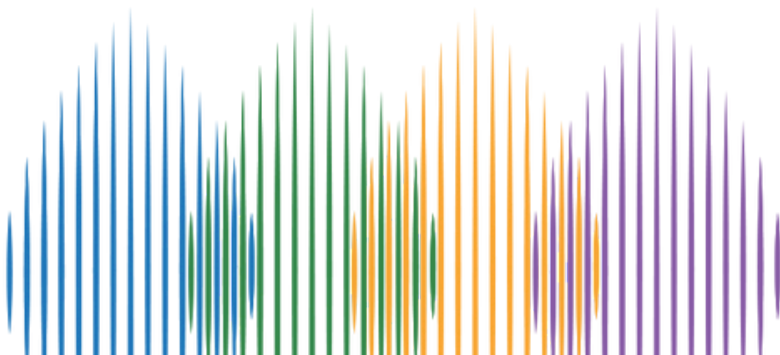


GenderUp: Scaling Agricultural Innovations Responsibly to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

Rwanda, Malawi, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Zimbabwe



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ABSTRACT

Existing scaling support methodologies often fail to consider the socially differentiated impacts, including gender effects, of innovation uptake. To address this gap, GenderUp was developed as a conversational tool to enhance the inclusivity, reflexivity, and responsiveness of scaling initiatives. GenderUp employs a five-stage process facilitated by trained facilitators, guiding teams through discussions, learning activities, and practical integration to create socially responsible scaling strategies. The tool's effectiveness is evaluated through pre-post surveys, content analysis, and team discussions.

Although GenderUp is a relatively new tool and its long-term impacts are yet to be fully realized, initial results show that innovation teams have become more aware of diverse user groups, particularly those facing barriers or negative repercussions. This awareness has led to the development of more socially responsible scaling strategies that include mitigating activities. The GenderUp team continues to monitor the impacts of these activities on innovation users, primarily farmers.

While GenderUp has been largely successful, it requires further internal scaling to improve accessibility and training content. This ongoing review process has enhanced the tool's website, resources, and management processes. GenderUp contributes to the global prioritization of gender and social equity by systematizing the consideration of social differentiation within agricultural innovation and scaling teams, ultimately leading to improved social outcomes.

TAPipedia Tags

gender equality, scaling, agricultural innovation, monitoring and evaluation

Other keywords

gender and social equity, mitigating activities, content analysis, inclusivity

Context

A key strategy in progressing toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is scaling innovation to improve livelihoods of marginalized populations globally. Widescale scaling of innovations is necessary to achieve complex and expansive SDGs such as reduced poverty globally. However, the ability to use and benefit from innovations varies for

different groups of people. When Agriculture Research for Development (AR4D) actors aim to scale innovations equitably, understanding how gender and other forms of social differentiation affect the distribution of benefits and risks associated with scaling processes is critically important. Other scaling tools used to guide innovators and stakeholders through a scaling strategy have focused more on identifying aspects in the enabling environment that facilitate or hamper the

scaling of innovations. While helpful, these tools often skip past the vital process of identifying and addressing the unique needs, opportunities, and constraints of different innovation users. A diverse network of researchers from several different organizations including CGIAR, FAO, Wageningen University and Research, the University of California, Davis, Cornell University, USAID, and others. It was designed to support projects and research teams in scaling agricultural innovations in a socially responsible way.

Through structured team brainstorming and discussion, GenderUp guides innovation teams to: (i) identify gender and other relevant diversity among potential innovation users and (ii) improve their scaling strategy by anticipating unintended negative consequences for different groups in society. Through this evidenced-based, structured training, researchers and innovators learn how to

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scale their technologies and practices in a responsible manner. Through a series of five stages, a trained GenderUp facilitator guides innovation teams through discussions, learning activities, and practical integration to develop a socially responsible scaling strategy for their innovation. Each stage encompasses discussion questions that were informed from extensive literature reviews on the relation between gender, social differentiation, and agricultural innovation, as well as methods to anticipate .

different scaling outcomes. The questions posed invite reflection on the team's initial scaling strategy, how gender and other dimensions of social differentiation (i.e., age, wealth, education etc.) are likely to shape the distribution of benefits and risks associated with the use or non-use of the innovation, what user groups may require special consideration for accessing benefits of the innovations, and finally how to re-design the scaling strategy to prevent or mitigate negative consequences of scaling.



Challenges addressed

Population and development dynamics, food and nutrition security, sustainable diets

- *Climate change and disaster risks*
- *Erosion of natural resource base, loss of biodiversity*
- *Food loss and waste*
- *Energy demand and use in agrifood systems*

Inclusion of the most vulnerable

- *Transboundary and emerging agrifood system threats*
- *National and international governance*

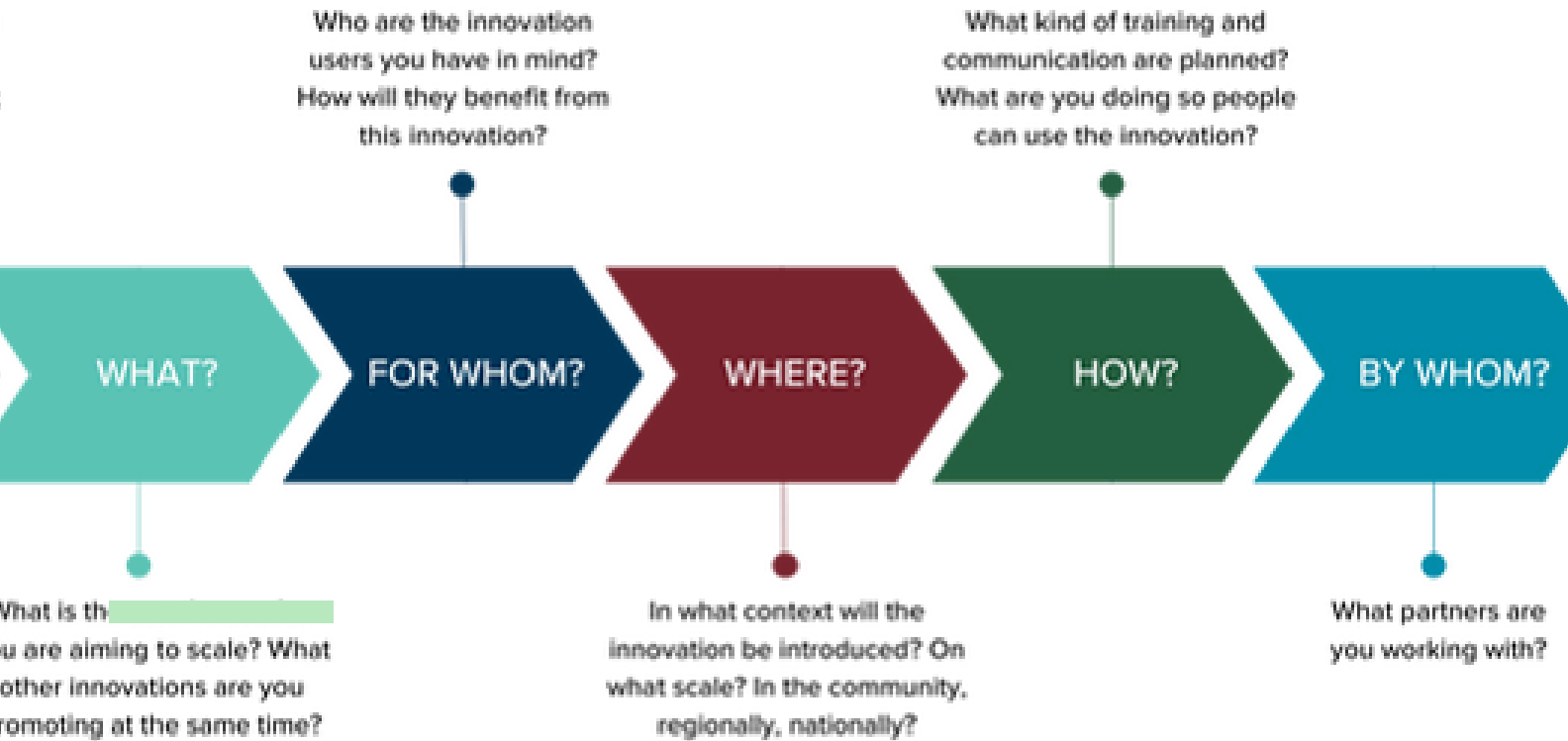
Key Problems

Scaling within Agriculture Research for Development (AR4D) is crucial for broad impact, but it can lead to both positive and negative consequences. While intended to produce positive development outcomes, scaling innovations can sometimes increase inequity or disempower women, especially if the innovation requires resources that only certain community members possess.

Additionally, scaling one innovation might necessitate the downscaling of another, potentially disadvantaging marginalized populations. To achieve positive social outcomes, AR4D actors must consider the social impacts of ,

biophysical innovations including the innovation itself, its scaling, and its benefits or negative impacts on specific users. GenderUp helps innovation teams and managers understand these impacts and develop inclusive scaling strategies to mitigate unintended negative consequences.

GenderUp is a unique tool in agricultural development, addressing gender and its interplay with other diversities such as wealth, ethnicity, and age. It is currently the only scaling tool that holistically considers these factors, making it an important innovation in itself.



Innovative solutions

To help innovation teams think deeper about the social aspects and impacts of their innovation, GenderUp was designed to be experienced in a workshop setting. Whether online or in-person, 3-6 innovation team members gather to discuss their existing scaling strategy, identify which innovation are not able to experience the full benefits of their innovation, and determine mitigating strategies that improve the experiences of all potential innovation users.

GenderUp encourages innovation teams to be composed of individuals with diverse areas of expertise and backgrounds. This discussion-based format allows team members to share their opinions and engage in novel conversations that are vital to the successful scaling of their innovation. While the name GenderUp may lead some to believe this tool only applies to improving gender-based experiences with innovations, it focuses on many more social dimensions.

Through a survey, GenderUp guides team members to identify various social groups with characteristics that may cause them to have less

to the innovation or who may not be able to benefit in the intended way from the innovation. The social dimensions include wealth status, education, ethnicity, land ownership, marital status, household structure, religion, occupation, age group, mobility, migrant status, geography, people with disabilities, and any other dimensions the team might identify. Thus, innovation teams deeply consider more than just gender dimensions and are able to develop more comprehensive, socially inclusive scaling strategies.

Another interactive solution employed by GenderUp is called the Persona Activity. This activity enables participants to “personify” users in a way that highlights the inequities those users may experience because of the innovation. To do so, participants develop demographics, goals, challenges, and experiences of identified innovation users. In turn, these personifications help participants envision what mitigation strategies may be needed to better include these users in the benefits of the innovation.

KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS



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Since its creation, GenderUp has held eight facilitator trainings with a total of 113 people. Thus far, these facilitators have conducted GenderUp workshops for six different innovation teams in Rwanda, Malawi, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Zimbabwe. After using GenderUp, analysis of pre-post scaling strategies and surveys showed that innovation teams considered different types of users and specifically focused on groups that might face negative consequences of scaling the team's innovation.

For example, one team scaling a dryness indicator technology in Rwanda, the DryCard, identified low-income women as an at-risk profile. As a result of the GenderUp process, the innovation team re-imagined trainings in regions where low-income women live, provided per diem, and offered trainings in relevant languages, demonstrating an increased awareness of the women's experiences and the necessary complementary innovations needed to provide access to the benefits of the DryCard. Additionally, when considering women who do not have a lot of power within the household, the

team identified the need to also train men on their attitude toward their partnerships with women.

In Malawi, a team that is scaling up their horticulture marketplace app also came up with interesting mitigating activities. These included developing a play to better market the app to people with low levels of literacy and forming strategic partnerships with the private sector.

They adjusted their project's data collection strategy to disaggregate data by gender, and they set aside a budget specifically for social inclusion activities. A participant from Malawi stated that GenderUp provided them with "actionable strategies to include people from different social groups in using our innovation...[and] think deeply about how important small inclusion activities are in making our innovation more scalable in the future."

GenderUp's end goal is to allow all groups in society to access, benefit from, and be empowered by these innovations. To quantify this goal, farmer-level data on the outcomes experienced by innovation users is vital.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

The first iteration of GenderUp was housed on a website that lacked accessibility, user-friendliness, and streamlined resources. After experiencing GenderUp through this website, several workshop participants pointed out improvements that could be made. For example, they desired a central location to host scaling literature, resources, videos, and learning slides. Without this, participants were prevented from following up on topics they were interested in learning more about.

Participants also felt that existing videos and resources did not fully reflect GenderUp's inclusivity goals and included difficult-to-understand jargon. In response to these insights, the team did a complete overhaul on the first website. The newly designed website is hosted on an updated platform, includes a comprehensive list of scaling resources, provides a central location for all learning slides, videos, and discussion boards to be housed and accessed by team members, and includes updated language that reflects GenderUp's inclusive mission. In addition to participants' feedback, GenderUp has received valuable feedback from trained facilitators. Some of them shared that they

needed more clarity on what resources to share with participants, how to access those resources, and where to go for further questions.

In response, GenderUp developed a new "Workshop Flow" that contains all necessary information and can be shared directly with participants. This approach is easier to follow and eliminates a large amount of preparation time that previously fell on facilitators.

GenderUp was largely developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in an online tool where participants required a device with internet access. However, another challenge arose when an innovation team who wanted to participate in a workshop lacked access to stable internet connectivity. In response, the team developed printable materials that have been adapted to run a GenderUp workshop without internet and/or electricity.

The GenderUp team is developing systems to manage and track future GenderUp trainings, events, and participants to ensure everyone is being supported as needed.

Factors for Success

GenderUp is unique in its ability to systematically address social differentiation within agricultural innovation to improve social outcomes. Because of this, GenderUp is relevant for all organizations with an ambition to scale innovations for positive social outcomes. AR4D organizations are increasingly interested in gender equity and inclusivity.

They are providing more and more incentives for research and project implementation teams to develop gender-focused processes and outcomes. GenderUp provides these teams with a roadmap for achieving these objectives. Stakeholders of the GenderUp team wishes to further engage FAO initiatives and programs, feed the Future Innovation Labs, USAID more broadly, International Development implementers, and CGIAR initiatives.

GenderUp's success can also be attributed to funding opportunities and innovative avenues for awareness building. Through CGIAR's Ukama Ustawi initiative, GenderUp has received funding to prepare an "Outcome Story" that highlights outcomes experienced by innovation teams who have completed GenderUp workshops.

This type of story can be shared with interested innovation teams and facilitators, clearly depicting the benefits GenderUp can have on their scaling strategies. Dissemination of these positive results has also been done through several blog posts on various AR4D platforms. By building awareness amongst the AR4D community, GenderUp has seen increased interest and implementation.

CRITICAL CAPACITIES

Ensuring the success of GenderUp hinges on several critical capacities. First, training a robust and global network of facilitators well-versed in gender and intersectionality has been essential in laying the foundation for the adoption of GenderUp.

Their expertise creates a supportive environment for meaningful discussions. Second, the team prioritizes enhancing the usability of its website and resources, tailoring them for both facilitators and participants. This improved usability aims to streamline engagement and foster a more seamless experience.

Building awareness about GenderUp as a tool, while also imparting insights into scaling and gender concepts, is a pivotal component the team continues to work towards. This not only empowers facilitators but also paves the way for cultivating similar innovative capacities within broader project implementation teams at institutions like FAO, USAID, and CGIAR.

The strategy involves leveraging existing networks and disseminating knowledge through webinars and blogs, ensuring a widespread understanding and adoption of GenderUp's applications, goals, and methodologies.

LESSONS LEARNED



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As facilitators and participants experience the GenderUp 'journey', they are encouraged to share their honest feedback and suggestions for improvements through anonymous post-surveys. The diverse perspectives shared by participants offer valuable insights applicable across various levels of social tools in AR4D. A fundamental takeaway is the critical significance of leveraging participant feedback as an ongoing practice for refining GenderUp resources, facilitator trainings, and workshops.

This commitment to continuous improvement remains integral to the evolving nature of the tool. Establishing a robust feedback platform and consistently addressing inputs will continue as a central part of our approach, fostering empowerment among participants and ensuring the tool's scalability remains inclusive and accessible.

Acknowledgements

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GenderUp is now being scaled by Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Horticulture, where the focus has turned to scalability and user-experience. The initial pilot testing was done with Development Solutions Ltd., Rwanda led by Seraphin Niyonsenga, a private entity selling a simple dryness indicator; and the CGIAR Flash Dryer, led by Thierry Tran, a research-led innovation that operates on a larger scale.

This multi-stakeholder and participatory approach have continued throughout implementation of GenderUp. Because of GenderUp's train-the-trainer approach, individuals of various ages, genders, areas of expertise, geographical locations, and organizations can be trained as facilitators.

In these facilitator trainings, time is dedicated to hearing from participants on what they think could be improved about the GenderUp program. They are able to jointly discuss facilitation strategies, context-specific case studies, and ways to improve the GenderUp process for innovation teams. This participatory process has resulted in an ever-evolving tool that strives for the best user-experience possible.

THE TROPICAL AGRICULTURE PLATFORM


The Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) is a G-20 initiative launched in 2012 to promote agricultural innovation in the tropics. TAP has formed a coalition of more than 50 partners, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and generously supported by the European Union (EU). The main goal of TAP is to strengthen agricultural innovation systems (AIS) in developing countries through coordinated multi-stakeholder interventions.



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Global Call for Agrifood System Innovations and Stories of Capacity Development for Innovation

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