

ISDC feedback summarizing comments from independent reviewers and the Funder Gender Experts on the GENDER proposal

Summary

The reviewers were generally positive about the proposal with particular appreciation of the ‘novel approaches’ proposed and the recognition of the gender work undertaken outside the CGIAR. It was noted, however, that the eight centers involved possess varying degree of gender expertise and demonstrated leadership in pursuing gender research for development. The Funder Gender Experts expressed gratitude to the team for their hard work in putting the proposal together.

1. Relevance

1.1 Alignment, value addition, demand

The GENDER proposal demonstrates strong alignment with the outcomes of the current CRPs, as described in the SRF, and outreach to centers and CRPs, including gender as well as non-gender scientists.

The proposal states that the internal demand for the platform comes from the 8 centers in the bid. The proposal also identifies external demand based on the “need to identify solutions on gender equity linked to the pressures around climate change and transformation of the food systems.” It also references donor demand for gender transformative research.

While the analysis of past PIM Flagship (FP) work is absent and the proposal’s value addition is implicit, the proposed activities are likely to add value to the gender work that has already been conducted within, as well as outside, the CGIAR. Through proposed coordination activities, GENDER has a good chance of elevating the gender work in the CGIAR to a higher level. What is novel and exciting about this proposal is that it recognizes that CGIAR is not the only entity involved in gender work (or AR4D) by placing considerable value on partnerships with other, capable institutions. The proposal further recognizes the value of gender work outside the CGIAR by demonstrating a clear understanding of the context in which the gender analysis needs to be framed, particularly regarding climate change and the transformation of the food systems. The proposal represents a clear and welcome change from business as usual.

While the proposal states that there will be no duplication of effort, it is not clear what will be new work and what is already ongoing. This issue comes up again in reference to human and financial resources.

1.2 Comparative and competitive advantage of CGIAR and partners and ability to deliver on the core objectives of the platform

The proposal provides evidence that it will enable the CGIAR and partners to better deliver on core gender objectives. The 8 centers collaborating in this proposal have a strong background in gender as presented in the Annexes 4 and 5. The summary of the state of the art in gender research and the team's contribution in terms of globally recognized research is relatively weak, however the proposal provides some analysis on the focus of the past gender research in Annex 1 and uses that as a basis for proposing a new approach to "theory-led" gender research. There is no clear reference to lessons learned from the PIM FP, though some examples are given on how members have been adapting the analytical tools developed in the PIM Flagship.

The proposed approach is somewhat novel and builds on existing center gender expertise, history of engagement with partner organizations and recognition of the need for broader and more inclusive partnerships. By clearly articulating their gender research within the boundaries of climate change and transformation of food systems, the proposal has focus and hence a high chance to deliver on its core objectives (evidence, enabling environment, capacity development).

Identifying research areas should involve consultation (as proposed), but would benefit from a more detailed analysis of the lessons learned from the PIM Flagship, something that is lacking in the proposal. The focus on 'new generation of theory-led gender research' is appreciated as is the plan to refresh the vision of the 2030 strategy in 2020. GENDER indicates that "the specific research areas to pursue ... in the first round will be decided in consultation with the entire set of centers and CRPs in the first year (Annex 1)". This was appreciated by the reviewers.

While it is important that all partners are on the same page and start with a shared understanding of the issues and challenges, there have already been many assessments and scoping exercises. These should not be repeated.

The proposed platform is not the global research leader but it has the capacity and the right framing of the issues, and will be inclusive.

1.3 Appropriate choice of partners

GENDER relies largely on the CGIAR partners for implementation with a strong focus on Gender Research Coordinators, and other CGIAR Center scientists. Amongst the 8 centers proposing GENDER, ILRI as a lead center is a convincing choice. All key partners have already demonstrated through their own work, their ability to cultivate a change in organizational cultures, and have close links with national governments and others responsible for policy. Importantly, the proposal demonstrates commitment to including all centers in the Platform going forward.

GENDER strongly integrates the NARES as partners and end users of their platform, building on well-established partnerships with local, national and regional organizations. More detail is,

however, needed on how specific partners will be selected and engaged and how partnerships will be structured.

GENDER will include other partners on the Scientific Advisory Committee such as Universities and NGOs, as well as build on existing linkages or build new linkages with universities and think tanks. These have yet to be named, however, and their specific roles are not defined, nor is the process through which this will be achieved.

2. Scientific Credibility

2.1 The credibility of the team

The applicant presents detailed information about the core team of the platform (gender experts in the 8 centers). The evidence presented shows credible gender expertise in terms of staffing, publications (evidence and tools), as well as information about the track record in capacity development for CGIAR partners. The expertise of any other potential partners is not presented. The information presented shows that the CGIAR team has high collective competence in terms of human capacity in numbers, as well as in leadership skills, and possesses a competent record of innovations developed, and involvement with development outcomes related to gender equality and foods systems research. However, no clear information is provided about the role that these key people will play in the gender platform management.

The GENDER team includes one male who has worked extensively on gender.

2.2 Mechanisms for assuring the quality of data and of science, their storing and sharing

The proposal outlines adequate means to ensure scientific rigor, overseen by a strong scientific advisory committee with external members. The proposal also provides information relating to CGIAR's principles and guidelines regarding both Intellectual Asset Management and Open Access Management. While the information provided is somewhat general, it shows that they will comply with CGIAR policies.

GENDER has a broad set of tools for sharing resources (described in the Communication Strategy) but does not specifically address curation. Access to materials, sites and services will be open and the materials will be readily accessible via the Platform's website, connected to CGSpace as well as through webinars and an annual conference. The website will be linked with centers, CRP and platform websites, and its manager(s) will work with center-based communications specialists to ensure usage.

2.3 Credibility of the proposed outputs

Outputs are presented by module -- evidence, methods and alliances. As explained in the impact pathway, there is interconnectivity between the modules and hence between the outputs. The

GENDER team and partners should have a high likelihood of achieving its outputs though exactly how this will be done is clearest for the “Methods” module.

The proposal includes strategies to ensure the credibility of proposed outputs and enhance their use within the CGIAR. GENDER will have a Science Manager and a Scientific Advisory Committee composed of CGIAR and non-CGIAR scientists. GENDER proposes to identify, evaluate and reward research quality and the contributions of gender researchers. While these are not developed yet, they will include guidance as well as good practices such as peer review. There will also be an annual review of scientific leadership and Platform needs, and possibly an external partner to do this if needed.

The proposed outputs are credible, especially given the call for cultural change within the CGIAR. The members of this proposal have the relevant experience to support the work needed to achieve this change. GENDER’s reach into the NARES will also mean engaging with a wide set of scientists outside the CGIAR system.

3. Legitimacy

3.1 Governance and management

The proposed governance and management structures are sound. GENDER proposes a governance approach that draws heavily upon the gender researchers and Gender Research Coordinators. To ensure inclusiveness, the Platform will be governed by a charter to be negotiated and finalized in the transition phase, in collaboration with all participating CGIAR centers and possible strategic partners. Membership in the governance is clearly defined. However, roles, functions and decision-making processes are not laid out as clearly. Bi-annual management meetings are probably not sufficient to ensure oversight and prompt decision-making.

Proposal states that the staffing for the module leaders will be done by center gender researchers, first at 50% FTE and then at 100% FTE. What is not entirely clear is if GENDER proposes to take these previously center-funded gender research positions and turn them into Platform-funded positions as module leaders, work package leaders, gender research coordinator, and gender researchers.

3.2 Engagement with stakeholders is based on a principled and value-driving model that embraces true diversity as a key enabler of functional agri-food systems.

This proposal includes evidence of strong engagement with national partners and partner programs with a strong track record of working with national partners.

GENDER's communication strategy to stakeholders is based on "knowledge capitalization and synthesis." The attempt is to synthesize and distill the accumulated knowledge into useable packages, or recommendations targeted for various audiences. GENDER proposes an extensive communications strategy with two topline organizing principles: 'Key messages' and 'Campaign-based approaches' that are timed to interact with important audiences e.g. International Women's Day, UN Climate Change Conference... (Annex 11). GENDER will use many communication means (Annual report, Website, Social media strategy, webinars, newsletters, media, events, publications) but has not prioritized these nor indicated which will be used to reach different stakeholders.

The communication seems somewhat linear in direction, from the platform to the end-users, and not much is discussed about the opposite flow of knowledge, from end-users to the platform.

4. Effectiveness

4.1 Strengthening of CGIAR delivery on gender equality research

GENDER's proposal demonstrates both an intention to reach across the CGIAR system as broadly as possible and consideration of innovative ways of measuring the change in thinking about gender by CRPs.

GENDER has a strong traditional approach to measuring performance, defining a TOC with an M&E plan that specifies indicators for each of the results (Annex 2). Module 3 outcomes relate to measuring how gender thinking is embedded across the CGIAR centers. Several indicators are proposed such as: # of CGIAR partners who prioritized and practiced gender integration; # of institutional cultural change processes set up and implemented after gender capacities were strengthened. Some of these indicators will need improved specification/definitions and testing, but GENDER is attempting to track the objectives and outcomes of the Platform.

The applicant has developed a system which is interconnected, both in terms of outputs as well as in terms of different actors in the proposed platform. As long as the actors of the platform do not become isolated in their respective areas, the proposed system for the platform should serve well to strengthen CGIAR delivery of gender equality research in terms of better targeted, and more focused approach.

4.2 Global leadership with transformative impacts

The GENDER vision for a strengthened cadre of gender researchers in agriculture is focused primarily within the CGIAR centers and their research partners such as NARES. Partners, especially NARES, will shape direction of gender work, participate in communities of practice, engage in research and knowledge creation. The outreach to NARES gender researchers is strong, such as a plan for NARES 'chapters' for gender scientists. External gender researchers will be

included on the Scientific Advisory Committee (3/5 members). GENDER intends to build alliances that 'reach far beyond the CGIAR' to facilitate a change in culture, priority and practice.

The proposed platform has potential to be a global leader in gender equality research with some far-reaching transformative impacts, especially because the platform has framed its task around "providing solutions linked to the pressures of climates change and transformation of food systems."

5. Budgets

At this level of detail, there is nothing in the base budget that immediately raises concerns though more detail and justification will be needed moving forward. The uplift budget, however, is not reasonable without considerable justification. There is no justification for doubling personnel and other costs.