

Wheat is grown predominantly by subsistence farmers under rain-fed conditions and is cultivated by 5 million households. Wheat rust diseases have long been among the major biotic threats to wheat production and productivity in Ethiopia. Over the last two decades, stem (black) rust and stripe (yellow) rust have been responsible for several devastating epidemics. According to the Central Statistical Agency (cited in Tolemariam, 2016), in the 2010-11 production season, one of the most severe stripe rust epidemics in recent history occurred in Ethiopia. Among the 1,921 sample households, 42 percent reported they were affected. An estimated 600,000 ha of wheat (>30 percent of the total area) were affected by stripe rust. The average wheat yield obtained under the stripe rust disease outbreak was 50 percent lower than the average expected yield in a normal season, according to some indicators.<sup>14</sup> Unlike other staple grains, wheat is imported to Ethiopia in large volumes despite high domestic production. The percentage of domestic wheat consumption coming from imports varies between 25 percent and 35 percent, depending on the size of the harvest and other factors.<sup>15</sup> Wheat is an under-performing crop but important staple food in Ethiopia and critical to the country's food security.<sup>16</sup>

The next section explains the study approach, background and scope. The methodology that follows explains the seven data collection instruments employed and profiles the four villages studied. The next sections deal with an instrument-by-instrument presentation of findings backed by analysis, discussion and conclusion. The final section of the report concludes with how gender norms affect agriculture innovation. Please note that the names and sites remain anonymous to protect participants. Consistent synonyms are used where relevant.

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<sup>12</sup> Gebremariam, H. (1991).

<sup>13</sup> FAOSTAT (2013). Retrieved from <http://faostat3.fao.org/download/Q/QC/E>.

<sup>14</sup> Tolemariam A. (2016). Wheat Varietal Change and Adoption of Rust Resistant Wheat Varieties in Ethiopia 2009/10-2013/14.

<sup>15</sup> Minot, N., Warner, J., Lemma, S., Kasa, L., Gashaw, A., and Rashid, S. (2015). *The Wheat Supply Chain in Ethiopia: Patterns, Trends, and Policy Options*. Washington D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).; Tesemma, T. (1991). Improvement of Indigenous Durum Wheat Landraces in Ethiopia, in Engels, J.M.M., Hawkes, J.G., & Worede, M. (eds.). *Plant Genetic Resources of Ethiopia*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 288-295.

<sup>16</sup> Adhikari, U., Pouyan Nejadhashemi, A., and Woznicki, S.A. (2015). Climate Change and Eastern Africa: a Review of Impact on Major Crops. *Food and Energy Security*, 4(2), 110-132.

## 2. Study Approach<sup>17</sup>

Innovation in agriculture and NRM is vital to reducing rural poverty. Innovation processes that ignore gender inequality, however, are limited in their impact. They risk worsening the poverty, workload and well-being of poor rural women and their families. Due to deep-seated gender norms, there are significant inequalities in the capacities of male and female farmers to contribute to, benefit from and manage risks stemming from agricultural innovation. Gender norms are, generally, the rules of social life that prescribe differences in how men and women should interact and go about their daily lives. Other formal and informal institutions drive gender differences in agricultural outcomes and may even explicitly disadvantage women. How and why agricultural innovations improve women's lives in some settings, but not others, is not yet well understood. This knowledge gap limits our ability to design and expand agricultural and NRM innovations that reduce gender inequality on the ground and contribute more effectively to poverty reduction, improved food security, nutrition and environmentally-sustainable livelihoods.

GENNOVATE was designed to build greater knowledge of these fundamental connections between gender equality and agricultural development. Thirteen of the CGIAR<sup>18</sup> research programs (CRPs)<sup>19</sup> are collaborating in this global qualitative and comparative research initiative. The research objectives include:

- Providing robust empirical evidence on the relationships between gender norms, capacities for agricultural innovation and other key constraining and enabling elements of local opportunity structures that affect the achievement of the CGIAR's development objectives.
- Informing the CRPs' theories of change and related research portfolios through identifying the gender-based constraints that need to be overcome in different contexts in order to achieve lasting and equitable improvements in agricultural outcomes.

The cross-CRP initiative is investing in strengthening CGIAR research capacities and knowledge-sharing on gender and comparative qualitative field research.

The global study's research design is informed by a gendered agency-opportunity structure. The analytic approach gives primacy to local men's and women's own understandings, interpretations and experiences with innovations in agriculture and NRM. The notion of "opportunity structure" recognizes that men's and women's agency are constrained differently by gender norms and other institutions that shape social status, access to

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<sup>17</sup> Petesch, P. (2015). *Gender Norms, Agency and Innovation in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Update Report*: CGIAR Global Qualitative Comparative Research Initiative.

<sup>18</sup> CGIAR refers to Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.

<sup>19</sup> CRPs refers to CGIAR Research Programs.

opportunities and the distribution of resources and technologies in their local settings. That includes family, marriage, community and markets. Among other factors, the opportunity structure encompasses gender norms and institutional rules, the mix of resources available, and the interactions between the two. Resources include plant diversity, agricultural land and irrigation systems inherited from earlier generations, technologies such as new seed varieties, soil fertility enhancement techniques, water management practices, health and education services, infrastructure and social connections.

While opportunity structures can act as powerful constraining elements on human action, these forces are not fixed. Both poor women and men can find ways to maneuver, negotiate and innovate around these constraints to access new opportunities. In this process, they can forge more inclusive and effective institutions at the local level. With a close focus on the gender dimensions, this study seeks to uncover regularities across diverse cultural and agro-ecological contexts in interactions between local opportunity structures, men's and women's agency and agricultural innovations that result in greater gender equality and poverty reduction on the ground.

The study design is framed to address the following research questions:

- How do gender norms and agency advance or impede the capacity to innovate and adopt technology in agriculture and NRM across different contexts?
- How do new agricultural technologies or practices affect gender norms and agency across different contexts? Under what conditions can they do harm and under what conditions can they benefit different social groups?
- How are gender norms and women's and men's agency changing? Under what conditions do these changes catalyze innovation and lead to the desired development outcomes? What contextual factors influence this relationship?

## **2.1 Research methodology**

The investigation builds on the "medium-*n*" comparative qualitative research design. The sample spans world regions and diverse agricultural systems as well as important cultural sub-regions (26 countries in total). Drawing on maximum diversity sampling principles, the individual village-level cases are selected purposively to ensure strong variance on two dimensions theorized to be important for outcomes: i) economic dynamism and ii) gender gaps in assets and capacities. Case selection has also been informed by the presence of CRPs' activities in the research areas, and by the potential for joint CRP research and longitudinal research in the sites. The sites were selected based on the criteria of high gender gaps to low economic dynamism. Information is requested on village-level gender and asset gaps and economic dynamism when cases are proposed to facilitate the initial classification and selection of cases. This ensured that the study includes villages distributed along the continuum from low to high on each dimension.



Field teams, trained by the lead consultant, applied a standardized package of seven qualitative data collection instruments, which included a mix of focus groups, semi-structured individual interviews, key informant interviews and a literature review (see Table 3). This allows for cross-country comparisons. In Ethiopia, these instruments were tested with local farmer. Translators were required in two of the four sites. Data collection began in December 2014 and concluded in February 2015.

The study engaged 275 individuals (137 men and 138 women) out of which 78 were youth (38 girls and 40 boys). They reflected on questions such as:

- What are the most important new agricultural practices and technologies for the men of the village? And for the women?
- What qualities make a woman a good farmer? What qualities make a man a good farmer?
- Do young people in this village follow local customs of women doing certain agricultural activities and men others? Why or why not?
- Are there differences in the characteristics of a woman who is innovative compared to a man who is innovative?

It is important to note that not all individuals participated in all activities. Participation depends on the activity tool, such as key informant, FGD youth, FGD adult and individual interviews.

**Table 3: Overview of GENNOVATE sample and data collection instruments<sup>20</sup>**

Tool	Purpose	Total number of Respondents
Activity A. Literature review	To give a wider context by providing general background information about the case study area and relevant findings from recent studies, particularly about the innovations of interest and their gender dimensions.	Principal investigator
Activity B. Community profile	To provide social, economic, agricultural and political background information about the community.	8 male and 8 female key informants
Activity C. Focus group: Ladder of Life (with poor adults)	To understand the following: Gender norms and household and agricultural roles. Labor market trends and gender dimensions. Enabling and constraining factors for innovation and their gender dimensions. The culture of inequality in the village, factors shaping socio-economic mobility, poverty trends and their gender dimensions, intimate partner violence.	8 FGDs (40 adult females and 37 adult males ages 30 to 55)
Activity D. Focus group: Capacities for innovation (with middle-class adults)	To understand the following: Agency. Community trends. Enabling and constraining factors for innovation and their gender dimensions. Gender norms surrounding household bargaining over livelihoods and assets. The local climate for agriculture and entrepreneurship and their gender dimensions, social cohesion and social capital.	8 FGDs (37 adult females and 40 adult males ages 25 to 55)
Activity E. Focus group: Aspirations of youth (with older adolescents and young adults)	To explore: Gender norms, practices and aspirations surrounding education. Enabling and constraining factors for innovation and their gender dimensions. Women's physical mobility and gender norms shaping access to economic opportunities and household bargaining. Family formation norms and practices.	8 FGDs (37 female youth and 40 male youth ages 16 to 24)
Activity F. Semi-structured interview: Innovation pathways	To explore in-depth the trajectory of individual experiences with new agricultural and NRM practices, and the role of gender norms and capacities for innovation in these processes.	A total of 16 interviews (2 male and 2 female innovators per site)
Activity G. Semi-structured interview: Individual life stories	To understand the life stories of different men and women in the community who have moved out of poverty, fallen into deeper poverty or remained trapped in poverty. To understand how gender norms, assets and capacities for innovation in agriculture/NRM and other assets and capacities shaped these different poverty dynamics.	A total of 16 interviews (2 males and 2 females per site)

The sample used for each case study consisted of approximately 70 individuals for each village. Within each village, approximately 50 male and female farmers were gathered for

<sup>20</sup> Adopted from Petesch P., et.al. (2015). Innovation and Development through Transformation of Gender Norms in: Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, *Methodology Guide for Global Study*.

focus group discussions and activities, with separate focus groups with 20 youth. The samples generally included equal numbers of male and female participants. This consistency in data sources provides strong analytical comparison within and between villages, as well as across different life ages.

**Table 4: Sample size used in the different activities for each village**

Village	Women	Men	Boys	Girls	Total
Gobado	26	26	10	10	72
Badero	24	26	10	8	68
Chala	26	24	10	10	70
Akkela	24	21	10	10	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>275</b>

Table 4 summarizes the sample size by sex taken out from each of the four (anonymous) villages.

### 3. Community profile

This section introduces the four villages included in the study. The names of the villages will remain anonymous for confidentiality purposes and pseudonyms are used but the district names and general condition within each village remain. Most of the information in the community profile is taken from the **Community Profile (CP) instrument** unless otherwise indicated. As shown in Table 5 below, the first two villages are found in Amhara region (single Amhara ethnic group) while the last two villages located in Oromia region (multiple ethnic groups: Oromo, Amhara and Gurage).

**Table 5: Summary profile of the four villages**

Socio-demographic characteristics	Amhara Region		Oromia Region	
	Gobado	Badero	Chala	Akkela
<b>Population</b>	10,800	5,404 (2,676 men; 2,728 women)	5,652 (2,812 men; 2,840 women)	3,344
<b>Proximity to main road</b>	17km	11km	12km	12km
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Amhara (100%)	Amhara (100%)	Oromo (75%) Amhara (20%) Gurage (5%)	Oromo (80%) Amhara (20%)
<b>Religion</b>	Orthodox Christian (100%)	Orthodox Christian (100%)	Orthodox Christian (45%) Muslim (35%) Protestant (20%)	Orthodox Christian (75%) Muslim (15%) Protestant (10%)
<b>Household types</b>	1,800 households	1,900 households (84.2% MHHs; 15.8% FHHs)	75%MHHs 25% FHHs	836 households 90% MHHs 10% FHHs

<b>Main agricultural livelihood</b>	Wheat, barley, peas, beans and fava beans	Wheat, barley, peas, bean and fava beans	Wheat, barley, peas, pulse crops, flax seed, maize and <i>teff</i>	Wheat, barley, peas, pulse crops, flax seed, maize and <i>teff</i>
<b>Market<sup>21</sup></b>	75% of vendors are female	Half of vendors are female	75% of vendors are female	Half of vendors are female
<b>Irrigation</b>	Yes (in only 1 sub- <i>kebele</i> )	No	Yes	No
<b>Communal resources<sup>22</sup> (rivers, forests, etc.)</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Average land holding</b>	2 ha	2 ha	2.5 ha	4 ha

Agriculture is the main livelihood of the villages with most farmers growing wheat, barley, peas and fava beans. The two villages in Oromia also grow maize and *teff*. Since approximately 2007 to 2009, farmers have started to cultivate improved wheat and apply improved practices. They have also started planting lentils, onions and garlic, which indicates a diverse and innovative farming portfolio. Activities in the women’s domain include preparing and selling *areke*<sup>23</sup>, rearing dairy cows and poultry as well as maintaining a vegetable garden where women have some ability to retain the income they earn. The average land holding in the villages is 2 ha per household except in Akkela, which has the smallest population size and biggest average land holding at 4 ha per household. The typical household type in all villages is male headed, although female-headed households constitute approximately 20 percent of the village population. However, in Chala and Akkela, polygamous households are also found, although their prevalence is not known. New agricultural practices include terracing, tree planting, *alebasso*<sup>24</sup>, use of improved wheat, fertilizer, improved varieties of cattle and sheep.

Despite many challenges and varying life situations, farmers were generally open to trying new innovations, although poorer households find it hard to afford fertilizer and other costs associated with innovation. Most farmers reported that it is harder for a woman to innovate because price of failure is scorn. For example, a female farmer said, "Women are dependent on their husband’s income and lack self-confidence and encouragement from inside and outside the family. They don’t participate in meetings and formal gatherings; whereas, men are expected to participate in meetings to update and familiarize themselves with new knowledge that will enable them to apply [innovations]." Farmers in all villages reported an increase in the fungus called *wag* (rust) in the last five years, which destroys wheat crops despite the use of pesticides. A new wheat variety that has less resistance to cold weather

<sup>21</sup> Note that while women’s involvement in the market appears substantial, the products they are selling are “in home” products typically managed by women: vegetables, dairy products, eggs, etc.

<sup>22</sup> “Communal” refers to collective natural resources shared by the public.

<sup>23</sup> *Areke* refers to a locally-prepared alcoholic beverage.

<sup>24</sup> *Alebasso* is a locally-innovated water drainage technique.

and unfortunately exacerbates the problems associated with rust is heavily used in all four villages.

According to community informants, prosperity has generally increased in the four villages over the past ten years. Enhanced infrastructure and newly-available services such as construction of roads, schools, health posts, electricity, mobile phones, savings, credit facilities and access to improved agricultural technologies have contributed to the improved level of prosperity. For a case study on each community see annexes.

#### **4. Ladder exercises assessing poverty dynamics and empowerment**

In each of the four villages, one group of eight to 10 adult men (ages 30 to 55) and one group of eight to 10 adult women (ages 30 to 55) representing the poor socioeconomic group of their villages participated in these FGDs.

The focus group explores men's and women's perceptions of and experiences with the following topics:

- poverty trends: how and why some individuals and households can get ahead while others struggle to escape poverty or fall back into poverty;
- normative framework shaping gender roles in the agriculture and domestic spheres;
- the culture of inequality in the village, factors shaping socio-economic mobility and their gender dimensions;
- labor market trends and gender dimensions;
- the issue of domestic violence.

##### **4.1 Community Poverty Line**

The first activity in the Ladder of Life (LoL) is an activity in which participants consider socioeconomic status in their villages and physically create a ladder out of sticks to represent it. This exercise starts by asking the focus group to reflect on the characteristics of the "best off" households in their village (which represents step five to seven depending on the village ladder steps determined by the participants) and then the "worst off" households (step one on the ladder). Additional ladder steps that fall between the top and bottom steps are also identified by participants. Most ladders have five steps, although a few had more steps, as determined by the participants. On completion of constructing the ladder (with sticks), participants identify the step above which people are no longer considered poor. This becomes their village's community poverty line (CPL).

Participants were given 20 seeds to place on the ladder, representing the percentage of households on each step. This exercise is repeated to ascertain how many people lived below the poverty line ten years ago. Following this, the respondents are guided into a

discussion about the assets and capacities of people on each step, and the experiences of women and men in moving up, getting stuck or falling down the ladder.<sup>25</sup>

**Participants answered the following questions:**

1. What is the step or category on the ladder where people in this village are no longer considered poor? *[Please note this on the ladder by drawing a line and labeling it as the "community poverty line."]*
2. Now I would like you to recall the village ten years ago. Would we need to add a new step to the top or bottom? Or would we need to remove a step?

Any household placed on or below the step labeled as the community poverty line is considered poor while those placed above the poverty line are considered to be out of poverty as understood by the villagers.

**Table 6: Community Poverty Lines (CPL)**

	Gobado	Badero	Chala	Akkela
<b>Men</b>	Step 3	Step 3	Step 2	Step 2
<b>Women</b>	Step 3	Step 2	Step 2	Step 2

As shown in Table 6 above, Gobado has the highest CPL (at step three) as reported by both male and female respondents. This is to say households placed above step three on the ladder are no longer considered poor, and households that belong at step three and below on the ladder are poor as understood by the community.

A female LoL participant from this village said:

*...people at steps one and two don't even have land. Especially those on step one are not even interested in improved seeds or any other farming activity because their livelihood does not mainly depend on it. People at step two have some knowledge and interest because they are mostly the ones who are engaged on farm activities as daily laborers. However, they may be careless, so the employer has to follow them up closely.*

Another male farmer from Gobado said:

*Those villagers placed above step two on the ladder want to learn from agriculture extension agents and apply what they learned on*

<sup>25</sup> The numerical findings provide the basis for generating a summary statistic [Moving out of Poverty = (Share of poor 10 years ago – share of poor now) ÷ (share of poor 10 years ago)] for comparing perceptions of local poverty dynamics across the focus groups and case studies. While it is not possible to compare the ladders directly because they differ, it is possible to compare views about change on the Ladders of Life.

*their farms. And those who are on step two usually do learn but only for the sake of their employers because they do not farm for themselves. Those who are on step one don't have an interest in learning and they don't want to participate in public meetings and agricultural training.*

In Chala and Akkela, both male and female reported step two as the line of poverty for their respective villages. In Badero, men reported step three while women report step two as the CPL. Male and female participants described people who belong between steps three and five as those who have their own land and a livelihood mainly depending on agriculture and, therefore, are more interested in extension activities.

Common to all four villages are the features associated with community members who belong at the top step of the ladder. These villagers are mostly model farmers who “own bigger houses constructed of better materials,” with “separate latrines and places for livestock.” They have “furniture in their houses, oxen and other bigger animals.” They “send their children to school; they are clean and seem to be happy,” according to respondents. They have shops, and they are invited for *shimglina* that is part of the ad hoc elders’ council that are called for during disputes between people. Those well-off people have more material possessions and mostly are community leaders.

On the other hand, those at the lowest rung of the ladder are known for being destitute as they are mostly landless or have small plots of land. They are unable to plough as they have no oxen. Their children are not able to practice good hygiene; the children go to school hungry most of the time; they have small, old huts and they do not have furniture. They are not happy most of the time. They are not trusted or respected in their community. They are usually sick and are hired on others’ farms, or they will work on their own land but with less productivity. The husband and wife do not support each other; often the husband drinks and is not peaceful at home but rather discourages everyone in the house. The men would not be respected enough to become *shimagile*.<sup>26</sup>

#### **4.2 Ladder of Life Comparison**

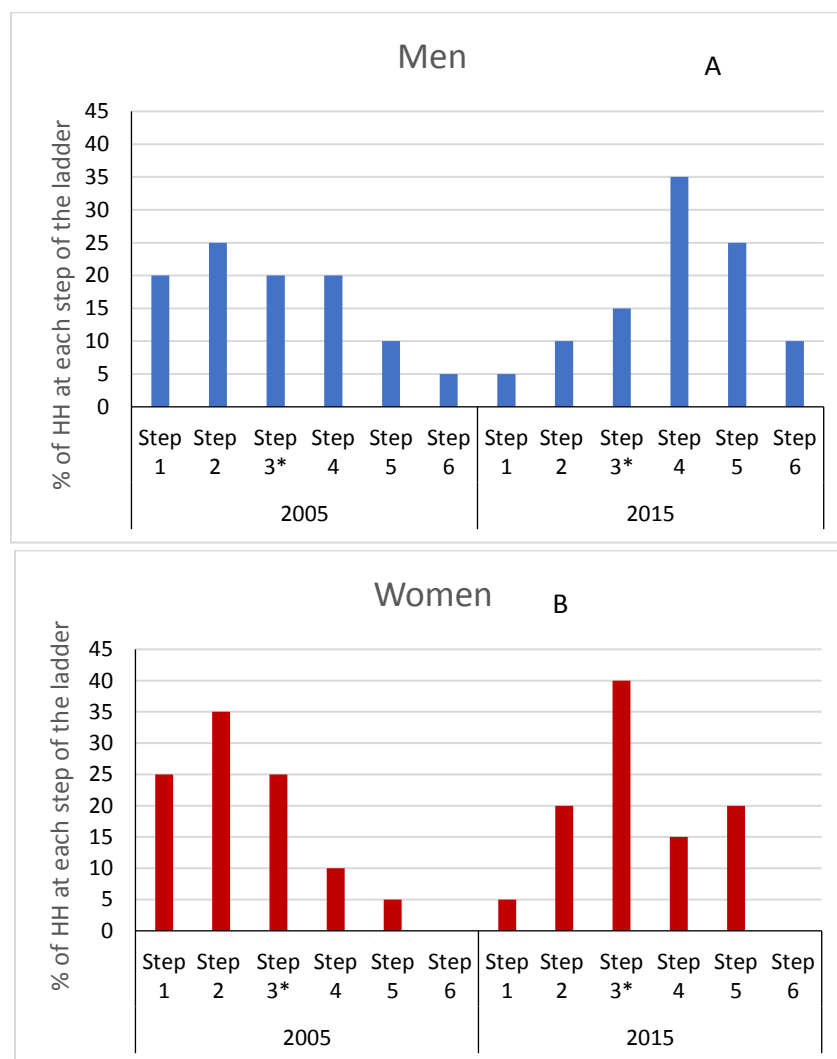
The LoL activity was designed to provide a general picture of the well-being of different groups that live in the villages. It explores how and why some individuals and households are able to get ahead and how and why people sometimes struggle and fall back.

This section presents the results by village of how male and female respondents consider the poverty ranking of their communities now and ten years ago. On the ladder, step one represents people who live at the bottom, or the worst-off in the community. The highest step refers to people at the top, or those who are the best off in the village.

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<sup>26</sup> Verb form of *shimglina*.

### 4.3 Gobado Wellbeing



**Figure 1: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (A) and women (B) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Gobado<sup>27</sup>**

Overall well-being in Gobado has increased, as seen in Figure 1. There is a general trend, as reported by both male and female respondents, indicating both movement out of poverty and getting closer to moving out of poverty. When comparing the percentage of households at each step between 2005 and 2015, a general movement “up” the ladder steps has occurred. For example, women reported 25 percent of the Gobado community lived in the worst poverty in 2005, whereas in 2015 this dropped to only 5 percent with the most growth seen in steps three and five. It is important to note that both the Gobado male and female FGDs set the community poverty line at step three, meaning that although there is positive movement up the ladder, 65 percent of the village population is estimated by their

<sup>27</sup> Steps marked by star (\*) show poverty line



female peers to still live in poverty. Men reported clearer, more positive movement up the ladder, resulting in the majority of the village moving above the CPL, from 35 percent in 2005 to 80 percent in 2015. This means that women perceive the majority of the households to still live in poverty, whereas men view the majority of the village households to live outside of poverty. Irrespective of gender, we see a positive increase in household location on the LoL. However, when disaggregated by gender, the differences in perception are seen. While both men and women in Gobado feel that step three and below represent “poverty” in their community, men felt many more households had moved out of poverty and even articulated a sixth ladder step. Perhaps men were not willing to say so many households were still in poverty, or their sixth step helped them to see differences in well-being not named by their female counterpart or for some other reason.

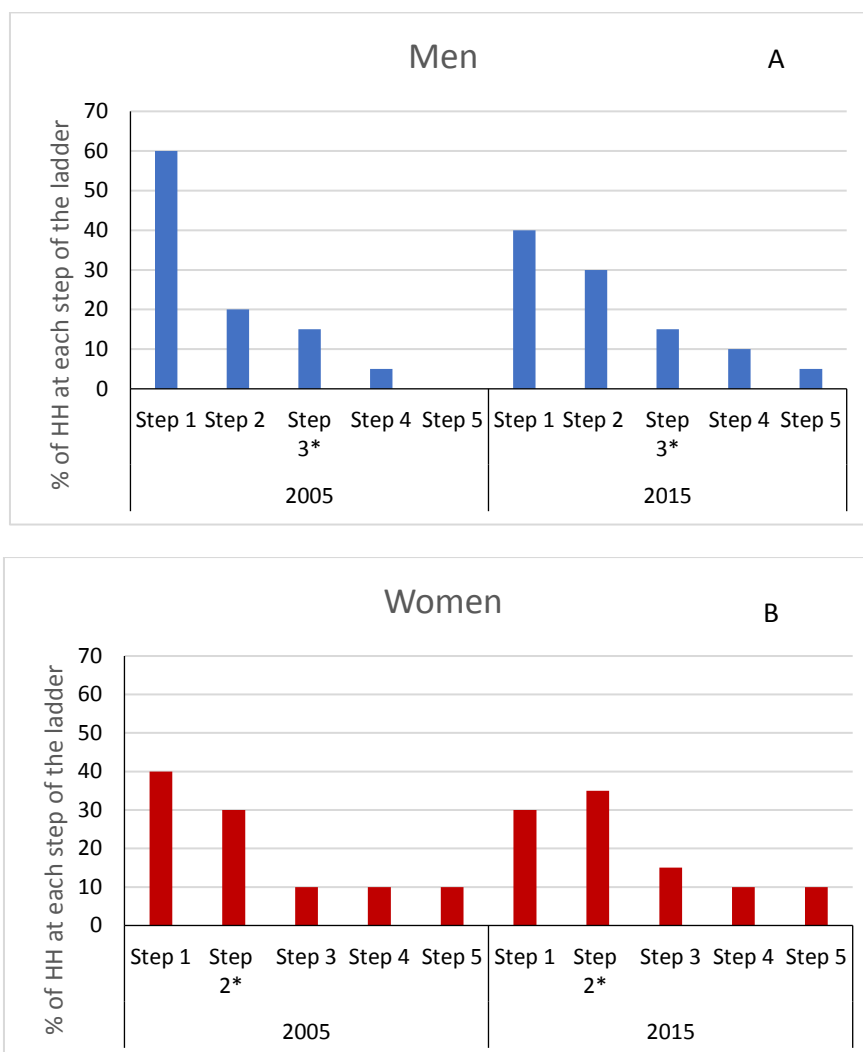
According to male and female respondents, people placed at step three are those who start saving, take credit and return it on time, and buy sheep for fattening. They may own a pair of oxen, engage in poultry production and grow vegetables; they are able to build good houses with iron sheet roofing and send their children to school. People located at step four of the ladder have oxen for plowing and also have agricultural knowledge and better farming experience. They may also learn from agricultural extension agents, would buy or rent additional cultivable land and use the new agricultural practices. They use their resources properly and accept innovation quickly. They are respected in the community and considered as source of information in many ways.

Participants pointed out a number of factors that have contributed toward this general positive change in village wellbeing. These include increased awareness among people that if they work hard they can change, better guidance from agriculture extension agents, learning from model farmers, availability of credit and savings services that contribute to good savings practices, adult literacy programs especially for women, learning from farmers at higher steps on the ladder, increased practice of renting additional land to cultivate and accepting innovations more quickly. Women emphasized adult literacy programs as contributing toward their enhanced level of well-being and confidence. As one woman in this village said,

*You know, through the literacy program, women, including the aged ones, have learned to sign and read even with difficulties. No one will fool us with numbers and we know where to go or at least ask what to do. So, I feel that has also contributed a lot for people to accept new innovation and try out alternatives.*

In this village, CCs<sup>28</sup> have also contributed to more egalitarian gender relations.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.4 Badero Wellbeing



**Figure 2: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (a) and women (b) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Badero<sup>30</sup>**

In Badero, male and female respondents reported fairly similar estimates of household distribution across the ladder steps. However, men rated the CPL at step three while women

<sup>28</sup> Community Conversation is a facilitated approach based on the recognition that communities have the capacity to identify their societal, economic and political challenges, set priorities, mobilize human, physical and financial resources, plan for action and address their challenges sustainably.

<sup>29</sup> A local NGO called Tesfa Birhan Children and Family Development Organization ran a series of CCs ten years ago. The outcomes of the CCs were translated into local laws at the *kebele* level with practical enforcement procedures. The local *kebele* administration offices are where important documents related to credit/loans, sales of fixed assets, land ownership certificates, etc. must be co-signed by couples. Conflicts among community members are also registered at the *kebele*. Since the community conversation project, these investigations are resolved in a more gender-equitable manner, according to participants.

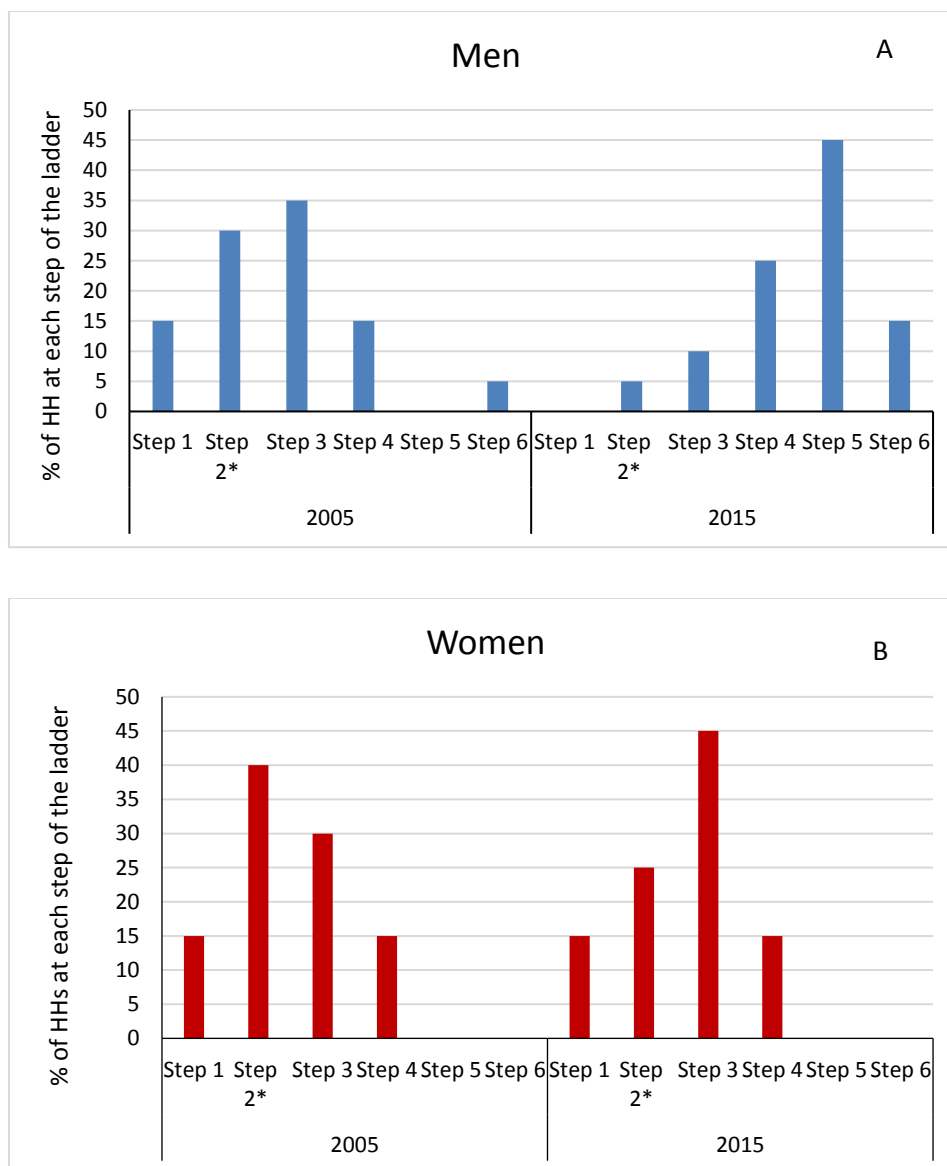
<sup>30</sup> Steps marked by star (\*) show poverty line

rated it at step two, meaning that although there was reported movement up the ladder, men felt the *same* percentage of households lived in poverty between 2005 and 2015 (approximately 85 percent) whereas women felt it dropped slightly. Although there is not much advancement above the CPL, a general trend of moving up the ladder (away from step one) was reported by both genders.

Women in Gobado and Badero reported a similar proportion of households are still living at or below their CPLs; however, men reported a very different picture. In Gobado, men felt that 80 percent of the households now lived above the CPL, whereas in Badero, men reported that only 15 percent of households lived above their CPL. This difference in men's perceptions is striking given that these villages are located in the same region, are close to the town that can help for marketing and other facilities, have similar average land holdings and grow similar crops. Since these variables are fairly constant, it would be meaningful to understand how these village histories and offered programs differ. For example, as reported in Gobado, the CCs helped engage and empower women through literacy and numeracy.

According to male and female respondents in Badero, factors that cause movement up the ladder include improved saving practices, participation in meetings, timely cultivation of farm land and increased production through renting additional land. People who manage to move up past step three on the ladder are those who rotate crops from year to year, engage in vegetable farming and animal fattening, do not limit themselves to farm activities but also work as daily laborers on construction sites during off season. Additional factors include that the men do not spend their money on women or drinking alcohol and they invest their money to generate additional income. These community-produced factors focus strongly on agriculture, demonstrating how those who take a proactive role in farming are seen by their neighbors as capable of moving out of poverty.

#### **4.5 Chala Wellbeing**



**Figure 3: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (A) and women (B) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Chala<sup>31</sup>**

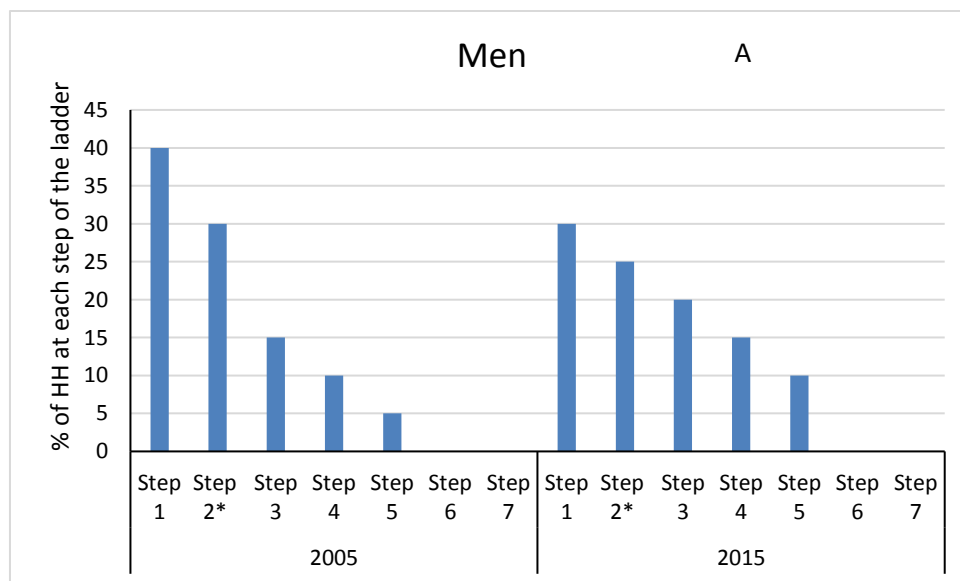
The results for Chala demonstrate strong movement out of poverty reported by both male and female participants. While both placed the community poverty line at step two, men created a six-step ladder, while women created a four-step ladder. These ladders demonstrate that male and female participants have different perceptions about the variability of household wellbeing within the village. Men reported a significant community-level movement out of poverty, from 45 percent at or below the poverty line in 2005 to only 5 percent of households at the poverty line in 2015. While women mirrored a decrease in poverty, they reported that 40 percent of households were at or below poverty in 2015. Interestingly, women reported households moving just above the CPL, whereas men reported a large increase in proportion of households at the top two ladder steps (steps five

<sup>31</sup> Steps marked by star (\*) show poverty line

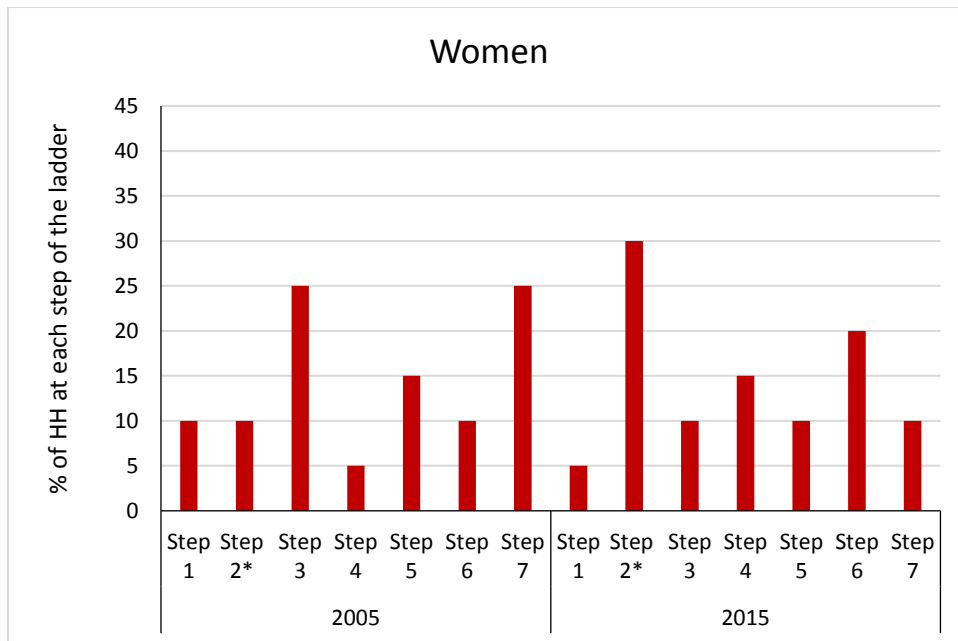
and six). According to women, some of the reasons that help households move out of poverty include hard work and dedication. For men, factors include being very careful with resources and never drinking, being able to maximize profit by buying grains when it is cheaper and selling when it is more expensive as well as enters *Equb* as a means of saving money regularly. Men also mentioned having close relationships with extension agents to get information, using improved seeds and modern agricultural practices and working hard toward achieving one's own goal as the reasons by which people can move out of poverty.

Since Chala reported the strongest movement out of poverty, understanding and reviewing the interventions and social and economic context of this village over the last ten years would be particularly helpful for building meaningful theories of change for CGIAR projects.

#### 4.6 Akkela Wellbeing



B



**Figure 4: Proportions of households (in %) according to men (A) and women (B) FGDs at different steps of the LoL in Akella<sup>32</sup>**

The Akkela focus group discussions generated interesting patterns. Whereas other villages reported a positive increase “up” the ladder of life with respect to household well-being, Akkela respondents had more mixed results. The male focus groups created a four-step ladder with a 15 percent decrease in the number of households living in poverty over the last ten years. However, the status of households skews heavily toward poverty with just over half of all households still living in poverty in 2015. Women, on the other hand, reported a significant increase in the proportion of households living in poverty, rising from 20 percent in 2005 to 35 percent in 2015. This was the only instance of a reported increase in the proportion of households living in poverty across all four villages. At the same time women reported a rise in those in poverty, they reported a drop in the proportion of households at the highest level of their ladder (step seven). Their male counterparts did not generate as many ladder steps and their reported patterns match the trends of the other villages.

According to male and female respondents, households that belong at steps six and seven mostly own oxen and traditional plowing machinery, have larger plots and rent tractors and threshing machines. Given this village has the largest average land holding per household of all the villages, it is surprising to note the decrease in wealth from ten years ago. This is potentially related to the government’s land redistribution program implemented a decade ago, which affected many households in the village as explained by female respondents. One of the female LoL participants said, “There are also people whose land was given to others during the land redistribution made by the *kebele* administration. During this time,

<sup>32</sup> Steps marked by star (\*) shows poverty line

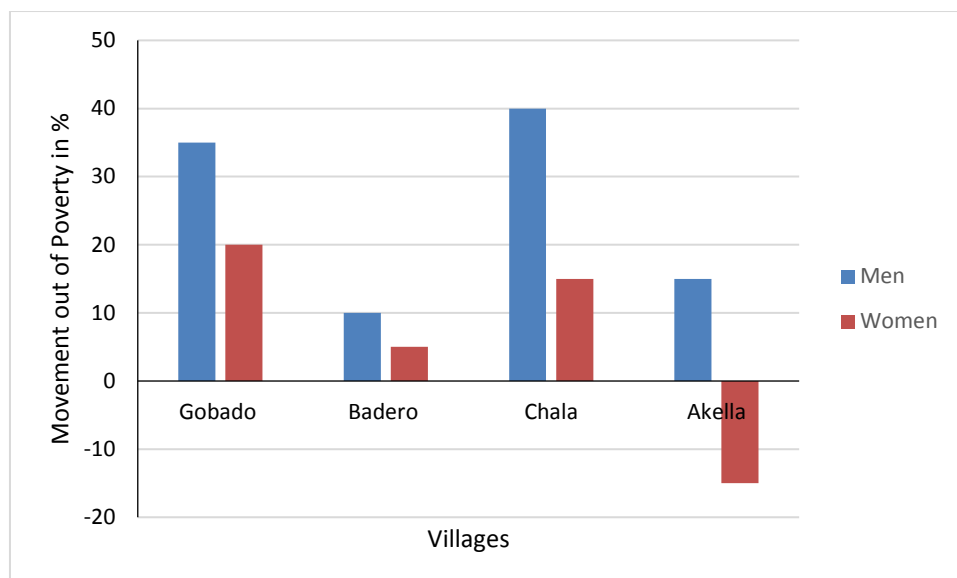
these people, who were on step seven ten years back, lost [some of] their land and income at the same time. Land redistribution is a practice that takes some of the land from large landowners and gives it to those without land. Men yet felt it was not enough to alter the situation of poverty as one male participant said:

*Still I couldn't see much improvement in the quality of life of the majority of villagers. This is because the majority of villagers have small farming plots, not more than a quarter or half a hectare. And with this even though our production increased due to use of improved seed variety and fertilizer, this change could not result in a significant movement up the ladder.*

Other factors women cited as reducing wealth in some households include men's alcohol abuse, cheating on their wives and sharing household resources with mistresses. In summary, households in all villages reported improvements in village well-being between 2005 and 2015 by reallocating the proportion of households along their community-defined Ladders of Life. Chala emerged as the "richest" village and Badero the poorest. Gobado and Akkela reported that, on average, just under half (45 percent) of the village households were in poverty. The differences in men's and women's perceptions of households along the LoL demonstrate the importance of sex-disaggregated data collection and that gender exerts some influence on their results. Respondents routinely mentioned agricultural knowledge, innovations, model farmers and enhanced farming practices as factors resulting in the improvement of household well-being. This demonstrates the positive attitude these participants have toward agriculture-related programming.

#### **4.7 Sex differences in perception of movement out of poverty**

This section presents the perceived change in wellbeing with a specific focus on movement out of poverty (MOP) between 2005 and 2015. In each village, using the community-defined poverty line, the movement out of poverty from 2005 to 2015 was recorded. There was other variation between steps that did not cross the poverty line and this information is not captured here (see village-specific charts above for this information).



**Figure 5: Movement out of poverty in % based on male and female perception in the four villages (2005-2015)** <sup>33</sup>

Figure 5 demonstrates that men consistently report movement out of poverty at higher rates than women and, in one village, male and female respondents even reported conflicting stories of changes in the community’s wellbeing. Some of these differences can be striking, such as in Chala where men reported a 40 percent movement out of poverty while women reported 15 percent movement on the same metric. Clearly, gender impacts perceptions of household wellbeing. While the reasons for this are unknown, it may be because men have greater mobility to view changes in their communities and may have more time to discuss and debate changes or enhancements others’ have made to their homes. At the same time, perhaps women’s perceptions are more realistic.

Figure 5 shows that in Gobado, 35 percent of male respondents indicate a movement out of poverty while women reported it as 20 percent. Thus, men are nearly twice as likely to consider villagers’ have improved wealth status in the past ten years compared to women. Badero has a lower rate of movement out of poverty compared to Gobado and the least gender difference in perception. In Chala, men reported a nearly three times higher rate of movement out of poverty than women.

Akkela is the anomaly, as women noted a significant increase in poverty while men estimated a 15 percent movement out of poverty. Comments made by male farmers in this village indicate an overall lower well-being of community members. One male farmer said, “The majority [of this community] is still below the poverty line. The slight change is due to the development of infrastructure like roads and the opening of job opportunities.” Compared to the other villages, women in Akkela gave higher scores at step seven of the LoL

<sup>33</sup> Estimates by men’s and women’s Ladder of Life FGDs.



10 years ago, indicating that village members were wealthier back then. Further research is needed to understand why males and females in this particular village scored so differently on this particular instrument. As noted, Akkela experienced a land redistribution policy and thus may have more acutely felt the loss of large plots of land.

Generally, women have a different understanding of their villages' movement out of poverty from men. This could be related to mobility restrictions: if women do not travel around the village as much as men do, they have fewer earning opportunities and less access to information because they do not attend the same number of community meetings that discuss community wealth and new developments. Additionally, it could indicate uneven intra-household dynamics in which men do not share the information they gained in the community with their spouses and do not share their increased wealth with their spouses. This mirrors the findings around extension services and other sources of information (see section below), to which women have less access than men.

It is also possible that women answered this question about their own lives, rather than their community's experience. Some of the questions on the LoL exercise specifically referred to the FGD participants (in this case women only). Women may have continued to reflect only on their well-being status and not necessarily on the village as a whole when answering this specific question.

#### **4.8 Factors that change poverty status**

The respondents cited a number of factors that affect how males and females in a community move their households from below to above the CPL or vice versa. According to respondents, the factors that affect socio-economic mobility include increased opportunities for women and men farmers to engage in on-farm and off-farm income-generating activities such as availability of savings and credit facilities, new farming skills and improved seeds. A poor woman explained:

*The improved seeds and farming method is beneficial for us because it helped families to increase their income and feed children properly.*

Poverty-causing factors explained by respondents include poor resource planning and poor saving habits, especially by men; negative societal attitudes towards women; illiteracy; lack of affordable farm inputs (fertilizer, improved seed, labor, etc.); lack of technologies and gender norms.

According to women, gender norms and gender inequality were considered to be problematic for escaping poverty. One respondent explains that men benefit more from improved seeds and innovation than women because they control the income from it:

*The income should be split between me and my husband. However, I believe he benefits more than me from it.*

Women reported that they are more likely to work outside their homes, on or off their family's property than ten years ago. While this may indicate greater gender equality, women associated it with necessity and the increased cost of living. In fact, the general societal belief is that a good wife should work inside the house and limit herself to income-earning opportunities within the confines of the household, such as making local beverages. A poor woman in Gobado explained, "Some people will disrespect and look down on a woman who works outside her home and may say that she is having an affair with another man".

Unequal gender norms contribute to household poverty and reduce women's economic opportunities and the benefits that accrue to women from these opportunities and reduce women's access to resources. The next section explores gender norms in more detail.

#### **4.9 Prevailing gender norms for men's and women's expected roles in the domestic sphere and agriculture**

##### **4.9.1 Qualities of a Good Wife and a Good Husband**

The data presented in this section is still part of the LoL instrument and is associated with the following question: What qualities make a good wife and what qualities make a good husband? Collecting opinions about what makes a "good wife" or a "good husband" helps to capture gender norms around desired qualities around household division of labor, roles and expectations. The findings demonstrate both current practices around agricultural and household labor as well as attitudes about the direction of gender norm change. Agricultural development projects could reinforce these normative expectations, furthering gender stereotypes or seek to transform them. During Activity D, poor adults were asked about what qualities make a good wife or husband. The following summarizes the village focus group discussions. There were four focus groups with women and four focus groups with men about qualities of a good wife and a good husband. Focus groups began by listing traits and then would remove traits if there was disagreement among the group (Table 7 shows the results).

Men reported that a good wife acknowledges a man's authority. Men believe a good wife is someone who supports them and cares for them and their children through their labor. Good wives should obey the husband, ask permission to make decisions and support them on the farm. At the same time, good wives should do all inside house activities including cooking, cleaning and washing. Women should be efficient and effective users of resources,

including household resources, gardening and seeds. Men also feel good wives should have diversified income sources through selling dairy products and a local alcohol called *areke*. The personal traits that make a good wife are obedience, not gossiping, being satisfied with what the man can provide, ensuring that the man is valued by the community (not a laughingstock), trusting the man, being loyal, not cheating and being peaceful. At the same time, there were a few mentions that women should stop the husband from making poor decisions, demonstrating that good wives may have to navigate an unclear normative line. There were a few mentions that women should help their children go to school and a few specific mentions of girls' education and preventing early marriage for girl children. Those responses demonstrate an interest in furthering women's rights through their daughters' future.

On the other hand, women described a much more active and engaging "good wife" than their male counterparts. Women still feel that a good wife is someone who obeys and trusts the husband. They emphasized making the husband and children happy. The biggest difference is that women describe good wives as being thoughtful, proactive planners of their households. A good wife is someone who works very hard to complete all of the basic tasks of running a household (washing, cooking, cleaning, caring for children), but also someone who is a strategic thinker, plans ahead for their family, encourages their children in school and shows love to their husbands (often through their labor and assistance). A good wife has diversified sources of income (by selling products), saves and knows about farming so that she can support her husband as needed. She shows the husband both respect and love. Women describe needing to know when the husband is angry while also being able to keep him happy. For their part, this means not asking for more than he can provide rather they should make up the difference. There was only one mention of rumors and gossip, saying that a good wife knows how to be active socially while also not being gossiped about.

There are close similarities between the concepts held by women and men respondents on the characteristics of a good wife. However, there were a number of traits that contradict one another, such as, "a good wife is one who doesn't choose to work outside the house" and on the other hand "she is expected to work hard to change [improve] her family's well-being status." Again, "a good wife is one who obeys her husband fully" and at the same time "she must control her husband so that he won't sell grain and livestock without her consent." These responses indicate the main expectations that communities put on women contradict one another and are difficult to fulfill. Women associate the qualities of a "good wife" mainly with a woman's socially-acceptable behavior, her relationship and bonding with her husband and her family responsibilities. Men had a much longer and more detailed list of expectations regarding a good wife, but in essence their expectations coincide with those of women. Men FGDs emphasized "traditional" roles focusing on housework, care duties and work on the main farm as important.

Men felt that good husbands are husbands who work hard to farm and provide for the family. They described a proactive farmer who is eager for innovation and does not stop and is interested in enhancing and improving the condition of the family. In terms of characteristics, good husbands should be faithful, not start quarrels, not nag their wives and love and care for their wives. There were few empirical examples of how that should be exhibited. There were also a few mentions that good husbands should help wives in the house when they are overworked. Being a good leader of the family and a community mediator were mentioned. Men should assist kids and encourage them in school (though this was mentioned less frequently by men). Men should work very hard on the farm, or in other venues, with the ultimate aim of providing for the family. The presence of community judgement against the husband was not mentioned and it appeared he is free to socially engage people and the community.

Women described a good husband by mentioning what he should not do rather than the presence of a trait. For example, good husbands should not drink or go with other women. Highly mentioned as a characteristic of a good husband was someone who respected the wife, would listen to her and not quarrel with her, who understood that she also has feelings and returns the respect she has for him. Good husbands should work hard to provide for the family. Farming was mentioned, but it was the providing of resources that was most important. Good husbands are ones who are engaged in the children’s lives and support them with advice. Good husbands help out around the house when it is needed and do not beat their wives. There was one mention of a good husband obeying his wife, while this trait was heavily mentioned during the good wife discussion. Being a mediator and peaceful in the home was mentioned. It was also mentioned that good husbands should know how to save and be thoughtful about resources, though this was mentioned less than during the “good wife” discussion.

**Table 7: Qualities of a Good Wife and Good Husband**

What makes a good wife?	What makes a good husband?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She leads her family with a plan and ensures their needs are met. In particular she takes good care of her children and educates them. (Male FGD, Badero)</li> <li>• She serves her husband his meals on time and she is hospitable to guests. (Male FGD, Gobado)</li> <li>• She is able to accommodate household requirements with the income her husband generates and takes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He works hard at farming and at any other work to support his family. (Male and female FGDs, Akkela)</li> <li>• The good husband helps his wife with household chores should these be too many. (Male and female FGDs, Chala)</li> <li>• He plans for and uses his resources carefully. (Male FGD, Badero)</li> <li>• He has a good saving culture and changes [improves] his family’s life. (Female FGD, Chala)</li> </ul>

<p>responsibility for family assets. (Female FGDs, in Chala)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good wife trusts her husband and has a positive attitude towards him. (Male FGD, Badero)</li> <li>• She is able to make him happy and is caring towards him. (Female FGDs, Gobado)</li> <li>• The good wife does not want to work outside the home. She prefers to work inside the home and on the family farm. (Female FGDs, Chala)</li> <li>• She generates small income streams through home brewing local beer (<i>areke</i>). (Male and Female FGDS, Badero)</li> <li>• She puts income into the safe and joins savings groups.</li> <li>• She closely controls family property and controls her husband not to sell grain and livestock without her consent. (Female FGD, Akkela)</li> <li>• She helps her husband on the farm, feeds the cattle and milks the cows, tends sheep and chickens and looks after the vegetable garden. (Male and female FGDs, Akkela)</li> <li>• She stores seed safely, and she takes lunch to her husband and reciprocal laborers (<i>wonfel</i>). (Female FGD, Badero)</li> <li>• She never steals and sells grain, returns in time from market, she thinks about the future and see things from a deeper perspective. (Female FGD, Chala)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He makes decisions in consultation with his wife. (Female FGD, Gobado)</li> <li>• The good husband leads his family properly, is a model to his children and takes responsibility to protect his family and property. (Female FGDs, Badero)</li> <li>• The good husband counsels his children and discusses problems with his wife. (Male FGD, Gobado)</li> <li>• He respects, listens to and never hits/beats his wife. (Female FGDs, Chala)</li> <li>• He recognizes that his wife gets tired and she has feelings. (Female FGDs, Badero)</li> <li>• He tries to mediate in disputes between neighbors, attends community functions and religious services. (Female FGD, Gobado)</li> <li>• He contributes to his country's development. (Male FGD, Chala)</li> <li>• He does not drink, have mistresses or quarrel with others. (Female FGDs, Badero and Chala)</li> </ul>
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In summary, both genders see their own role as important to the household. While both males and females confirmed stereotypical roles of women working in care roles inside the house with men working in productive roles outside the home, both males and females demonstrated that “good” is defined by husbands and wives who work hard to improve the household, be it inside or outside the home. Regarding gender relations, both male and

female focus groups described marriage partnerships based on love and respect, the ability to listen and understand the other. These descriptions should hearten any agricultural development programming to include gender sensitization as an essential component of the project design. The qualities of a good wife and a good husband can be used as a baseline to inform project design and ensure that gender roles are not merely entrenched through agricultural projects.

#### 4.9.2 What makes a Good Farmer?

The focus groups were asked to transition from describing good marriage partners to what makes a “good farmer,” exploring the expectations of male and female farmers. Generally, the findings from the LoL instrument reveal that gender segregation and fixed gender roles exist in the agricultural sphere. Men are typically responsible for land preparation and tillage with oxen, selecting seed, threshing and winnowing and they make decisions about when to plow, weed and harvest. Women do all the household work and manage the home garden; they also help out on the farm more than in the past (and certainly more than men help out inside the house). Women in all villages actively participate in farming, including in seed, planting (but only in row planting), threshing, winnowing, composting, as well as preparing all meals including for *wonfel*<sup>34</sup>.

**Table 8: The good woman and man farmer, poor male and female focus groups**

<b>A woman who is a good farmer</b>	<b>A man who is a good farmer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works equally with the man on the farm, knowing when and how to plant and the best seed and always prepares for the next harvesting season;</li> <li>• Is active and supports her husband in his efforts;</li> <li>• Creates different kinds of income-generating activities;</li> <li>• If her husband died, she would take over his role in farming and becomes more active than him;</li> <li>• Must be braver than a man, a good model for other farmers and share her seed with others;</li> <li>• Uses her time properly and participates in row planting;</li> <li>• Is careful with her resources and, as a result, she will be able to feed the family year in and year out;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plows his land on time, prepares the seed ahead of time and collects the harvest on time;</li> <li>• Respects his job and is hard working;</li> <li>• Consults his wife on the seeds and teaches his children how to farm.</li> <li>• Asks advice from his neighbors or agriculture extension agents, learns new ways and helps out others;</li> <li>• Is respected and chosen as a model farmer;</li> <li>• Engages in other kinds of income-generating activities;</li> <li>• Doesn't let his wife work on the farm but hires farmers and returns loans/credit on time;</li> <li>• Participates in <i>wonfel</i></li> <li>• Has a yearly plan;</li> <li>• Uses technology and tries to increase production and reduce starvation in his country;</li> </ul>

<sup>34</sup> A traditional form of reciprocal labor

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If her husband calls for <i>wonfel</i>, she will prepare good food and drinks for the participants;</li> <li>• Raises her children the way her husband wants;</li> <li>• Prepares meals for <i>wonfel</i> participants during harvesting;</li> <li>• Does all household chores.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consults his wife on the household economy and devises a way to overcome shortages;</li> <li>• Trusts his wife and supports her initiatives;</li> <li>• Does not waste money for drinks and sends his children to school.</li> </ul>
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There were a number of expectations that contradict the characteristics of a “good wife” and those of a “good female farmer,” as “a good wife stays at home and doesn’t want to work outside” but as a good female farmer “she should attend innovation meetings and work closely with agricultural extension workers,” “she is diligent in farming by herself rather than subcontracting her plot of land” and “she must be braver than a man” and “a good model to other farmers.” There are some expectations for women which are higher than for men such as:

- “A good female farmer follows government policy. [How?] When the government brings agricultural innovations, she would be the first to accept without hesitation.”
- “She works towards reducing starvation in her country, striving to change her life by working men’s work.”
- “She attends innovation meetings and works closely with agricultural extension workers.”

Another aspect common to all villages is that, although both males and females are invited to extension events, some married women may not be allowed to participate by their husbands. Certain categories of women (especially mistresses) are excluded. Men support women in backyard vegetable cultivation when they are no longer busy with farm tasks and particularly on holidays, but women are regularly responsible for supporting men with on-farm activities. This means that women help men but men are not expected to help women as much.

#### **4.10 Attitudes toward gender equality**

The data presented in this section includes responses from poor adults from the LoL instrument and of youth responses. The question asked was: In your own words, please share what you understand by equality between a man and a woman. Is this kind of equality a good or bad thing?

**Youth attitude:** Young women and men seem to have a more liberal understanding of gender equality compared to their fathers and mothers. Young women from Badero briefly outlined their understanding of equality, including "equal participation of males and females in political, social life, work and education."

*Equality between male and female means having equal expectations from both. For instance, society requires women to be in a certain way that makes her inferior to the man. However, this has to be changed and they have to see women as equal to men in terms of capacities, in opportunities and in rights". (Young women Gobado)*

Young men explained carefully and at length about their understanding of gender equality. Most of the young men agreed that gender equality is good because "when a man and his wife are communicating and discussing issues that means they will be successful in their lives." (Badero).

The following quotations briefly summarize young men's and women's understanding of gender equality:

- "If the level of their (men's and women's) understanding is the same I say that is equality." (Young woman, Gobado)
- "If the man does what is traditionally considered a woman's job and when the woman does a man's job that is equality." (Young man, Badero)
- "If they both discuss and solve problems together that is equality." (Young man, Chala)
- "If the right of a man and a woman is respected I say that is equality." (Young woman, Akkela)

Focus group discussions conducted among young women in Badero regarding a story presented in a vignette about "an ideal man who helps out at home" has provided interesting insights into the tensions around changing roles.

- "His friends gossip that he is a bad model for our wives."
- "They insult him and call him a woman [not a real man]."
- "I am feeling a bit confused here. You know what, yes, previously they would say these things. However, these days, men are cooking and cleaning; they are carrying their children, and people do not lose respect if he is working in the kitchen."
- "His mother may even say, 'I wish I had never given birth to you!' Because he stays home and does whatever his wife is supposed to be doing."
- Some community members would say "the wife visits a witch to keep him under control."

Young men made exactly the same points, saying that if the man is strongly involved in domestic work, "they would insult him. They would even blame God why he created him like this" and "he would face too much criticism from his friends and the community. His mother would be ashamed." This implies that even if the youth have positive attitudes



toward gender equality and would like to have closer relationships with their wives, existing gender stereotypes will not make it easy for them to practice what they believe in.

Other comments included:

- “Equality for me is when a man’s mistake is corrected by a woman.” (Men FGD, Chala)
- “I regarded equality between male and female as giving equal rights for deciding on household consumption and expenditure of income. If a man dominates a woman in those regards, I don’t think there is equality.” (Men LoL, Akkela)

**Adult women** all agreed that equality means working equally with men, being involved in decisions that were previously only within a man’s domain, selling products "without men and women fighting with one another" and fundamentally being aware of and using one's equal rights. Three remarks are given in full here. One focuses on equality as defined as balance, and the second suggests the synergies. The third looks at the gender division of labor and intra-household decision-making roles.

- "For me, equality between male and female is about deciding together, being able to openly discuss, having balanced responsibility over the household, helping each other in whatever the man and the woman do, and being able to overcome problems and raising children together knowing their rights." (Women LoL, Badero)
- “A woman is not equal to a man. It is difficult to say she is equal to him. When we are equal, we work together and we think together. This is what it is. But in practice there is no such thing.” (Women LoL, Chala)
- “In my opinion, equality is doing what a man is doing. If a man is giving judgment she also has to give a judgment”. When the women bake injera, he has to cook wot<sup>35</sup>.” (Women LoL, Akkela)

Women FGDs in Gobado believed strongly in gender equality and listed the gains as: (i) equal access and control over resources, which is important in the case of divorce; (ii) reduction in vulnerability to abuse such as domestic violence; and (iii) the sharing of knowledge and experience.

There is an exceptional scenario in Gobado where community members revealed the existence of much more liberal gender roles. A male participant from Gobado explained:

*Some years ago, there was what they call Community Conversation on HIV/AIDS, family planning, women and men’s equality and the like. That time we learned a lot. We had a chance to clearly identify the bad from the good and decided together to change the way we live and to discard those*

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<sup>35</sup> wot -wat: is an Ethiopian traditional sauce with which one eats injera.

*practices that are dragging us down. It was a good thing, but it was discontinued around four or five years ago.*

In Goabdo, male and female respondents referred repeatedly to CCs as being the primary force for change, and suggested it needs to be restarted for the younger generation. CCs helped to create awareness about the need to respect people's right, awareness on gender relations and the importance of social cohesion. This in turn has paved the way for increased collaboration between males and females in undertaking farm activities as well as household chores. As one woman articulated:

*Thanks to the community conversations...we now have the ability to be listened to. Women negotiate what is to be used for consumption and to be sold and calculate together with the husband how the money should be used. If he refuses to listen to me and if what he suggests is not good for our life, then I have the right to stop him and he will never breach that.*

The men concurred that joint discussions and consultations with their wives is important. As one man from this community explained, "We discuss together and decide. If not, she may think I am going to drink with it, and then she may start to steal from the seed grain too." Another man explained, "Women influence the decision on the amount of wheat to keep for household consumption. They are the only people who know how much should be enough. The man does not have adequate knowledge when it comes to consumption" (Men FGD, Gobado). Unfortunately, this research did not cover details on CCs and it is unknown how they functioned nor why they may have been so impactful.

#### **4.11 Gender wage gap and agricultural labor**

The data presented in this section is part of the LoL instrument and is associated with the following questions and topics:

- I would next like to understand more about different types of work that [sex of FGD] do to earn a living in the community, either in their own home or on their land, or outside of the home or their land. Again, this can be regular or irregular work that is paid with money or with goods and services, like meals or crops or education fees. It can also include exchange of services between households.
- What are the common types of unpaid work that [sex of FGD] do in the community, on or off their family home/land?
- Now I'm interested in whether certain types of women in the village are more likely to work for pay (which includes in-kind), whether the work is on or off family home/land.
- What do people in the village generally think of women with children who work outside their homes in a local job?

According to women respondents in the four villages, a great majority of women are engaged working on their family property, such as helping with on-farm activities, selling poultry and dairy products, preparing and selling local alcohol drinks like *arekki* and managing other household and care work. Women also work off their family property and are hired as daily laborers on-farm and in construction sites, go to towns and work as house maids or work as government employees (teachers, office secretary and as extension agents).

Women are responsible for almost all domestic tasks including cooking food, fetching water and firewood, grinding grain, washing clothes, attending to the children and other family members, attending cattle, etc. Women have a crucial role in social affairs such funeral and wedding ceremonies.

There was no notable difference in the responses provided among the types of women, in terms of the likelihood of working for pay whether the work is on or off the family farm. Community profile informants in Badero said that, previously, the attitude toward women working as hired farm hands was so negative that women would prefer to "starve at home." However, they reported that this attitude has flipped and now many women are interested in earning money. This, according to them, has emanated from an increasing cost of living, increased work opportunities targeted at women and changing expectations on how to support children. Young women in general had mixed views on what people in their respective villages think of women who work outside their home. A young woman in Badero said, "A woman who works hard is actually respected. Previously they may say she is a prostitute but now it is not that much of a problem because there are women who work outside and men are also working in the kitchen."

Women respondents, however, have emphasized that women working for money are not viewed universally with favor. Above all, her honor is at stake. The idea that she is actually looking for an affair rather than merely seeking income was reiterated in all discussions. Interestingly, women CP informants suggested that the working woman's friends would "get jealous of her and will tell her husband that she is cheating on him. They will tell him that she is not only looking for income, but she might be having an affair." This idea of women's freedom being resented by other women unable, for some reason, to take their own steps toward that state is significant and clearly hampers women's income-generating potential. It ties in with other remarks – made repeatedly – that focus on the importance of being respected. Women respondents in Gobado reported that women, whether married or not, are free to engage in off-farm work. One woman said, "Previously, we would die of hunger rather than go out and work in a local job. If a woman had to get engaged in work, she would leave to distant places such as Addis Ababa so no one knows what she is doing" (Women FGD, Gobado).

In general, negative responses were given by women respondents in Chala and Akkela of Oromia region (compared to Gobado and Badero) regarding this particular question. They

all agreed that a woman who works outside the home is considered to be “looking for attention from other men around,” “ill-mannered and who has some bad intentions otherwise, she would not go out,” “the kind of person who has put some pressure on her husband” and “unfaithful and is not a proper wife or mother.” On a contradictory note, two respondents from Badero gave a different insight toward a working woman: “People will say that her husband trusts her and she is lucky to have such a husband who supports her” (Women FGD, Badero).

Men respondents did not discuss this topic in detail, saying merely that women who work outside the home are seen as hard workers, as supporting the family and as professional. However, they unanimously agreed that if a woman has to work outside, she cannot go far because she has to look after her children. Opportunities for off-farm work and on-farm labor activities are important income substitution and livelihood strategies for farmers.

Information presented in the table below is based on this question asked in a key informant interview:

We would like to understand changing patterns for the payment of agricultural and non-agricultural labor in the community. *(Please provide information on daily agricultural and non-agricultural wages for male and female farmers in your village).*

The gender wage gap for agriculture and non-agriculture activities was then calculated. The community profile respondents who provided this data clarified that some hired laborers work continuously on a particular farm (from weeding to harvesting) and are paid a lump sum amount of birr 2500 to 3000 by the end of the year. It is not clear if women are ever employed for a season in this way or if the arrangement refers to men only.

**Table 9: Gender wage gap across the four villages in 2014**

	(A) Daily ag wage male (Br.)	(B) Daily ag wage female (Br.)	Ag gender wage gap now % $\frac{(A-B)*100}{A}$	(c) Daily non-ag wage male (Br.)	(D) Daily non-ag wage female (Br.)	Non-ag gender wage gap now % $\frac{(C-D)*100}{C}$
Gobado	60	50	16.7	150	50	66.7
Badero	100	60	40	80	80	0
Chala	10	7	30	100	0	100
Akkela	14	3	78.6	50	6.7	86.7

N.B: 1 USD ~ 23 Birr (Br.) during the study period in 2014.

Table 9 summarizes the daily gender wage gaps for agriculture and non-agriculture activities across the four villages. The highest gap in daily wage today for agriculture activities is observed in Akkela at 78.57 percent, the second biggest gender wage gap exists in Badero (40 percent) followed by Chala (30 percent). As explained in wealth rankings above, it is no surprise that women in Akkela reported an increase in poverty given the low daily wage women receive today (2014). Similarly, Gobado has the lowest gender wage gap among the four villages (16.67 percent) which explains the highest wealth status of the village. Chala has the highest gap in daily wage for non-agriculture activities (100 percent), indicating that women are not considered part of the labor force for non-agriculture activities. Here, women are under strict mobility restrictions.

The next highest wage rate gap for non-agriculture activities is in Akkela (86.66 percent) followed by Gobado (66.67 percent). Generally, the daily wage schedule for workers shows that women agricultural and non-agricultural workers earn a lot less than men except in Badero, where women and men get paid equally for non-agriculture activities.

The daily wage rates in all villages (for both agriculture and non-agriculture activities) are much lower than the national monthly statutory minimum wage of Br.420<sup>36</sup>. The unequal wage rates for male and female workers on the same activity indicates gender discrimination pertinent to the labor market which manifests existing gender inequalities and negatively impacts poverty reduction efforts, particularly women's economic empowerment. This said, a cross-village comparison indicates that labor in Badero and Chala is very cheap, particularly for agriculture activities, and that farmers (particularly male farmers) can easily hire labor during harvest season. This can be considered one of the enabling factors for adopting new agriculture innovations with high labor requirements, such as row planting.

#### **4.12 Domestic violence**

This section focuses the experience and perception of domestic violence in the community. Both male and female respondents in all four villages agreed that domestic violence continues, though declining when compared to ten years ago. A sharp decline in the incidence of domestic violence is reported by male and female respondents in Gobado which, according to them, is attributed to CCs, a behavioral change methodology which focuses on bringing people together in discussions held at the community level. A woman from this village said "...We had what we call community conversation in our locality some time ago. I do not know why they stopped it, but it was very helpful. They taught us about the benefits of living peacefully, about gender and the like." Other women added that

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<sup>36</sup> Central Statistics Agency (CSA), 2016.

village elders do not tolerate domestic violence; women are informed about their rights and they know where, and how, to seek help and that couples marry of their own free will.

Men respondents in Badero explained that "Most women these days know and defend their rights. The men also know the benefit of understanding and agreement with their wives." This signals explicit recognition of the impact of strengthened women's agency in reducing gender-based violence. Interestingly, men respondents also emphasized the importance of their own role in changing the gender dynamics through improved relationships with their wives. This said, there are still cases of domestic violence as indicated in the responses. When asked about the effects of domestic violence, women respondents interestingly associated direct harm to the woman and her well-being with a ripple effect on her family, the community and even the nation. Women told horrifyingly stories of the harm domestic violence can cause.

*This is the scar I got when my husband hit me with a piece of burning wood which he took out from the fire [extends her hand to show a big scar]. It burned my skin. The scar on the surface healed but the one in my mind and in my children's minds never healed. (Female FGD, Gobado)*

*Previously if a woman said no or struggled she was beaten to death and if a man wanted her even if she is married he took her and spent the night with her. There is still harassment and abuse in the house. Some men still beat and insult their wives. (Female FGD, Badero)*

According to male and female respondents, a number of factors contributed to the decline in domestic violence, including the existence of improved local laws with improved enforcement procedures, better awareness and improved agricultural productivity, among others.

A man from Gobado said, "The government and NGOs worked hard to change people's perceptions. This has brought a big change to our community." Another added, "Now the productivity of agricultural activities has increased so much. This means you have enough to eat in the house and therefore there is no need to quarrel and no stress."

A woman from Badero said,

*The law supports us and it is really implemented. There are police forces around the village. The 1-5 structures help us to discuss what is going on, where to go when something happens to us, what kind of laws we have and other related issues.*

When asked about the broader impacts of gender-based violence on the communities, all male and female respondents agreed the impacts were serious. A number of remarks were

made by respondents including, “It has a negative impact; it creates hatred between family members and community,” “there was a problem, separation of families including children, poverty, there were also some individuals who hanged themselves after family conflicts, and some who sustained health problems due to severe hitting in a dangerous place on the body” and “it has affected not only the family in question but also the whole community in terms of social integrity.” Finally, women explained how gender-based violence affected women victims: “[She is] psychologically affected. She loses confidence. These women dress poorly and don't mix with others. They feel ashamed.” Both male and female respondents underlined the effects on children, such as being unable to concentrate on school and failing to do well.

#### **4.13 Conclusion to LoL results**

The LoL focus group discussions provide meaningful insight into how adults perceive poverty in their village, movement out of poverty and what factors contribute to this movement. By allowing each focus group to define their own community poverty line, the understanding of poverty is locally created and not imposed. Men consistently reported movement out of poverty at higher rates than women. Three out of four villages reported a positive trend out of poverty, while the fourth village had divergent opinions between male and female. When describing the households which had improved their wellbeing, many agricultural factors were highlighted, demonstrating a clear understanding that changes or enhancements to farming can have positive impacts on households.

Male and female study participants from the four villages refer to norms governing household relations becoming more cooperative with rising access to information, education, and awareness of rights as well as enforcement of local laws. Nevertheless, the findings show that in all four villages there is a strong normative association of “good husbands with the productive sphere and economic provision,” and equally strong normative association of “good wives with the reproductive sphere.” These normative associations are reflected again in the local expectations for men’s and women’s roles in farming. As a productive and economic activity, farming and new technology fit well with the association of men with the productive sphere. At the same time, both male and female participants described “good” as someone who is open, a listener, supportive of their partner, communicative, respectful, loving and helpful to the other.

Women’s productive contributions continue to be framed as “helping their husbands.” This framing makes it possible to maintain the association of women with the reproductive sphere and, hence, to conform to normative expectations. At the same time, it masks women’s contributions to farming and reduces their capacity to gain recognition as farmers, let alone as participants and potential agents of change in agricultural innovation and rural transformation. Overall, the findings under this section indicate that deep-rooted gender

norms are evolving in many ways. Generally, adults and youth understand that gender equality may bring benefits to a household. However, there is a long way to go before achieving gender-equitable agricultural development in all of the study villages.

## 5. Ladder of power and freedom (Instruments D and E)

### 5.1 Introduction

This section explores focus group discussion data from middle-class adults and youth. For details on the youth methods and activity, see section 1.6.

The focus group discussions with middle-class adults (Activity D) aimed to explore experiences and perceptions of community trends in prosperity, enabling and constraining factors for agricultural and NRM innovation, the local opportunity structure for agriculture and entrepreneurship, social cohesion and social capital and their gender dimension, as well as gender norms, surrounding household bargaining over livelihoods and assets. In each village, the data collection was conducted in two focus groups each constituting a group of eight to ten adult men (aged 25 to 55) and another group of eight to ten adult women (aged 25 to 55) in the middle socioeconomic group of their respective villages.

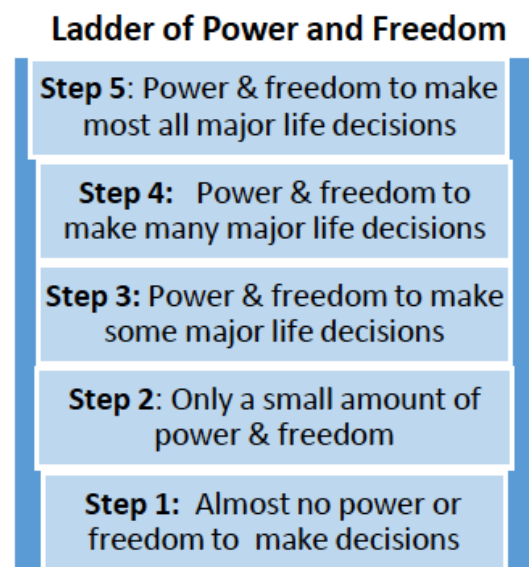


Figure 6: Ladder of Power and Freedom

The focus group discussions on youth aspirations (Activity E) were designed in a way that helps to explore issues around gender norms, practices and aspirations as they relate to education, livelihoods and capacities for innovation, women's physical mobility, access to economic opportunities and household bargaining. Two FGDs were conducted with a group of eight to ten young women and a group of young men in the age range of 16 to 24 in each village.

Participants, helped by facilitators, were asked to consider a five-step ladder and rank their degree of power and freedom to make decisions on a scale, or steps, from one to five (See Figure 6). The focus group discussions with middle-class adults addressed the following questions:

- On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of (sex of FGD) in the village today? Why?



- On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of (sex of FGD) ten years ago? Why?
- What has (or has not) changed for FGD participants in this community?
- How do families here make decisions about how much wheat to sell and how much to keep for use in the home for food?
- How are women usually involved in these decisions? And men?
- What factors influence this decision for women? And for men?
- What local norms shape household decision-making about women's earnings from agriculture/NRM and their marketing activities?

Youth participants were asked to imagine a five-step ladder (*facilitators show figure of ladder*) where at the bottom, on the first step, stands the individual [sex of FGD] of this community with little capacity to make their own decisions about important affairs in their lives. These [sex of FGD] have little say about if or where they will work, or about starting or ending a relationship with [opposite sex]. On the highest step, the fifth, stand those who have great capacity to make important decisions for themselves, including about their work life and whether to start or end a relationship in their personal life. Youth were then asked to discuss the following question:

- On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of the young [sex of FGD] in the village today?

## **5.2 Intra-household decision making**

This section summarizes male and female responses from the ladder of power and freedom to make decisions, exercise with the focus on intra-household decisions. Female respondents in the four villages confirmed that they usually sell small amounts of wheat at different times to cover household needs without the knowledge of their husbands. As one respondent articulated, "Irrespective of their role in production, women generally have no say in what happens to the harvest. As a result, some women secretly store away some food as insurance for times of food shortages."

Yet there were also differences among the villages. The majority of women participants in Gobado and Badero located themselves at step three of the five-step ladder, indicating a moderate level of power and freedom to make decisions. According to women and men respondents in these villages, a lot has improved over the past ten years in relation to women's rights, resulting in increased joint-decision making. Decisions over household resources are generally — though not always — made in consultation between husband and wife. Women have equal decision-making power regarding many resources, to the extent that women can stop their husbands from making major decisions for which they have not

given their consent. Women, however, are not culturally entitled to sell farm produce in bulk because it is believed that women are not as proficient at market negotiations.

A very different scenario applies to women in Chala and Akkela, who reported that they do not have the autonomy to make decisions about earning money from agricultural produce, not even regarding the sale of their own vegetable products. Young male and female participants in Chala and Akkela confirmed this finding, noting that in their culture only men are entitled to sell in bulk and women cannot ask or stop their husbands from doing so. A female youth FGD participant in Chala said:

*In my parents' case my father is the one who sells big animals including sheep. If my mother disagrees with him I see him beating her. One time she said he can't sell the cow she raised and he beat her [nearly] to death... If a woman did such thing she will be killed or sent back to her family.*

It can be inferred from the above discussions that women, despite their ample contribution to production, do not have equal access to, and control over, household resources such as grains and money. This in turn has direct implications on household food security, poverty reduction and gender equality.

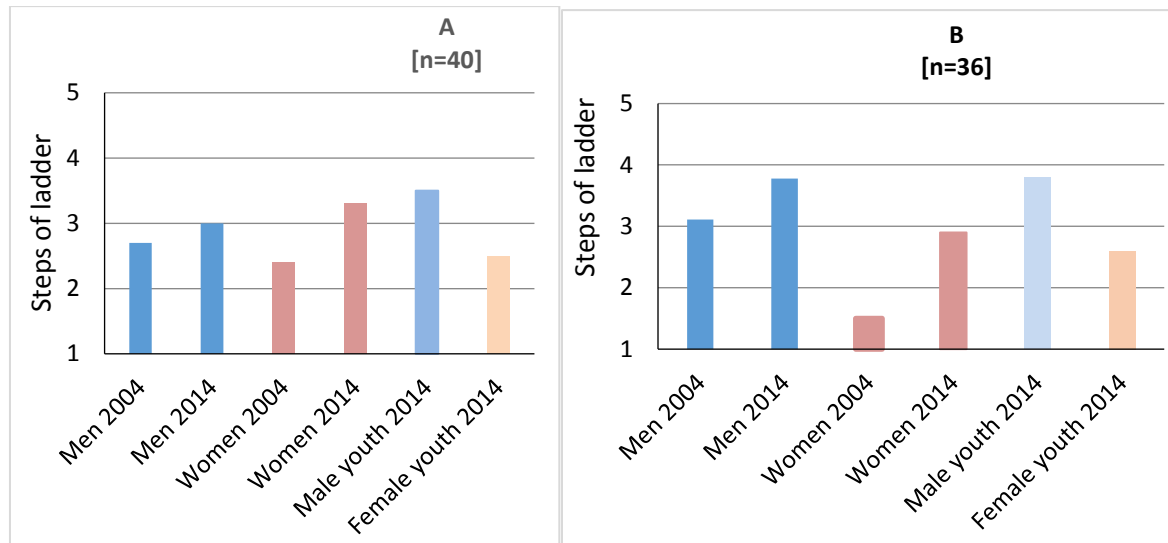
### **5.3 Marketing decisions**

Young men confirmed that women have little decision-making power when it comes to selling crops and livestock. As one young male respondent from Chala explained: "Even if she is married, her responsibility is limited to tending her cows and managing dairy products. She can sell milk, butter or cheese in the market but no other crops because it is the men's domain to produce it and to sell."

Findings from all villages indicate that joint decision making is more prevalent for subsistence crops and livestock, with chickens and milk falling into women's decision-making domain. When grown commercially, there is joint decision making on wheat and fava beans. However, men have the key decision-making roles over *sheep and cattle* and they traditionally sell products in bulk.

In addition, female participants indicated that one of the reasons for women's poor economic status compared to men's is that women have no control over income generated by their husbands and are restricted from important income-generating activities, such as making bulk sales of household produce. Even in many female-headed households, women do not decide for themselves, especially with regards to farming. If there is an older son or male relative, then the women will defer to them for decision making. This is true even when the male relative lives elsewhere. In these cases, the women call the men to ask for

advice on what they should do. While this might reflect women’s lower confidence in their own abilities and women’s lower education levels, it also highlights a strong gender norm that men are the decision-makers and are considered better at making decisions than women.



**Figure 7: Ladder of power and freedom mean step for majority of own sex in A is Gobado and B is in Badero<sup>37</sup>**

The above graph (Figure 7) summarizes the mean steps on the Ladder of Power and Freedom for FGD participants in Gobado (A) and Badero (B) respectively. Looking at the trend in ratings, males and females of both villages generally reported an increase in power and freedom to make decisions over the last decade (2004-2014). In both villages, women reported higher decision-making abilities today compared to the steps where they were placed ten years ago, while men reported only a slight improvement compared to ten years ago.

But these improvements were not experienced universally. Some men in Gobado and Badero feel that their decision-making power has actually declined compared to 10 years ago, when they used to have absolute power over decisions. Now they consult and negotiate with their wives before a decision is reached. A man from Badero said, “Now we are required to consult with the wife. Previously we used to decide independently, now we have to negotiate, and this somehow decreases our ability to be decisive” (Male FGD, Badero).

In Gobado (A), men reported feeling their decision-making power and freedom has increased slightly since 2004, but not as much as the women’s reported increase. When it

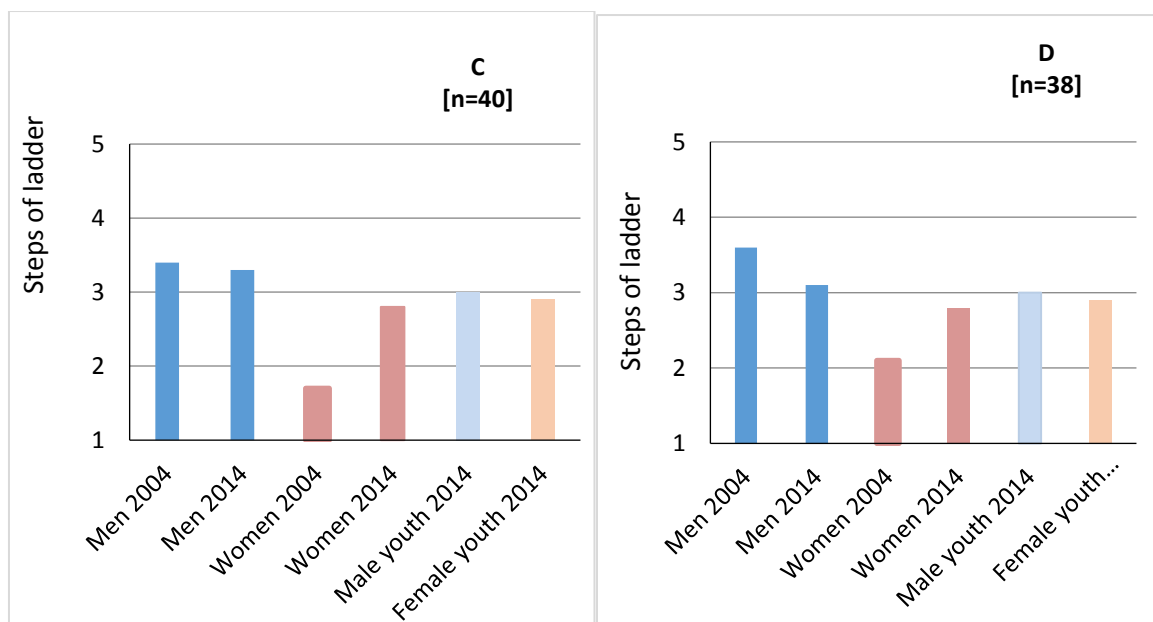
<sup>37</sup> Ratings by individuals in four focus groups of middle-class adults and youth.

comes to youth, this village was the only one where young men reported feeling they have more power and freedom than the older generation. It is also the only village where female youth feel as limited as women did 10 years ago. We also see that things have improved for women in terms of power and freedom and that this has not come at the expense of men because they have also improved their decision-making power. Gobado had CCs implemented (See section LoL), which helped transform gender norms around intra-household decisions, traditional gendered division of labor, harmful traditional practices and community cohesion. This further highlights the importance of gender sensitization program components that, alongside agricultural innovations, could offer powerful results.

In Badero (B), women have almost doubled their reported power and freedom while men have only slightly increased theirs. In this village, some women FGD participants said that they can take their husbands to court if they make significant decisions without their knowledge. One of the most important factors that facilitated change and is common to both Gobado and Badero is the role of local *kebele* administrations that enforce local laws through community police. When asked about the differences now compared to ten years ago, one woman linked their stronger voice to agricultural and other training:

*In the past, all interventions focused on men, and women were not given attention. As a result, they did not have skills and information. Their attendance at meetings and training sessions was almost nil. Currently, women are encouraged and empowered to participate. We have knowledge and power to participate on major issues in our lives and homes.*

Men respondents emphasized the increase in their ability to think, to learn and to discuss with each other. This includes improved discussions between women and men within the household, as well as the strengthened rights of young people and women. In line with this, a male FGD participant in Gobado said, "Today the husband discusses with his wife and decides things. Today the rights of the youth and women are respected. It was not like this in the past."



**Figure 8: Ladder of power and freedom mean step for majority of own sex (C) is in Chala and (D) is in Akkela<sup>38</sup>**

In Chala (Figure 8 A) and Akkela (Figure 9 D), a slight decrease in men’s power and freedom over the last decade is seen. Simultaneously, women’s reported power and freedom increased. According to male and female respondents, a number of factors contributed to these changes. Adult men in both villages seem to be confused about their ability to make decisions generally. A male respondent from Akkela explained this and connected it not to shifts in gender dynamics, but the speed and pace of change:

*Now the time has changed. More and more technologies and new practices are coming. The economy is also unpredictable. There are certain things we didn’t know about or decide upon until we make sure that things are advantageous to us.*

Another male respondent complemented this by saying:

*In our lives we see so many ups and downs to talk about the power of freedom to make decisions on things that matter to us. Democracy is new for us but we are getting used to it now.*

However, other men did connect their decreased feelings of authority with changing gender dynamics within families. One male respondent from Chala said:

<sup>38</sup> Ratings by individuals in four focus groups of middle class and youth.

*Previously men had all the power to decide on things concerning their household without consulting anyone in the family. Now it is not like that. In most familial decisions our wives have also the right to decide and this is even supported by the law.*

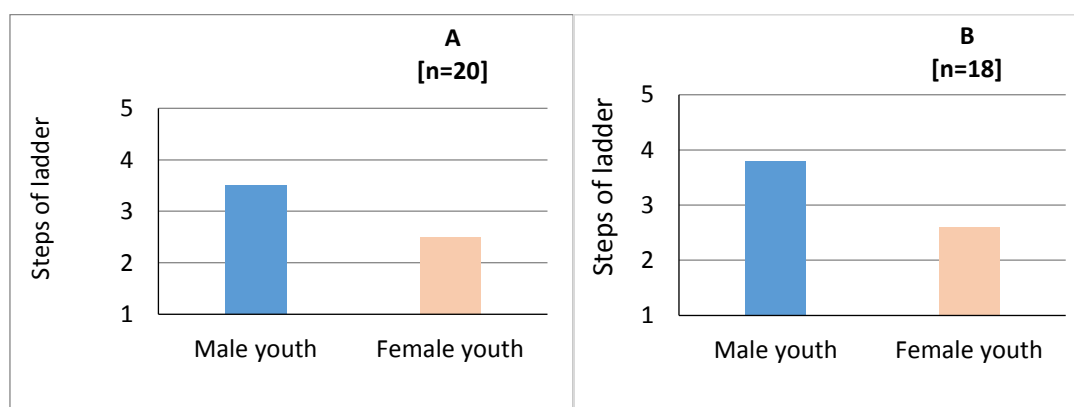
A female FGD participant from Chala confirmed that more equitable decision making has occurred within the household, but articulated a dynamic in which men still hold the majority of the power:

*The male will never allow women to administer or decide on everything. These days we have reached a fair degree of decision making but it is still difficult for women to decide on everything.*

Women reported increased power and freedom on decision-making in the last ten years, but these focus groups confirm that these households and communities will respond in dynamic and unknown ways, with men potentially feeling threatened by women's increased power or also confusion on how to make decisions in a rapidly-changing world.

#### 5.4 Youth decision-making issues

Since the participants of the youth focus group discussions are younger, they were not asked to recall their power and freedom from ten years prior. Rather, the youth were asked to focus on their sense of power and freedom today (2014). Unlike many of the adult focus groups, youth were asked only to comment on their own gender's status within their communities.



**Figure 9 : Ladder of Power and Freedom mean step for majority of own sex (Youth) Gobado (A) and Badero (B)**

As can be seen above in Figure 9, in Gobado and Badero, young men have reported a higher level (closer to step four) of power and freedom to make their own decisions while young women ranked themselves one step lower on the ladder (slightly lower than step three) than their male counterparts. The youth discussed how parents, neighbors, and the community can influence young women's decision-making power. In line with this, a young woman from Gobado highlights how she is treated differently in her home by her parents, but also the fear of violence she has if she were able to move freely:

*For instance, at home I am not treated equally with my brothers. I am given more work and I have no time to even study especially during harvest time. My brothers will be told to do something and they will go out without doing it. They will disobey my father and mother if they want. For me such disobedience is something that has severe consequences. If I do that, I know I cannot go anywhere, because I am afraid I may get raped or may not be able to go back once I spend time out of the house. For my brother he can come when he wants sometimes.*

Similarly, another young woman in Gobado explained,

*If I decide by myself and neighbors see me doing my decision in spite of my parent's advice that would give me a bad name among them. People will say I am not a good and well-behaved person, so even my parents would be worried I would not get a husband.*

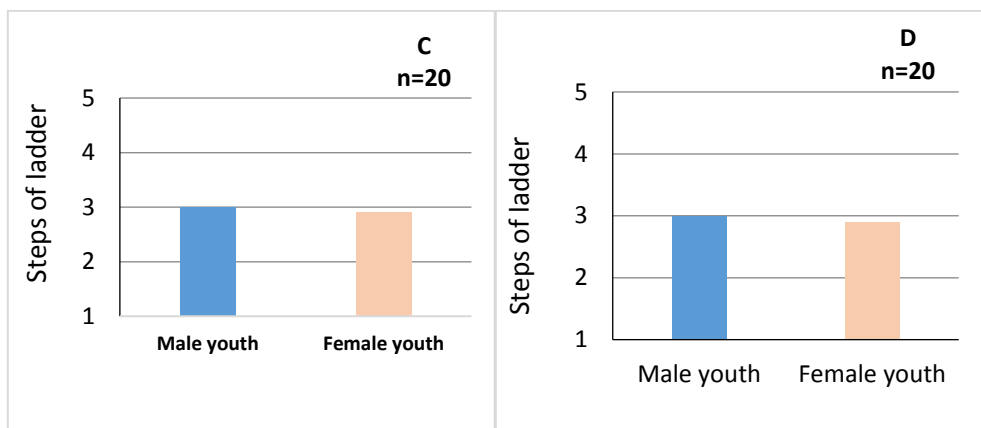
Here we see a young woman's decision-making is discouraged by neighbors, parents, and then, by the threat of not being a desirable future wife. However, it is important to note that both young male and female reported that they *do* have more freedom to make their own decisions around marriage and education.

Young men in both villages, despite their belief in education, typically stop before finishing high school, usually at grade 8. One young woman respondent said,

*Boys have alternatives. They can get employed...or some families give them land early and they can start farming. Usually when they do this, they will start business on the land or they can even take contracts on the land and start multiplying improved wheat seeds and selling them. So they will have*

money and therefore there is no need to be in school. They consider it a waste of time.

Some young men said that when they see other young men earning money, they are "influenced easily" and want to stop schooling. However, others were keen to acquire more education to lift their families out of poverty. Young men can also easily travel to town and work as daily laborers. In this context, young men have a high opportunity cost to schooling. Agricultural programs should be aware that when income from farming is raised, young men may be encouraged to drop out of school in order to participate in the more immediate cash opportunity that can come with farming.



**Figure 10: Ladder of Power and Freedom mean step for majority of own sex (Youth) Chala (C) and Akkela (D)**

As seen above in Figure 10 both young male and female had similar rankings. Considering the difference typically observed between the genders, this finding is surprising and only visible when disaggregating by village. In Chala and Akkela, young men placed themselves nearly at step three while young women placed themselves only slightly lower than their male counterparts. While reporting a similar quantitative level to their male counterparts, young women instead described the inequality of opportunity in their respective villages. Young women do not have equal time for educational studies, or room to deviate from their parents' decisions, as they could end up lacking social acceptance as well as not having equal access to family resources to engage in income-generating activities.

A young woman in Chala explained that perhaps disaggregating by how, what and where the power and freedom to decide is needed, saying



*I feel we are at step three because we can decide if we are involved in small businesses and parents would not interfere as long as we have the means. We also decide on matters of marriage. However, in relation to mobility, still the boys are more mobile and have opportunities to decide on such things.*

Young men perceive that it is their responsibility to make decisions “as men” yet also view their generational status as a constraint on their ability to make decisions freely.

*We are born men. We have to make decisions; it is expected of us. If we are not decisive as a man, then that is it. However, since we are youths, there are things we are not making decisions on. If the father is around he will make every decision in the house. (A young man – Chala)*

In conclusion, although young men experience the power and freedom to make decisions, this remains limited due to parental expectations. Young women, similar to young men, are constrained by their parents' expectations. But these expectations are different from those young men because young women are expected to limit their mobility, to help more in the home and to obey their parents without questioning. The world beyond the front door is threatening for young women and they are afraid of losing their reputations and of being raped.

### 5.5 Conclusion to Ladder of Power and Freedom results

Results on decision making across the four villages reveal that both male and female respondents have provided a mixed portrait of decision making around household issues, such as how much wheat to store for domestic consumption. Either the husband makes the decision and informs his wife or the husband takes inputs from her before making decisions or both of them discuss and make decisions together on the amount for consumption, sale and seed stock. Yet, there were also differences between the villages.

**Table 10: Differing Perceptions of who holds decisions-making power**

<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Youth</b>
Feel they have increased decision-making power and have some influence.  (Placed themselves at <b>step three</b> ).	Are confused about their ability to make decisions generally. Agricultural innovations and speed of innovation, economic dynamism and exposure to a wide range of information as well as gender dynamics affecting intra-household	Feel that women do not have power in household decision making and that men hold full control.

	relations are clouding decision making.  (Placed themselves between <b>steps three and four</b> ).	
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Young male and female respondents in all villages stressed that decisions concerning household matters including what happens on the farm are mainly made by men and that, irrespective of their role in production, women in general have no say in what happens to the harvest. As a result, some women secretly store away some food as insurance for times of food shortages. It was indicated in some responses that men's ability to take risks has been curtailed sharply now that women have to co-sign all documents that could be implicated in risk taking, such as credit agreements and collateral offered.

There was a great deal of variance in the responses around decision making. Although women positioned themselves at step three, statements were made later that downplayed or suggested doubt as to women’s increased decision-making power. Regardless, we have to accept how women assess their own situation and realize that further empowerment or “conscientization”<sup>39</sup> is necessary. Identifying changes and explaining them positively is still a good indicator of progress.

Young men are experiencing an increase in agency, which remains limited due to parental expectations. Young women, similar to young men, are constrained by their parents' expectations. But these expectations are different from those of young men in that young women do not have a socially-acceptable fallback position.

Community Profile (CP) respondents in Gobado, Badero and Akkela have indicated that there is a joint decision-making practice on the main locally-produced agricultural goods such as wheat and barley. Interestingly, CP responses in Chala indicated a clear demarcation where decisions over main agricultural goods are solely made by men while women are responsible for poultry, milk, egg and dairy products. Overall, the findings indicate that women’s control of household budgets, their own earnings and assets are very limited, which in turn constrains women’s ability to innovate and their contribution to agricultural development at large.

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<sup>39</sup> “Conscientization,” according to Paulo Freire, is a concept that involves an in-depth understanding of the world and includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are only illuminated by gaining a complete understanding of one’s position in the world.

Male and female respondents in the four villages underlined that increasing levels of production and strengthened well-being are two of the most important results that the new varieties have brought to their communities. The respondents explained that they studied the experience of the model farmers before deciding to adopt and that their final decision to adopt is always based on a number of discussions and consultations with spouses, relatives and/or neighbors. That said, most male and female respondents recognized that women-headed households and poorer households find it hard to afford fertilizer, additional labor and other costs of innovation.

## **6. Agricultural Innovations and Gender**

### **6.1 Men's and women's experiences with agricultural innovations**

The focus of this section is on exploring in-depth the trajectory of individual experiences with new agricultural and NRM practices. It seeks to understand the life stories of different men and women in the villages who have moved out of poverty, fallen deeper into poverty, or remained trapped in poverty and the role of gender norms and capacities for innovation in these processes. The following data was generated from semi-structured individual interviews held with adult male and female innovators. Questions asked included:

- I would like to turn to your experience with the [innovation: new improved wheat variety and associated cultivation practices including fertilizer, weed control, watering, pesticides...]. Can you please tell me a little bit about it? What is new about it?
- How has the [innovation: adoption of the new wheat variety and cultivation practices] changed the way you do things, in wheat and in any other livelihood activities you're involved in?
- How did you gain the knowledge and skills required for cultivating with the new improved wheat varieties and associated practices?
- Was your family supportive or unsupportive of your use of the improved wheat variety and practices? How about your friends?
- What important changes have resulted for you from cultivating with the improved wheat variety and practices?

Improved wheat was introduced to the villages between 2007 and 2009. Farmers expressed that they were initially very resistant to the idea of trying out the new seed. Out of the 32 farmers (16 men and 16 women) interviewed in the four villages, 15 of them (seven men and

eight women) were successful<sup>40</sup> in their adoption of improved wheat varieties. Of the remaining 17 farmers (eight men and nine women), eight of them never adopted the new varieties while nine of them quit at some stage of the adoption process.

Male and female respondents listed a number of reasons for not adopting and/or for quitting the adoption process at different stages. Reasons included the high cost of improved seeds and fertilizer, the lack of labor, the increased costs of hiring and/or owning smaller plots than the required standard for adoption, the severely-degraded plots mostly owned by female household heads and the lack of information on how to apply the new technologies. Others pointed out that the poor resistance of the improved variety to extreme cold weather held them back from adopting.

In some female-headed households, the lack of technical support from extension experts was also raised. As one woman explained:

*I don't take improved seeds [with anger], they [agriculture extension agents] have refused to give me improved seeds for the mere reason that I don't have enough land. I know about improved seeds, and I'm buying from the market since they don't give me. Even the kebele administrator neglected me when he was registering others from home to home, so I do it by myself. (A female household head, Chala)*

Male and female respondents said that decisions on whether to adopt improved wheat seed, and which variety, are taken after a series of consultations with spouses and other family members. They examine the costs and resources required to cultivate against the advantages they expect before making adoption decisions. They emphasize that they use multiple sources of information, including neighbors and agricultural extension agents, to support their decisions. Model farmers are the key source of improved wheat seeds, which are collected and sold by a group of farmers' cooperatives. We assumed the reason why spouse consultations are highly emphasized here, unlike in other decisions, is mainly because wheat is the major crop that their livelihoods depend on. Thus, there are many concerns around making decisions on new practices.

As a female farmer in Gobado said,

*Wheat is our life. Once we see the improved varieties are good in terms of production and yield no one has hesitated to buy and apply the cultivation practice.*

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<sup>40</sup> A successful adopter is one who has fully implemented (not a dropout and/or partial implementer of) a new technology and benefited from it.

Male and female respondents agreed that it is harder for a woman to innovate as the price of failure is scorn.

*In my opinion, failure of any kind of effort or trial would be graver for the women than for the man. If the women innovator fails, people talk about her as if it is the end of the world. This will discourage her from trying again. However, if a man fails, it is not even a big deal. No one will talk about it as much as her failure. (A male interviewee, Gobado)*

The labor and time requirements for cultivating improved wheat by employing “row planting” are as follows:

*It demands about 10 people: one on average for plowing, two for seeding and the remaining seven for covering the tilled soil after seeding. (A female interviewee, Badero)*

A high labor requirement is one of the main reasons that discourages poorer and female-headed households from adopting the new technology of “row planting.” It appears everyone uses *wonfel* (reciprocal labor) to cover labor requirements of the alternative method they have developed. A *wonfel* team is always given as 10 individuals. Mostly, women would not be able to participate in a *wonfel* team and, as such, are unable to access this labor pool to support row planting innovation adoption.

While some households chose not to adopt innovations for the above reasons, others do adopt them and experience benefits. Male and female respondents mentioned several times that they have benefited a lot from adopting the improved wheat varieties and they were clear that adoption could transform lives. A male respondent in Gobado who adopted the new wheat varieties says:

*Some of us have gone beyond food security and are able to run a shop, own good housing with iron sheet roofing, and construct a house in the town for rental purposes as well as owning many cattle.*

Although it has been outlined throughout the findings that men continue to dominate economic and household decision-making, this does not mean that women are without financial responsibility or influence. In the four study villages, “good wives” are often described as entrepreneurial. In line with this, some positive responses were provided to the question asked, “women in the families who took up the new improved wheat varieties, what are they

doing now? How has their work in agriculture and livestock management changed? Why has it changed?” Female respondents said:

*Many women who adopted earlier, or women in model households, have benefited a lot and therefore were able to buy cattle or open shops. (A female respondent, Gobado)*

*The women in families who have adopted the new variety have a better living standard; they have bought better furniture, due to better income from harvesting good amounts. They are able to diversify household income by engaging in activities such as bee keeping, poultry, livestock fattening, etc. (A female respondent, Chala)*

## **6.2 The Top Two Most Important Innovations by Gender**

### **6.2.1 Important Innovations for Women**

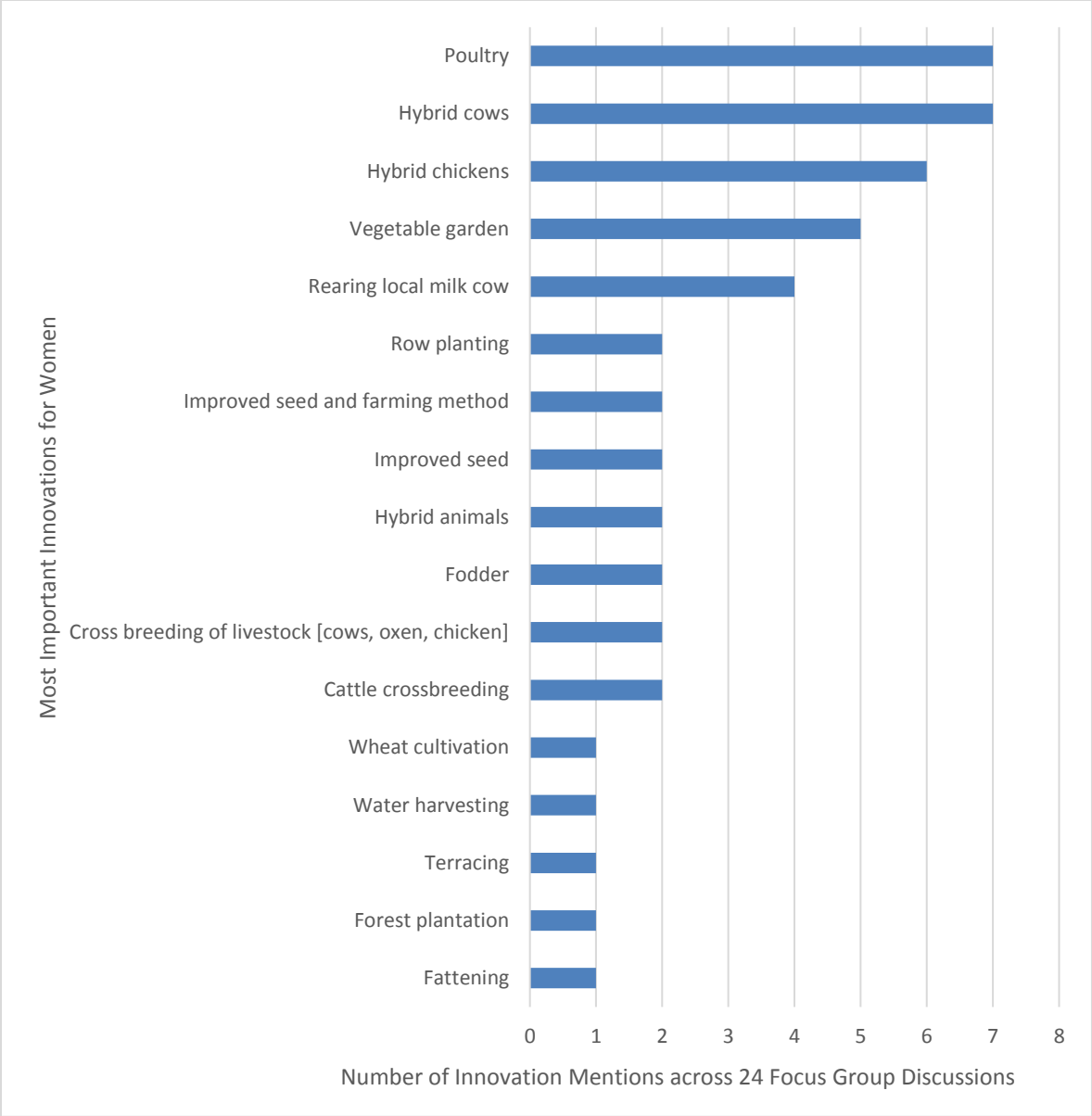
Data for this section comes from the 24 different focus groups: poor adults completing the Ladder of Life activity (C), middle-class adults describing capacities for innovation activity (D) and youth completing the aspiration of youth activity (E). Each focus group was asked to name the top two innovations for men and the top two innovations for women, resulting in a list of 48 possible mentions of an innovation. When only male or female focus groups are discussed, the maximum number of mentions is 24.

Women appear to be most interested in poultry and local dairy cows, yet their male counterparts believe women need hybrid chickens and cows. Interestingly, women desire improved seed and farming methods, while men did not mention women needing seeds. Males and females have a shared interest in women having poultry and vegetable gardens. Assuming that innovations that target women will garner more support from their husbands if the husbands also see value in the innovation, agricultural development project designers should consider the center grey area where both males and females independently felt these innovations would be meaningful for women. Additionally, projects may want to listen to what women are interested in, meeting women’s needs and demonstrating that projects are relevant to their needs, as seen in the left two columns (Table 11).

**Table 11. What Innovations are Most Important for Women?**

What Men Believe Women Need	<i>Shared Interest in Innovations (number of mentions)</i>		What Women Believe Women Need
<i>Men only reported</i>			<i>Women only reported</i>
Hybrid chickens (6)	Hybrid cows (5)	Poultry (4)	Local dairy cow (4)
Crossbred cattle (2)	Vegetable garden (3)	Hybrid cows (2)	Improved seed (2)
Crossbred animals (2)	Poultry (3)	Vegetable garden (2)	Improved seed and farming methods (2)
Forest plantation (1)	Hybrid animals (1)	Hybrid animals (1)	Row planting (2)
	Fodder (1)	Fodder (1)	Fattening (1)
			Terracing (1)
			Water harvesting (1)
			Wheat (1)

Each focus group was asked to select the top two most important agricultural innovations for women, meaning a total count of 48 “top two” innovations. Across all of the focus groups discussions, which ranged in age, economic status, gender and village, most people believe that women are in need of poultry projects and hybrid chickens. At the same time, hybrid cows and vegetable gardens also received strong support as important innovations for women. However, it is important to note that women themselves did not voice an interest in hybrid cows but rather the local dairy cow. The reasons for this could be many, but women’s interests are hidden when included in this aggregate graph. When describing the factors that hinder or support women’s innovation, women reported along two key themes. The first was the actual knowledge, finances and ability to implement the innovation while the second pathway was more about sensitizing their partners, family and community members to support them in their innovation endeavors.



**Figure 11: What all respondents believe women need as an agricultural innovation**

This research has shown that women are more likely to suffer dire social consequences for failure and negative ramifications could be experienced. Agricultural program design should take these dynamics into account and develop multi-component programs to support women’s innovations.



### 6.2.2 Important Innovations for Men

Data for this section comes from the 24 different focus groups: poor adults completing the Ladder of Life activity (8), middle-class adults describing capacities for innovation activity (8) and youth completing the aspiration of youth activity (8). Each focus group was asked to name the top two innovations for men and the top two innovations for women, resulting in a list of 48 possible mentions of an innovation. When only male or female focus groups are discussed, the maximum number of mentions is 24.

**Table 12. What Innovations are Most Important for Men?**

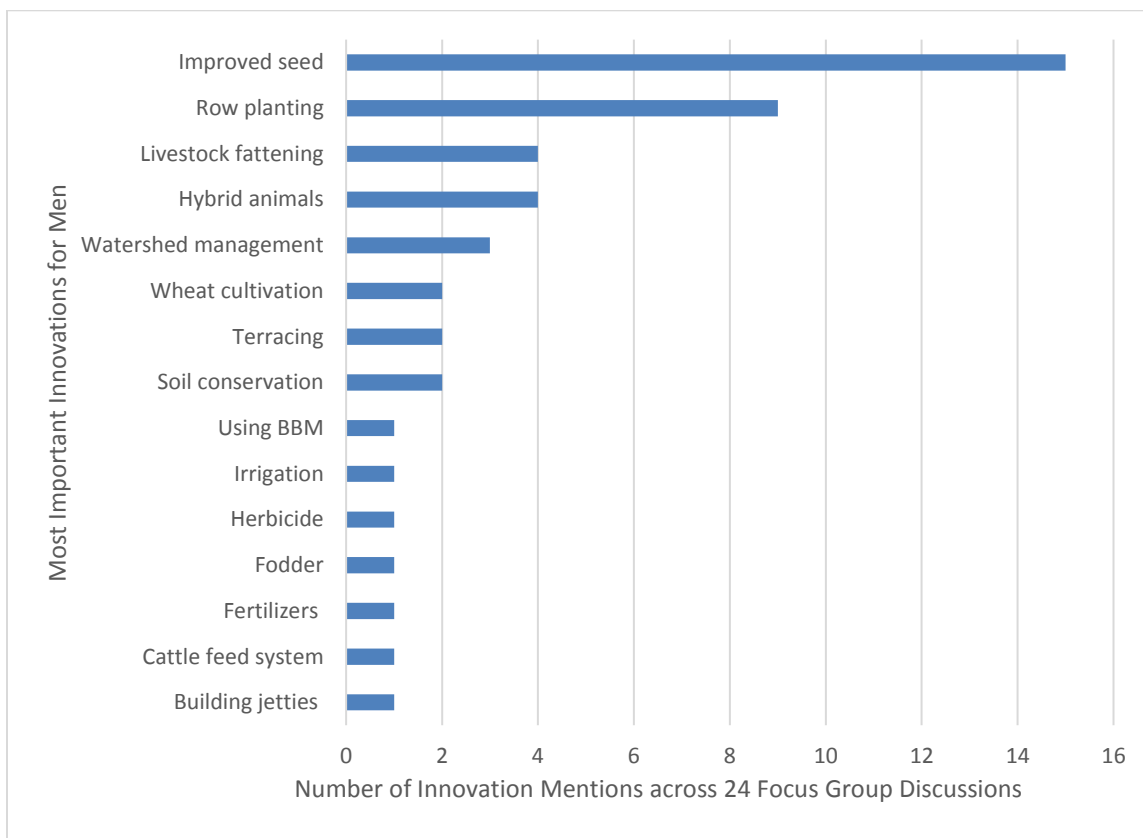
What Men Believe Men Need	<i>Shared Interest in Innovations (number of mentions)</i>		What Women Believe Men Need
<i>Men only reported</i>			<i>Women only reported</i>
Hybrid animals (4)	Improved seed (8)	Improved seed and farming methods (7)	Fattening (4)
Watershed management (3)	Row planting (3)	Row planting (6)	Wheat cultivation (2)
Terracing (2)	Soil conservation (1)	Soil conservation (1)	Cattle feed system (1)
Building jetties (1)			Fertilizers (1)
Herbicides (1)			Fodder (1)
Using BBM <sup>41</sup> (1)			Irrigation (1)

Male and female respondents agree that improved seed, farming methods and row planting are important innovations for men. Interestingly, men reported a strong interest in hybrid animals, while women did not mention this. Women reported men would benefit from fattening, yet no men mentioned this interest. This trend continued with many of the items listed by women and

<sup>41</sup> BBM stands for a tool that allows farmers to make a broad bed on a plot of land.

not listed by men. It also appears that women are eager for their male counterparts to learn more and implement row planting. Assuming that innovations that target men will garner more support from their wives if the wives also see value in the innovation, agricultural development project designers should consider the center grey area where both males and females independently felt these innovations would be meaningful for men.

Improved seed and row planting were consistently reported as meaningful for men across economic status and age differences. There appears to be little economic status and age differences in reporting which innovations are useful for men.

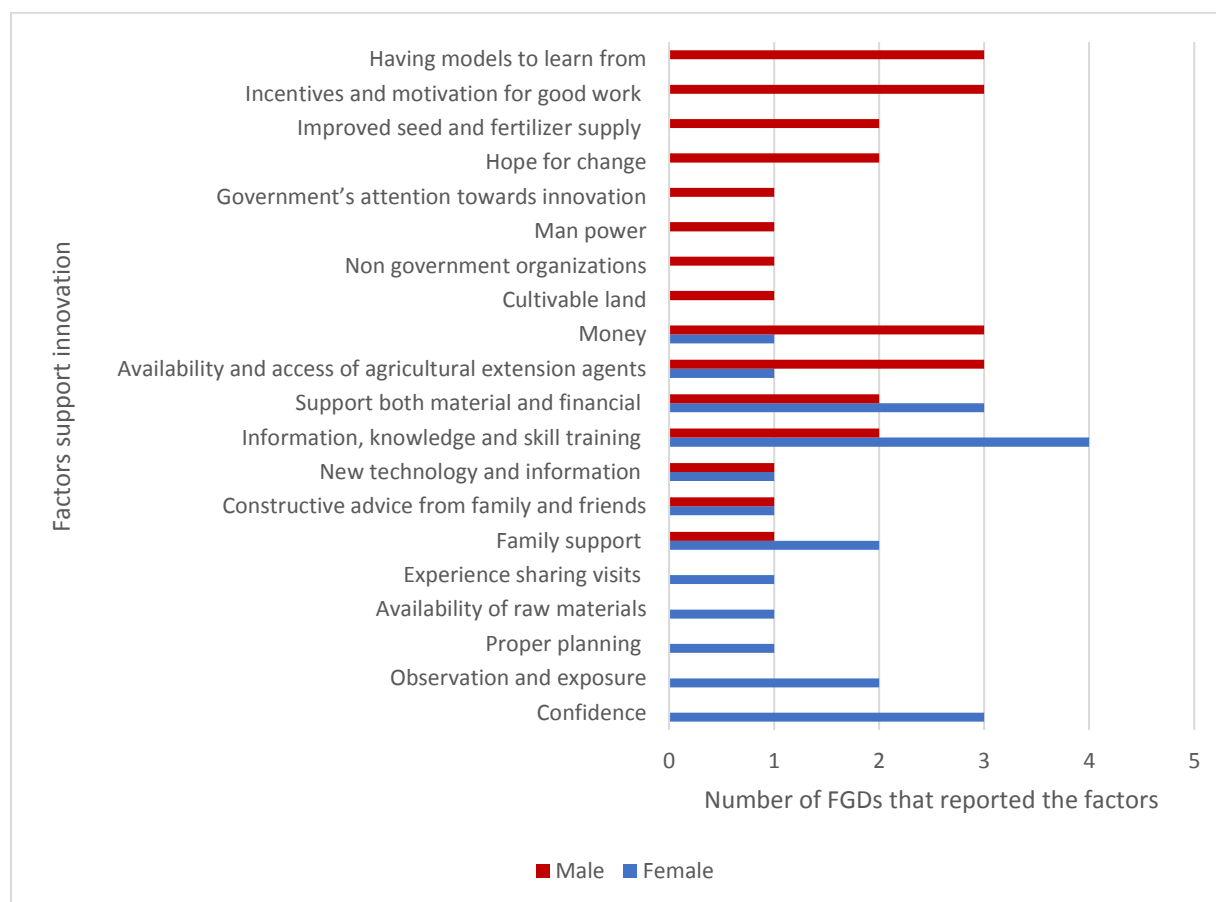


**Figure 12: What all respondents believe men need as an agricultural innovation**

Each focus group was asked to select the top two most important agricultural innovations for men, meaning a total count of 48 “top two” innovations. In contrast to the innovations important for women, which had a more even distribution across innovations, only two innovations account for nearly half of all answers: improved seed and row planting. This was followed distantly by four mentions each for livestock fattening and hybrid animals. However, it

is important to note that, in aggregate, gender differences are often hidden. In this case, the livestock fattening came fully from what women perceive to be meaningful for their male counterparts while all four mentions of hybrid animals came from male focus groups. It is also important to note that while improved seed and row planting appear important for men, men also reported that the factors to innovate are due to financial constraint, suspicion or doubt of the innovation and old-fashioned thinking. They reported innovation would be best assisted by model farmers, incentives for success, money and access to extension services.

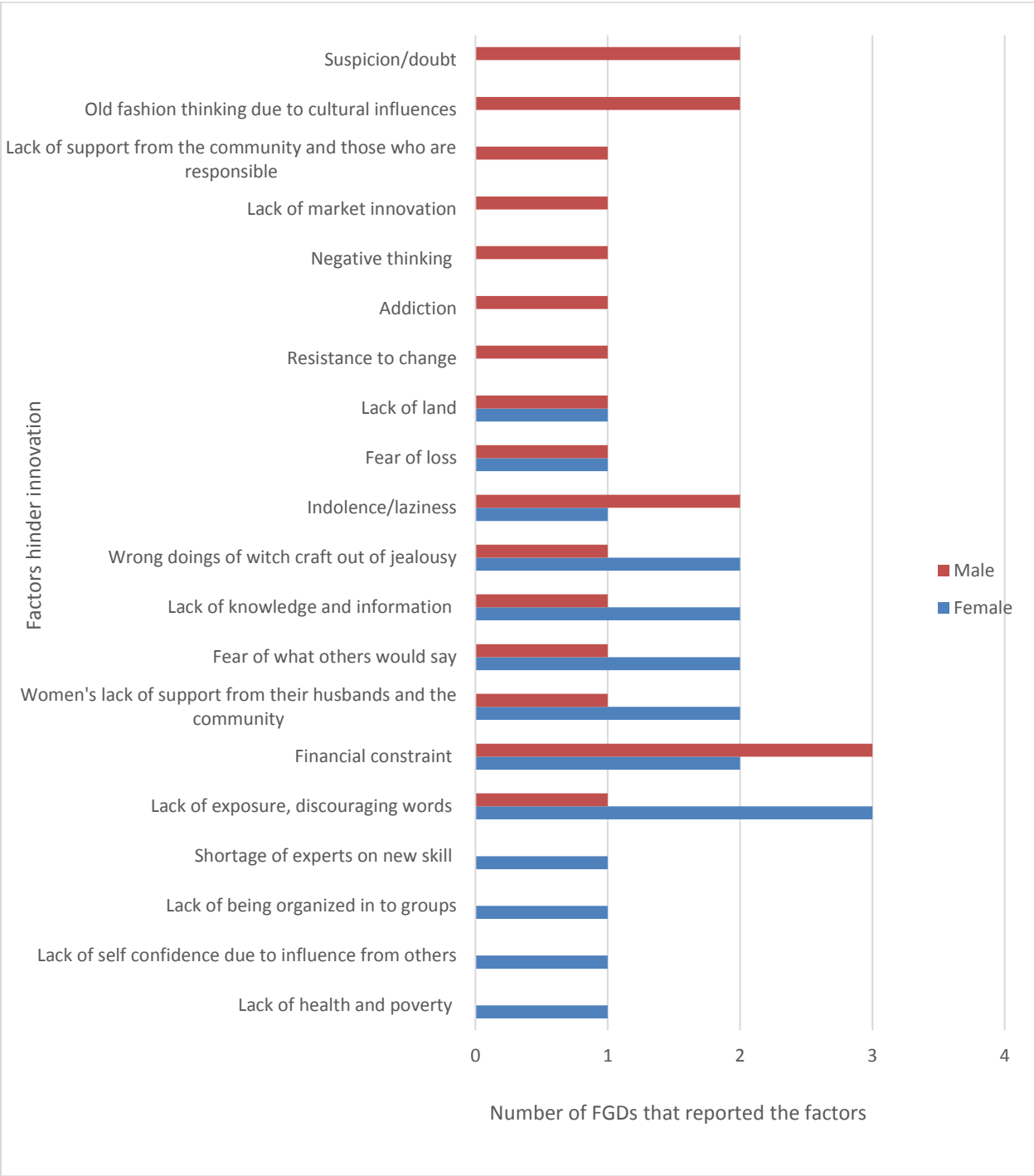
### 6.3 Supporting and Hindering Factors for Agricultural Innovations



**Figure 13: Factors that support innovation, men's and women's FGDs, all villages**

During the focus group discussions, both middle-class men and women listed factors that support innovation. According to the female focus groups, all four independently listed "information, knowledge and skill training" as the supporting factors for innovation. This was followed by three of the four reporting both confidence and material and financial support.

Family support and observation and exposure were then listed by two out of the four groups. For middle-class women, it appears as if meaningful programs would include two core elements: technical knowledge and exposure buttressed by confidence-building in the women and garnering their families' encouragement. Meanwhile, their male counterparts listed four factors which best support innovation. Three out of four groups independently listed having good role models, incentives for successful adoption, money and access to agricultural extension services. The relative absence of confidence and family support from the men's perspective demonstrates the importance of gendered project designs.



**Figure 14: Factors that hinder innovation, men’s and women’s FGDs, all villages**

During the focus group discussions, both middle-class males and females listed factors that hinder innovation. Women primarily reported their households and communities as standing in

the way of innovation, while men spoke in a more empowered voice suggesting great male agency. Three of the four female focus groups independently reported that a lack of exposure and discouraging words, typically from their spouse and/or family members, hinders their innovation. Two of the four focus groups independently reported the following as hindering innovation: financial constraints, lack of support from husbands, fear of what others would say, lack of information, and potential fear that jealous neighbors will use witchcraft on them. Meanwhile, their male counterparts reported that their main barrier to innovations was financial constraint, which was named by three out of four focus groups. This was followed by half of the discussions reporting laziness, suspicion of the innovations and old-fashioned thinking.

Based on this analysis, women would be best assisted in agricultural innovations by programs which offer sensitization to husbands, extended families and communities partnered with investment in women's knowledge. The fear of what others could say could possibly be mitigated through popularizing successful female innovators and offering holistic services to help prevent innovation failure. Men may be best motivated by repeated demonstrations of agricultural innovations partnered with access to financial support.

Despite the presence and adoption of improved varieties, most male and female respondents explained that customary agricultural practices continue due to various reasons, including high labor costs and high financial investments associated with the adoption of new technologies. As one participant said:

*It needs more labor and takes longer. The land has to be plowed at least five times until it is very fine. There are also recommended cultivation practices that we must follow for better productivity. (Male FGD, Badero)*

## **7. Overall Conclusion**

**Merits of the study:** The GENNOVATE methodology is unique in the sense that it features developments in multi-site qualitative comparative research designs. Its focus on CRP-specific evidence about how gender norms influence local-level development dynamics, including agricultural technology uptake processes, is an additional advantage. The methodology involved several data-collection instruments, which enabled triangulation of data and a certain level of validation of information as well. In general, the GENNOVATE study has conceived of agricultural innovation as a social process. It has explored experiences with improved wheat varieties and other innovations identified by study participants as being the most important for the women and men of their villages. The study has thus provided robust empirical evidence on the relationships between gender norms and capacities for agricultural innovation as well as

other key constraining and enabling elements of local opportunity structures that affect the achievement of development interventions.

**Limitations:** The fact that the data-collection instruments were tested in only one of the four villages in Ethiopia is a limitation. This might also have impacted the quality of data collected in the other three villages mainly due to lack of using practical and contextualized approaches in the data-collection process. Female-headed households were not deeply studied and discussed except for very limited information obtained through key informant interviews. This still leaves a gray area on the proportion of such households in each village, their unique experiences and the challenges they face.

**Gender norms constraining innovation capability:** Across the four villages, women's focus groups point to restrictive gender norms as one of the most significant obstacles for women to innovate in agricultural livelihoods. A decline in gender-segregated roles has been reported, however, particularly in Gobado and Badero, indicating that more women participate in agriculture activities and in decision making than ever before. In all villages, male and female respondents have different ideas about their power and freedom to decide. The general trend is an increase in women's reported sense of power and freedom, yet this never exceeds men's reported freedom. In Gobado and Badero, men's sense of power and freedom has increased in the past ten years while there has been a slight decrease to make decisions among men in Chala and Akkela. In Gobado and Badero, young women have about the same freedom and power as their mothers while young women in Chala and Akkela reported having less power and freedom to make life decisions. In all villages, young men have more power and freedom than their mothers (and in one case, more than their fathers).

While some positive changes are reported in the data in terms of improved gender relations in all aspects of life, some persistent issues need to change for enhanced agricultural development. Women are watched more closely and judged more harshly than men.

Women reported increased decision-making power, but there is still a long way to go before they have the freedom to choose when and how much of the crops to sell and what to do with the money. Some women feel they give more consultation on these decisions, but many have little say. The husband still makes income-generating decisions without consulting his wife, to the extent that women feel they must secretly store grains to manage household food security. Men and women consider this stealing.

This all directly impacts women's willingness to take risks. It also impacts their self-confidence, which in turn affects national productivity and development and the household economy and food security.

In Gobado, where women had more freedom and decision-making power, CCs were a particular methodology attributed to the changes. The CC method enabled many changes to occur at the community level, such as increased awareness of women's rights and effective enforcement of local laws, representation of women in the local council and community police involvement in intra-household decisions. Other changes were witnessed at the household level, such as increased cooperation in decision-making, reduced gendered division of roles and reduced mobility restrictions on women. A rapid transformation of gender norms took place over the past decade, resulting in women's improved role in influencing decisions, including those regarding household food security and their ability to innovate. The key takeaway is that respondents see the transformation in terms of achieving gender equality rather than in terms of women's empowerment, although women's empowerment is understood to be a necessary corollary of achieving equality.

As discussed in previous sections, while gender norms can be restrictive and limit social interaction, they are constantly challenged and negotiated, often in restrained ways. The resulting transformation of gender norms will have major benefits to the community as a whole and to agricultural development and the national economy at large.

As CIMMYT researchers Lone Badstue and team said:

*Relative to women in male-headed households, women heading their own households sometimes face fewer restrictions on their physical mobility and social interactions. These women, who in many cases will be better positioned than other women for engaging with new opportunities for agricultural innovation, represent an important opportunity for agricultural R&D, as potential role models and vehicles for opening space for other women. Similarly, men, who against local traditions openly support their wives and daughters' productive and economic initiatives, can be positive role models and also play important roles in local change processes. In many cases the male and female who successfully confront the dominating stereotypes and normative expectations are outliers from whom much can be learnt, and whose examples have the potential to open space for others.*

A better understanding of the role of gender in the agricultural sector could greatly increase productivity, reduce poverty and improve food security. As has been stated by the World Bank, failure to recognize the roles, differences and inequities between male and female poses a serious threat to the effectiveness of the agricultural development agenda.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> World Bank (2009). Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>42</sup> World Bank (2009).



**Young men and women:** The general findings related to gender norms and innovation in the four study villages also apply to young people. Young women similarly face barriers to physical mobility, lack of access to training and other opportunities, as well as limited market access. While their individual circumstances differ, young people, like others, are deeply-embedded in networks of family and social relations. Many young male and female study respondents perceive their farming and other life opportunities as highly dependent on their elders. However, most young respondents have more education than their parents had at the same age, and although there are exceptions, most of them wish for livelihoods outside of agriculture.

Many respondents, especially young men, disputed the extent of changes to gender relations. The difference in responses between the generations and between male and female requires further research. Community conversations, as in Gobado, and creating a space to discuss equality is beneficial to all villagers.

**Extension:** The findings indicate that extension is a key enabler of innovation but is mostly accessible to men. The findings consistently show that women's ability to access and benefit from extension services is very limited. In most cases, this is linked to restrictions on women's physical mobility and issues regarding household responsibilities, especially for young and married women. A government extension system that targets household heads, and does not take women's tight schedules into consideration for plot demonstrations and training is another factor that hinders women's participation. However, for those women (mostly heads of households) who have managed to learn about and access new technology and adapt this to their preferences, the results are often highly encouraging. If extension arrangements existed that were able to accommodate women farmers, more women, even in restrictive contexts, would be able to learn about and put to use new practices in agriculture, which could make their livelihoods more effective and efficient. There is a need for the government to collaborate with seed companies and other stakeholders to enhance equitable access to improved seeds and related inputs at an affordable price.

**Issues for further research:** Despite the findings that indicate overall encouraging results, much work remains to create a more gender-equitable environment for enhanced agricultural development. Future R4D programs need to undertake research to explore concerns around such issues as why males and females rate the wealth of their respective villages so differently. Given the broad support for the Community Conversations in Gobado it may be worthwhile for further investigation of their curriculum and methodologies as a fruitful starting point (See Gobado Community Profile below). Other questions include why there was no overlap between

the top-two rated innovations by men's and women's focus groups and what the proxies of gender equality in each village are. Additionally, the issues related specifically to female-headed households need to be fully understood. The range and inconsistency in responses suggests that further awareness-raising is needed. Further research on gender and social differentiation in wheat-based livelihoods is needed, including on labor and household economics, the experiences of male and female innovators and institutional innovations for agricultural development. A better understanding of these issues could help identify opportunities for expanding the benefits of wheat-related innovations to more women and poor households.

An in-depth understanding of all the issues discussed above will positively contribute to future wheat R&D interventions in addressing gender disparities, enabling inclusive change towards equality of opportunity and improving outcomes for males and females earning most of their income from growing wheat.

## 8. Annexes

These annexes present a case study on each community and highlight the heterogeneity of the country and the value in collecting qualitative data. Data that can show how the social, cultural, geographical, economic and historical aspects of a community can affect men's and women's opportunities to advance and their agriculture productivity and how this all interacts with other statuses (age, religion, class etc) can help to highlight entry points for each community. More context-specific data on women's role in agriculture crops is needed to ensure tailored programming.

### 8.1 Case Study: Gobado

Gobado is located 17km from the center of the main town in Amhara region. It has a land area of 6,130 ha and an average land holding of 2 ha per household. Gobado has a population of 10,800, which is the largest population among the four GENNOVATE study sites in Ethiopia. This community has many similarities with Badero in many aspects, as both villages are in the Amhara region and are followers of the Orthodox Christian religion. Its main agricultural livelihood is based on wheat, barley, peas and fava beans.

Around 30 percent of households are led by women, making it the largest FHH rate out of the four study sites. There is no explanation from the findings as to why there is such a high rate of FHHs in this village. According to community profile respondents, the majority of women in FHHs are divorced. Women and men in this community have equal inheritance rights under customary and statutory laws, which might have contributed to the high divorce rate. Consequently, three-quarters of the vendors in the market are women. However, this rate of market sellers was also found in Chala (Oromia region), which does not have such a high FHH rate.

Women participate actively in agricultural activities. However, women do not use oxen to till and they never plant on the main field or put the threshed crop into storage, which is similar to Badero but different from the two communities in Oromia. Activities in a woman's domain (common to all four communities) include preparing and selling *areke*, milking cows and rearing poultry as well as maintaining a vegetable garden. These activities give women in male-headed households some ability to retain the income they earn.

Joint decision-making is more prevalent for subsistence crops and livestock, with chickens and milk falling into a woman's decision-making domain, compared to when grown commercially. Men have key decision-making roles over sheep and cattle and they traditionally sell products in bulk, which is common to all four villages. In this community, women have more decision-making abilities than men which could explain why gender relations are more equitable in this community.

Respondents feel that their community is very innovative. Most households are keen to increase production and willingly adopt new technologies,<sup>43</sup> particularly improved wheat varieties. However, there were community-specific issues that hamper innovation such as high costs, area topography, farm size and availability of oxen. Respondents stipulated that poorer households find it harder to afford fertilizer and other costs of innovation. Males and females agreed that it is harder for a woman to innovate than a man and that the price of failure for a woman is scorn. Female household heads have emphasized the various challenges they face, including discouraging words from the community and extension agents as well as resource and labor constraints, when trying to innovate. Several men have also confirmed that there are women-specific challenges around innovation.

New agricultural practices include terracing, tree planting, the locally-developed innovation *alebaso*,<sup>44</sup> the use of improved wheat seed, the use of fertilizer, cattle fattening and sheep fattening. The top two factors that support innovation for men are financial resources and the availability of farmer role models<sup>45</sup> while “information, knowledge and skill training” and confidence are the top two factors that support innovation for women. These sets of factors indicate that women, unlike men, are still lacking the life skills unlike men to try new innovations. This mainly relates to how the agriculture extension system works by mostly targeting household heads who are primarily men and systematically excluding women from gaining access to information and capacity-building opportunities. This in turn affects their level of agency<sup>46</sup> and self-confidence. This is constant across all four communities.

Gender roles are changing, although the division of labor by sex is still common. In Gobado, gender-specific roles were coded 175 times and non-gender specific roles were coded 56 times. A decline in gender-specific roles was coded 25 times. So, while changes to gender roles were observed, such as women participating more in agriculture activities and in decision making (where women scored the highest of all four villages) and men doing more work inside the house, gender-specific roles are still more common. Moreover, some young boys did not support helping women in household chores, although the majority supports the idea of sharing household responsibilities. Young women, however, argued that there were plenty of situations where domestic and productive tasks were shared, and that both genders were admired for this.

This village reported less coded gender roles than non-gender roles compared to other villages. But for all villages, considerable changes to the gender norms and power relations at the intra-

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<sup>43</sup> New technology includes agriculture innovations less than 10 years old.

<sup>44</sup> *Alebaso* is a locally-innovated water drainage technique.

<sup>45</sup> “Model farmer” is a farmer who is an early adopter of a new innovation and helps other farmers learn by doing on-farm demonstrations.

<sup>46</sup> “Agency” refers to the ability to make one’s own choices and act on them.

household level are observed. What is unique about this village is the progress around decision-making rights for women and the transformations at the community level. Even when marriage practices are arranged, they are mainly based on the consent of the young couple; whereas, in the past, the parents would arrange marriages without asking the young couples for their consent.

Respondents in Gobado attributed intra-household gender-norm changes to CCs. CCs are a participatory method that uses topics and facilitated conversations to guide collective behavior change. A local NGO called Tesfa Birhan Children and Family Development Organization ran a series of CCs ten years ago. The outcomes of the conversations were translated into local laws at the *kebele* level with practical enforcement procedures. The local *kebele* administration offices are where important documents related to credit/loans, sales of fixed assets, land ownership certificates, etc., must be co-signed by couples. Conflicts among community members are also registered at the *kebele*, and since the CC project, these investigations are resolved in a more gender-equitable manner, according to participants.

Given that so much else has changed in the community, and that the *kebele* administration and community police are gender sensitized, it is odd that freedom of movement for young women remains so restricted, and that men who harass such women are unpunished. This issue of harassment was raised by respondents but not deeply explored.

This community is the most prosperous (has the highest rank in well-being) compared to the other three communities. The link between prosperity and gender equality should be more deeply explored in other studies, along with the contribution of community conversations. Rural people are often considered “backward” by city dwellers, but the lesson learned from this community is that they are ready and able to cope with gender progress.

## **8.2 Case Study: Badero**

Badero is located in the same region (Amhara) as Gobado. Both villages have many similarities in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics as well as the pace of economic, social and political transformations over the past decade. Badero is divided into five sub-*kebeles* and is located 11km from the center of the town. It consists of 4,275 ha with 45 percent of the land being mountainous. The total population is 5,404 (2,676 men and 2,728 women), which is the largest among the four villages. As is the case in Gobado, all inhabitants in this village are Amhara and speak Amharic; they are all orthodox Christian and their main livelihood is agriculture with most farmers growing wheat, barley, peas and fava beans.

Badero has become more prosperous over the past ten years. According to community profile respondents, a rapidly-changing agricultural landscape characterized by a profusion of new

farming techniques and crops contributed to increasing prosperity. This process started around ten years ago and accelerated five years ago when the first Growth and Transformation Plan was rolled out by the federal government. Unique to Badero is its hilly topography which, according to farmers, hampers innovation of key recommended practices such as row planting.

According to community profile respondents, women's rights have changed a lot over the past ten years. Half of the vendors in the market are women. Customary and statutory laws are practiced and both forms of the law respect women's inheritance rights to full entitlement. Women's access to credit has changed radically for the better over the past decade. Women participate actively in farming, including plowing. Women in Badero, whether married or not, have the greatest freedom of mobility of all the communities.

Division of labor by sex is still common despite the changing gender roles. In some respects, people in Badero keep a division of roles among women and men. For instance, petty trading in markets is for women. Differentiation between the farm, which is managed by men and the household, which is the responsibility of women, is another example. However, many men help with household labor while wives help their husbands during farming seasons. On the other hand, in Badero, similar to Gobado, women never plant by broadcasting nor put threshed crops into storage. No one can explain the reason for these practices, although a few people try to link them to religious beliefs, such as the idea that *"the crop will lose its abundance if women do such activity as only men can bless crops before they start broadcasting."* This means women play a major role in row planting but not in broadcasting which shows that gender norms intertwined with religious beliefs are harder to change than those defined culturally.

It is agreed across all four communities that women sell in small quantities and men in large quantities. The reason given (when it is given) is that women are not as proficient at negotiation as men and so men handle the higher-value products, even though both can go to the market and sell.

Unlike the other three communities, males and females in Badero reported differently on their community's poverty line, which is the step where households are no longer considered poor. Women reported this as step 2 on the ladder of life and men at step 3 of the ladder. This indicates that males and females in this community have a differing understanding of their wellbeing status, with men assuming poverty is being reduced more quickly than women.

Respondents provided a mixed portrait of decision-making around agricultural and domestic issues. Some women in Badero linked their stronger voice to the awareness and knowledge they have acquired from various agricultural and social skill-training programs. Decisions over household resources are generally (though not always) made in consultation and women are deciding equally regarding many resources, to the extent they can stop men from enacting

decisions for which they have not given consent. Differences within Amhara and across all communities are observed. Men in Badero scored the highest on decision making. Adult men scored 3.8; Gobado men scored 3. Women scored 2.9; Gobado women scored 3.3. Despite many changes to gender norms, adult inequality in decision making is greater in Badero. Young men in Badero reported the highest score of 3.8) on their power and freedom to make their own decisions, while young women, who scored 2.6, placed themselves one step lower than their male counterparts. In this community, both young and adult men have more decision-making rights than women.

Men listed new agricultural practices (similar to the other villages) for the past ten years, such as using improved seed, compost and fertilizer, preparing animal forage, terracing, row planting, planting trees on hills, making ponds, planting large quantities of onions and improved dairy and poultry. Women added planting animal forage, the *albaso* water draining technique, and cleaning and selecting seed. Improved wheat, milk and poultry are the most important innovation for women while men highlighted improved wheat and terracing. Women and men respondents reported that extension workers and model farmers are key for dissemination of improved wheat. This is consistent across all four communities.

Arranged marriage practices no longer exist (same as Gobado). Oromia has also seen some changes to arranged marriages, but marriage practices are different there due to the Muslim influence and polygamy. One of the driving forces behind the changing marriage practices, across the four communities, is the role of the local *kebele* administrations that enforce local laws against early marriage and abduction through community police who are in charge of applying stiff penalties to perpetrators.

It seems that a lot of change has occurred in this community over the past ten years. However, the issue with all four communities is that the mechanism for the ongoing and pervasive change in gender norms in all areas of life is unclear. It was never discussed as a topic except for Gobado, where community conversations were key to stimulating deep change and women reported greater decision-making freedom than men today (2015). This said, there is no doubt that rigorous enforcement of the laws and local bylaws protecting women from gender-based violence, ensuring gender equity in land distribution and inheritance, and even allowing women (or men) to take partners to court for selling or purchasing large assets without their agreement has been extraordinarily influential.

### **8.3 Case Study: Chala**

Chala is located in the East Oromia region about 12km from the center of the town. The community has a population of 5,652 (2,812 males and 2,840 females) with 75 percent male-

headed and 25 percent female-headed households. Findings indicate that in this community and the second community in Oromia region (Akkela), there are polygamous households. Their proportion is not documented because these households commonly identify themselves as male-headed households. There are three different ethnic groups in Chala: 75 percent are Oromo, 20 percent Amhara and 5 percent Gurage. The main livelihood is agriculture with most farmers growing wheat, barley, peas, fava beans and *teff*. Some residents also earn an income from livestock, leather processing, beekeeping, poultry and *enset*<sup>47</sup>. Women constitute three-quarters of the vendors in the market. The religious composition includes Orthodox Christian (45 percent), Muslim (35 percent) and Protestant (20 percent). The two communities in Oromia (Chala and Akkela) are similar in terms of their economic, political and socio-cultural practices.

In Chala, similar to the other two villages in Amhara, the wellbeing status of the community has positively progressed over the last ten years. This is mainly attributed to the availability of improved infrastructure and services such as electricity, roads to local markets, use of mobile phones, access to credit, presence of wheat flour factories demanding locally produced wheat and the government's local purchase program which buys produce from farmers.

According to male and female respondents, women assume multiple roles while men do most of the labor-intensive activities such as preparation of the land, planting, weeding, cutting and stacking as well as storing. The men sell bulk amounts and the women frequently sell small amounts of goods like chickens, eggs, vegetables and dairy products at the market and buy important items for the house such as soap, oil and gasoline with the earnings. Even though women play an important role in cattle fattening, they are never allowed to sell cattle. Women support men in land preparation, weeding, removing trash, planting and harvesting, transporting and piling as well as storing. Women are responsible for all household chores, taking care of the children, the elderly, the sick and the husband (such as washing his feet when he returns from the field) and for all the social affairs such as attending *equb*<sup>48</sup> and *idir*<sup>49</sup> events.

Despite government efforts to eradicate unequal customary practices, women are prevented from inheriting land and other properties whenever their parents and/or husbands die. Male elders lead customary negotiations in favor of the traditional ideas of male superiority. However, joint decision-making is becoming more prevalent. Women feel they have some say over how much of the harvest to sell and how much to use for household consumption, even though men make the final decision. Women secretly store away some produce as insurance

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<sup>47</sup>*Enset* is a perennial root crop indigenous to Ethiopia cultivated predominantly in the south and southwestern highlands.

<sup>48</sup>*Equb* is an informal money-saving group where members take turns collecting money from members every week/month in rotation.

<sup>49</sup>*Edir* is a funeral society run on a monthly basis.



for times of food shortage. This practice is common and done to circumvent the need to ask men for more money. Men may find this disrespectful or may become angry if asked.

Both male and female respondents reported increased agency compared to ten years ago, which is mainly attributed to education opportunities. For some women, it relates to being divorced, separated or widowed. In contrast to the Amhara communities, adult men's decision-making power in both Oromia communities showed a slight decrease over the past ten years. Adult men in Chala and Akkela seem confused about their ability to make decisions. They pointed out that there is too much new information. The speed of innovation and involving their wives in the decision-making processes are among the reasons their decision-making abilities are hampered.

The youth were more gender-aligned about decision-making power in Oromia compared to Amhara. Young men placed themselves at step three while young women placed themselves slightly lower at step 2.9 in the ladder of power and this was the same for both Oromia communities. This is different from Amhara (Gobado and Badero), where the decision-making scores of young men (3.5, 3.8) are far higher than their female counterparts (2.5, 2.6).

Women reported confidence and knowledge as the two most important factors that support innovation, while men pointed to skill training and the availability of financial resources, which are consistently reported across the four villages. Women reported improved varieties of chicken, heifers and vegetables as the most important new agriculture practices for them while men reported row planting and improved seeds as the two most important new practices. There are two gender issues which are common to all four villages: the new practices/innovations that women consider most important to them are those traditionally under the "women's work" domain and the factors that support innovation for women (confidence and knowledge) are both directly related to women's agency and their decision-making ability. In line with this, many women household heads are unable to make decisions on their own and seek advice from male relatives, which they attribute to a lack of confidence.

In Chala, various marriage practices range from those based on mutual consent of the young couple to a practice involving abducting the girl. According to respondents, arranged marriage is still practiced, although it's declining. There is also a unique practice known as "elopement," which is actually a form of abduction. It is a traditional marriage practice where the groom bribes the girl's brother or other male relatives to help him arrange a way to "abduct the girl." They threaten the girl not to tell the truth to her parents and then convince the parents to bless the marriage as if it was based on a mutual interest of the couple. According to women, "marriage is like selling off the child" because the bridegroom's family is expected to send some cattle and other materials, such as cultural utensils and jewelry, in order for the bride's family

to allow the marriage. In a way, this has implications for the woman's future inheritance rights. If the husband dies, her parents have to pay back the gifts they received during the marriage. Women in Chala and Akkela understand gender equality as equally sharing household chores, decision-making and distribution of roles.

Male and female respondents in Chala have indicated that the community poverty line is at step two of the ladder of life, which is similar to Akkela. Men in Chala gave a higher rate of movement out of poverty than women (three times as much), which is similar to the women's report in Akkela. Men control and hold household resources, which is why their wives rate poverty reduction less than men (and why women save produce). In Chala, the trend showed an increase in wealth. Still, a large number of households are placed at step two and three of the ladder, suggesting a greater poverty rate in this community compared to Gobado and Badero.

To conclude, Chala and Akkela (located in Oromia region) have many similarities. The two communities in Amhara are in a better position in terms of their wellbeing status and have more liberal gender relations. The findings also indicate that existing gender equality is far better in the two villages in Amhara region compared to the two villages located in Oromia region (Chala and Akkela). This emphasizes the need for regional and context-specific approaches to agricultural development that incorporate unique gender norms and cultural practices.

#### **8.4 Case study: Akkela**

Akkela is found in the East Oromia region 12 km from the main road to town. It has a population of 3,344 with two different ethnic groups: 80 percent Oromo and 20 percent Amhara. It has 836 households, of which 90 percent are male-headed and 10 percent are female-headed. The religious composition of the population is 75 percent Orthodox Christian, 15 percent Muslim and 10 percent Protestant. Similar to Chala, this community grows wheat, barley, peas, pulse crops, flax seed, maize and *teff* as a means of livelihood. A scenario common to all four villages is that an increase in the fungus called *wag* (rust) in the last five years is destroying wheat crops despite the use of pesticides. Half of the vendors in the market are female.

Akkela has the smallest population and the largest average land holding of 4 ha per household among the four communities. Prosperity has generally increased in the past ten years, according to men, who suggested that 15 percent of households in the village have moved out of poverty. However, women in this village reported a significant increase in poverty (15 percent). Given that this community has the largest average land holding per household and

land size is one of the determinants for trying out new innovations, it is surprising to note such a significant increase in poverty as reported by women respondents. According to adult women, this reduction in wealth is attributed to the land re-distribution program enacted by the government in the last ten years, which left many households in a worse position in terms of land size. Understanding this issue, however, requires further research.

Women in all communities play significant roles in farm work including plowing, row planting, collecting harvest and preparing meals for *wonfel* during weeding and harvesting. Women are responsible for carrying out household chores as well, which include preparing food, fetching water and collecting firewood, taking care of livestock, attending to children and the elderly, washing clothes and working in the garden. Men are responsible for plowing the land, breeding cattle, preparing fodder, building houses, communicating with agriculture officers and using fertilizer and improved seed.

The findings from the Ladder of Life exercise in all four communities reveal that gender segregation and fixed gender roles exist. However, opinions about gender roles varied between young women and young men as well as between adult males and females. For instance, in one community, young women said that it was common for men to help with tasks around the house such as caring for children and doing the dishes, while the young men did not support helping women with household chores. They felt it was holding them back. Adult male and female respondents in the four communities highlighted the fact that a good husband is one who helps his wife with domestic tasks.

On the other hand, some young as well as adult male and female respondents indicated that a man is perceived to be “under the control of his wife” if he stays home and does whatever his wife is supposed to be doing and that some community members may have a bad attitude toward his wife. Speaking of existing gender relations, findings from the two villages in the Amhara region (Gobado and Badero) reveal more gender-equitable relations compared to that of the two communities in Oromia region (Chala and Akkela).

For marriages, the man and woman have the right to choose their partner; however, arranged marriages are prevalent. In this community, there is also a traditional marriage practice known as *kurbet antifuligne* where a male widower appeals to his in-laws to let him marry his sister-in-law. This is commonly practiced among Muslim families. The law gives women equal rights and entitlement to inherit in case of death of parents or husbands but customary practices deny women these rights, according to respondents.

Male and female respondents in all four villages have similar views on the qualities of a “good wife and good husband.” The qualities relate to traditional, socially-acceptable behaviors.

Women are judged by their household responsibilities and care roles, while men are judged by their breadwinning, community and leadership roles.

According to men, new agricultural practices introduced in the last ten years include row planting, using pesticides and fertilizer, preparation of forage, cultivating new pasture seed (called *sinnar*), using the locally-invented farming tool BBM<sup>50</sup>, using improved new seed varieties (maize and coffee), modern beekeeping and cattle cross-breeding (hybridization). Women, in addition to some of the practices men listed, included growing vegetables, use of compost and soil conservation (planting trees) on top of the list provided by men.

The two most important innovations for men were the locally-invented farm tool BBM and cross-breeding of livestock. For women, those innovations were fodder and improved seeds and row planting. The two factors that support innovation for women are money and family support, either in the form of labor or ideas. The two factors that hinder innovation for women are financial constraints and individualism (not collaborating with and learning from others). For men, lack of money and resources, and lack of support from the community and those who are responsible government offices hinder innovation.

According to the Ladder of Power and Freedom, adult men have gone down from 3.6 ten years ago to 3.1, while women have increased from 2.1 to 2.8, although they have lower scores than men, which is similar to Chala. Women in Gobado scored the highest at 3.3 while women in the other three communities scored 2.8. In Chala, young men scored 3 while young women scored 2.9 on the Ladder of Power and Freedom, which is the same as Akkela. Young women emphasized that they do not have the same opportunities as young men. They were not given the same time for educational studies and were unable to deviate from their parents' decisions. Young women felt that young men were given more opportunities and freedom.

Adult men in Akkela, similar to Chala, seem to be confused about their ability to make decisions. They pointed out that there is too much new information. Additionally, the speed of innovation and involving their wives in the decision-making processes are among the factors hampering their decision-making abilities. Young males and females in this community have almost the same score in their decision-making power (3 and 2.9 respectively), revealing that young women are starting at a gender-equitable position compared to their mothers.

In conclusion, as is the case with Badero and Chala, in this village, the mechanism for the on-going and pervasive change in gender norms in all areas of life is unclear. It was never discussed as a topic. However, similar to the situation in the other three communities, the rigorous enforcement of the laws and local bylaws protecting women from gender-based violence as well as ensuring gender equity in land distribution and inheritance has been influential in this

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<sup>50</sup> BBM stands for a tool that allows farmers to make a broad bed on a plot of land.

community. This said, further research is required to clearly understand the reason behind the contradictory responses that are unique to this community provided by male and female respondents regarding the current wellbeing status of households in this community.