

SECURING WOMEN'S **RESOURCE RIGHTS** THROUGH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE **APPROACHES** 



# GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING ROUTE

**IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL** 







FOOD POLICY RESEARCH



Tool prepared for IFAD and the Building Rural Business Capacities, Trust and Opportunity - TOP Colombia - El Campo Emprende Project

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## **ABOUT THE INITIATIVE**

#### SECURING WOMEN'S RESOURCE RIGHTS THROUGH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

In 2020, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) invited a consortium of the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) to work with selected IFAD projects to promote and strengthen women's land rights through the integration of gender transformative approaches (GTAs) in rural development interventions by improving policies, tools and practices.

Following a detailed gender analysis to identify contextual factors across projects and geographies, as well as bottlenecks and opportunities for promoting women's land rights, the initiative used collaborative learning and design approaches to develop and test innovative gender transformative approaches (GTAs) and complementary methods that can support the achievement of women's land rights (WLR) through rural development interventions. This co-creation process ensured that each tool was fit-for-project purpose and endorsed locally, while at the same time contributed to a GTA toolbox that can be adapted for rural transformation projects across the IFAD portfolio.

This collection of tools include GTAs already developed and applied by IFAD projects and partners across targeted countries, as well as a suite of new tools to integrate women's land rights more explicitly and support gender transformative outcomes. These tools entail different strategies to address inequalities at the individual, household, community, policy and institutional domains, as well as to catalyse and transform harmful and discriminatory norms, perceptions and attitudes, and behaviours and practices at the identified levels across targeted countries. We share this toolbox with the IFAD community to continue testing, contextualization and sharing learnings across countries.

https://www.cifor-icraf.org/wlr https://www.ifad.org/en/gender\_transformative\_approaches

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## Introduction

This manual describes how to implement a Gender Transformative Learning Route (GT-Learning Route). The GT-Learning Route is an adaptation of the "Learning Route" method specifically focused to examine gender dynamics within community-based organizations. It is intended to create opportunities for women and men to learn from other women that actively participate in the governance and leadership of rural development initiatives.

This tool was tested with rural enterprises in Colombia that where selected because women played prominent roles in in the enterprises and benefited from them. The expectation was that the GT-Learning Route could provide organizational examples and role models that would strengthen women's capacities and give them confidence to proactively engage with and benefit from productive organizations in their communities.

The following sections will explain why this method was selected, and how it was modified to be part of a Gender Transformative Approach (GTA). Each section also will examine how it worked by drawing on examples from piloting in Colombia.

The Learning Route or Ruta de Aprendizaje is not a new method and has been used in Latin America and Africa previously. It emerged from the recognition that conventional knowledge dissemination mechanisms like classroom training or technical reports did not always lead to knowledge uptake or behavior change (Halpern et al. 2017). The response was to create conditions where people could learn from the know-how of others by drawing on local knowledge and experience around proven successful practices.

The objective is to develop the ability of the Learning Route's participants to identify and absorb from the host organisations or communities, those potentially useful innovations that can be adapted and then applied in their own specific contexts. This way the participants are able to learn from and teach to each other outside the constraints of a classroom, and the individuals themselves become the facilitators of knowledge exchange.

In the iteration presented here, the Learning Route method was adapted to explicitly address gender and to facilitate reflection on change in gender dynamics within successful community-based organizations where women have played prominent roles within their organizations or have even emerged as leaders.



#### (Halpern et al. 2017)



#### The Gender Transformative Learning Route consists of four steps:



Participatory Reflection Workshops – These meetings are held with communities selected as sites for the exchange visits because they exemplify cases of gender inclusion and female leadership. Workshop activities assist members to distil a narrative describing their experience in the organization and the changing roles of women in the group. Emphasis is placed on the challenges they have faced, the response strategies they developed, and changes in gender dynamics related to these processes within the organization.



Preparation and capacity building workshop – This meeting is convened for the launch of the GT-Learning Route and is intended to introduce the program for the GT-Learning Route, provide concepts and frameworks to assist with gender analysis during the exchanges, and create a space for participants to get to know one another prior to the visits.



Learning route knowledge exchange visits – Here participants visit community-based organizations selected because they illustrate active participation and leadership by women offering examples for the knowledge exchange.



Debrief for reflection and co-learning - This activity, held at the conclusion of the knowledge exchange visits, allows participants to discuss what they observed, compare it to their experiences, share what they have learned, and to identify potential lessons they can take when they return home.

The goal of this approach is to raise participant consciousness of gender dynamics, expose them to the experiences of successful organizations and provide role models that could inspire them in the future. It is intended to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned among participants and help them learn from the experiences of women in other rural enterprises.

## Gender and the TOP Colombia project

The GT-Learning Route was piloted by the Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches for Securing Women's Resource Rights (WRR) in Colombia with the IFAD funded project "Building Rural Business Capacities, Trust and Opportunity – TOP Colombia - El Campo Emprende" (henceforth Top Colombia). Top Colombia, implemented between 2012 and 2022, addressed inequality and poverty in rural Colombia and promoted equal access to basic services, particularly rural financial services. The project was a joint effort of the Government and IFAD, implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Its target group was composed of approximately 50,000 rural households living in extreme poverty across 17 departments in the country. Among these were small farmers, indigenous groups, afro descendant communities, rural young people, families who had been forcibly displaced, and female-headed households. The overall goal of the project was to improve living conditions, income, and employment in post-conflict rural areas.

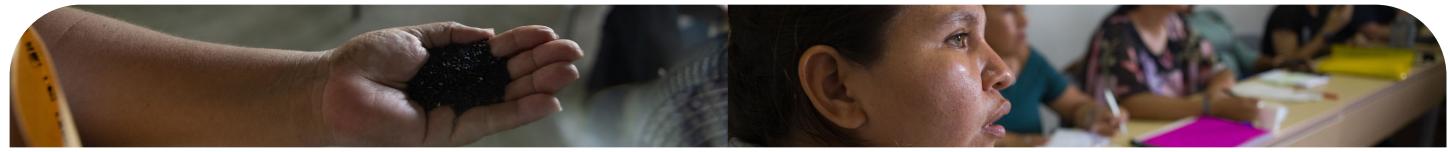
The Top Colombia project adopted specific strategies to target rural women and youth to increase their participation in the enterprises receiving support. Besides providing financial capital to associations and cooperatives, the project built social capital, developed business skills, supported rural financial assets, and enhanced knowledge and communication management. The inclusive approach underscored the project's commitment to empowering rural communities, especially women and youth, while addressing the complex challenges of poverty and social development in Colombia. By improving economic conditions for women, the initiative helped women to voice their needs and contribute more actively to community life.

To develop a piloting strategy to test GTAs, the WRR project in Colombia drew on on lessons learned from gender analysis conducted by WRR, as well as findings from earlier research. These lessons indicated that members of successful community-based organizations frequently did not recognize the significance of their achievements and were often unaware of how similar groups had succeeded. Leaders from organizations that had been studied suggested that previous exchanges with other organizations had allowed women to identify shared experiences, common challenges, and similar opportunities, which gave them confidence to participate more actively in their communities and take on leadership roles<sup>5</sup>. These experiences increased their awareness of how others had succeeded and raised consciousness of their achievements. Research results indicated that interacting with female leaders and strong organizations provided role models for women and helped them form networks and alliances.

Based on gender analysis in Colombia, discussions with partners, and feedback from women in rural enterprises, the WRR team decided to adapt the Learning Route method to focus on gender issues. The method was expected to support transformative change by helping women and men from rural enterprises learn from the experiences of others to better understand challenges driven by ridged gender norms and, through the facilitation of critical reflection and dialogue, build trust among the participants and help them identify potential paths for behavioral change in their own organizations and communities.

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<sup>5</sup> Cronkleton, P., Cromberg M., Gutierrez, Y., Delgado, D., Castro, A., Ramos, P., Romero, I., Buitrago, J., Galindo, C. Larson, A. Monterroso, I., 2022. Soluciones de mujeres: Lecciones para la conservación y el desarrollo en la Amazonía. World Bank/Washington D.C. https://documents1.worldbank



# **Introduction to the Gender Transformative Learning Route Method**

This section will describe the step-by-step process for implementing the Gender Transformative Learning Route (GT-Learning Route). For each step we will refer to examples from the piloting exercise carried out in Colombia.

Prior to arranging a GT-Learning Route, some initial preparation is required. The organizers should focus on issues where exchange and learning could catalyze change. It is necessary to identify potential cases that offer useful lessons to share with other groups and confirm that they are willing to participate. The organizers should define candidates to invite for the GT-Learning Route, ideally in consultation with the targeted community-based organizations to select representatives that could learn from the exchange.

In the Colombia case, the WRR team met with experts from Colombia's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development that had participated in the TOP Colombia project to discuss potential sites for the GT-Learning Route. They identified four rural enterprises that were recognized as successful cases with high percentages of women participating or were led by women. In addition, the experts identified four enterprises in the department of Cauca that were invited to send representatives to participate in the GT-Learning Route.

## The Gender Transformative Learning **Route Method**

As mentioned earlier, the Gender Transformative Learning Route consists of four steps:

- I. Participatory Reflection Workshops held with each of the organizations selected for exchange visits to assist the members to prepare.
- **II.** Preparation and Capacity building workshop held with learning route participants to orient them and provide analytical tools and concepts to examine gender dynamics
- **III.** Learning Route exchange visits held with each of the selected community organizations for presentations and discussions about the cases.

The following subsections will describe each of these steps in greater detail.

# **Participatory Reflection Workshop**





#### FACILITATION

Two facilitators (one leads, one takes notes and tabulates responses).

#### PROCEDURE

The participatory reflection workshops are held with the community-based organizations that will be visited during the GT-Learning Route. Workshop activities are intended to assist representatives of these organizations identify gender dynamics within their organization and community, and to describe how their roles have changed in the group. Workshop participants are encouraged to examine the group's historical trajectory and key turning points in its development. Discussions emphasize challenges faced by the group and strategies used to successfully address them. The goal is to identify lessons illustrating how shift in gender norms and practices benefited women and men in the organization.

These workshops are organized as focus group interviews with representatives of the organization including leaders and members. Ideally, the focus groups should be small, approximately 4 to 12 people, to ensure that all can participate. Multiple methods are used to stimulate discussions about the group and elicit information about members' perceptions of their organization, including open-ended interview questions, participatory activities to develop a historic timeline for the group and short opinion surveys to gauge variation in views on gender and encourage more in-depth discussion.

Representative from organizations selected to be visited during the GT-Learning Route.

Assist participants to describe gender dynamics in their organization, the challenges they have faced and the strategies they have used for success to identify lessons

#### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The facilitator initiates the workshop with a brief introduction and a summary of the purpose and agenda for the meeting. The focus groups start with general questions about the local group's purpose and activities, its organizational structure, the composition of the membership in terms of gender and age. This discussion will set the stage by helping participants to describe their case and the responses will familiarize facilitators with the case to help them compose follow-up questions later.

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE

For the second part of the interview, facilitators ask the participants to sketch a historical timeline for their community and organization on flip charts. The participants work together to co-create a description of the historical trajectory of their community as a graphic representation of the changes at different periods of time. The following steps will help the participants develop the timeline:

- First, participants are asked to establish an origin date or event that marked the founding of their group or community. That date should be marked on the left edge of the flip chart to set the starting point of the timeline.
- Then, through a facilitated discussion, participants are asked to list key events that were important in the community or for their organization.
- ٠ From the generated list, the participants select five or six events they view as most relevant and then plot them on the timeline. Facilitators should ask the participants to explain why these events were considered relevant.
- Once the events have been plotted on the timeline, facilitators then ask participants to describe how dynamics changed in the organization and community as these events occurred. For example, at each point in the timeline facilitators might ask:
- How were the livelihoods of women and men?
- How did women participate in decision making in the community and the organization?
- What were the domestic responsibilities of women and men?
- How did women and men access land and natural resources?
- How did women and men access financial capital?

The guestions should be tailored to reflect the local context so that the facilitator can elicit a description of change from the point of view of the focus group participants.

#### OPINION SURVEY

By posing these questions in a group setting, ideally including both men and women, the facilitators attempt to engage participants in a discussion to explain the organization and how it works. However, sometimes group interviews are dominated by individuals, or some women or men may feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions in front of others. Allowing participants to respond anonymously on simple questionnaire forms can provide an easy means to ensure that all participants have opportunities to express their opinions and to identify variation in the groups' perspectives. For the opinion survey exercise the facilitator reads statements about gender roles in the group and participants mark responses measuring their levels of agreement (e.g. responses expressing levels of agreement on a scale from 1 to 5).

Participants mark their answers on the form, and once completed, the responses can be quickly tabulated by the second facilitator on a flip chart. The tabulated responses are then reported back to the group to provoke additional discussion. For example, a statement in the survey might be "The opinions and contributions of people of different genders are valued equally in meetings and discussions." The participants' tabulated results might show strong consensus in the group (either all agreeing or disagreeing), or difference of opinion within the group. The facilitator can generate discussion by asking participants to explain the results.



In Colombia, the Participatory Reflection Workshops with the four selected enterprises took place over two days (September 19 and 20th 2023).

At the start of each workshop, before the introductory questions about the enterprise, the facilitators asked participants to rate how familiar they were with gender and whether they expected others could learn from an exchange with their organization. These questions helped develop the content for the capacity building workshop during the next step.

After the group discussion about the enterprise and the development of the timeline, facilitators administered a short opinion survey to the participants. The topics included a personal assessment of their perceptions of gender dynamics in the organization (4 questions) and their perception of skills gained from participation in enterprise (6 questions)<sup>5</sup>. The objective of the survey was to elicit information on the groups' perceptions of the distribution of tasks and benefits by gender within the organization. The discussions allowed the participants to examine how gender dynamics were playing out within the group, to identify their strengths as well as areas where challenges remained.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> A translated example of the response form can be found in annex 1.

## Preparation and capacity building workshop

#### TIME

Variable

#### **OBJECTIVES**

 Ensure that participants know basic gender concepts, understand GT-Learning Route program and are familiar with each other.



### MATERIALS

(This depends largely on the content defined by the organizers in consultation with the participants.)

#### PROCEDURE

This activity brings together the individuals that will participate in the GT-Learning Route to meet with gender experts to review analytic concepts for understanding gender and gender transformative change. The content should be targeted to reflect the interests and needs of the participants, as well as the types of community-based organizations that will be visited in the field during the exchange experiences.

The program for these workshops should alternate instructional training sessions with plenary discussions to allow participants to express opinions and ask questions about the material but also to provide feedback to experts/trainers on content needs. The program should also include activities to allow the participants to gain familiarity with each other and to encourage communication within the group.





In the Colombia case, the GT-Learning Route was highlighting rural enterprises in which women played prominent roles. Information gathered during the Participatory Reflection Workshops in the selected communities and through contacts with the women invited from Cauca indicated that the participants had a basic understanding of gender concepts. However, the WRR team realized that the concept underlying gender transformative approaches would be new to them. Besides reviewing these concepts, the WRR team decided to show how gender was used in different contexts. Also, during prior consultations, participants had requested training for accessing on-line platforms for government assistance programs, which was a knowledge gap the women wanted to address. Given the interests expressed by potential participants, while the workshop content was being designed both academic theory on gender transformative approach and also practical examples were included to provide participants with a foundation for interpreting the cases they would be visiting.

The workshop in Colombia was organized at the Javeriana University in Bogota. The meeting convened community representatives from Bolivar and Cauca invited for the GT-Learning Route. This workshop was intended to provide the participants with a review of key gender topics and conceptual frameworks for understanding gender dynamics to be used during the exchange visits. It also provided an opportunity for the participants to get to know one another prior to taking part in the exchange visits to the selected enterprises in Bolivar.

#### The content and key concepts from the capacity building course included:

- A review of results from gender analysis conducted by the WRR project in Bolivar and Cauca<sup>5</sup>.
- An introduction to the concepts of gender transformative change<sup>6</sup>.
- Lessons learned from Javeriana Universities research on gender in the context of
  - Land tenure systems
  - Ecological restoration and gender •
  - Natural resource management.
- An Introduction to communication and gender

#### .....

An introduction to Colombia's Interethnic Network of Women for the Defence of the Environment

<sup>5</sup> Developing Gender Transformative Approaches to Strengthen Women's Land Rights in Colombia. Foundational Gender Analysis.

<sup>6</sup> Gender Transformative Approaches to Strengthen Women's Land and Resource Rights. https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/

https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/9108/

publication/8960/

## Learning Route exchange visits

#### TIME

Variable (depending on number of sites visited and distance between them, ideally at least 2 hours for each exchange visit).



#### **OBJECTIVES**

• Facilitate dialogue and learning through the exchange of experiences during visits to selected community/organizations.



#### MATERIALS

Flip charts and/or other graphic material drawn from the earlier Participatory Reflection Workshops at each site.

#### PROCEDURE

During the GT-Learning Route exchange visits participants go to the selected cases to hear about the groups' experiences and discuss lessons learned. Each visit starts with an introduction and presentation about the case by members of the organization or community. This is followed by a plenary discussion in which visitors can ask questions or comment on the organization and compare it to their own experiences.





The GT Learning Route exchange visits in Bolivar, Colombia took place over two days (October 3rd and 4th 2023) with a half day visit to each of the selected community enterprises. These cases included:

- Nueva Esperanza: This sesame producer association had used financing to invest in machinery to membership had increased to assist with the processing activities and commercialization.
- ASOEMANUEL: This beekeeping association is focused on generating opportunity for rural youth
- ASOVI: This is an egg producer association that has invested in a small poultry confinement to chickens and commercialize eggs in the departmental capital Cartegena.
- Brisa y Mar 7: This group is an artisanal fishing association led by afro-descendent women. offshore.

During the visits, leaders of the enterprises presented their histories and described how women's roles have changed in the enterprise and in the community over time. They then lead tours of enterprise activities. Finally, the meeting closed with a group discussion with members of the enterprise responding to visitors' questions.



process their sesame into oil and sesame paste. The association president is a woman and female

in the community. They received financing for equipment to expand and manage their apiaries, to process honey and package it for sale. While men take on the heavy labor managing the hives, women play active roles in processing and sale of honey as well as representing the association.

building for egg production. Women and men from the community work collectively to manage

Women in this group manage the association and commercialize fish caught by their husbands

# **Debrief meeting with participants**

#### TIME



At least two hours.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

• Reflect on the exchange visits to identify key messages and lessons learned that participants found useful.

#### MATERIALS



Pens Notebooks

Flip charts

#### PROCEDURE

After the exchange visits, the debrief meeting helps participants to share their impressions and make sense of what they have observed. In this meeting facilitators ask participants to recount each of the visits describing the case and identify key points they found remarkable or interesting. The facilitator starts with open-ended questions asking participants what impressed them about the specific cases. Follow up questions address the challenge faced by each group, the strategy used in response, and factors that contributed to the success of the group. The details of these responses are recorded on flip charts for each case. Once done, facilitators ask participants to compare and contrast the cases to draw out general lessons. Participants are encouraged to identify experiences and practices they could apply when returning home, which are also shared in a plenary discussion.





In the Colombia case, the debriefing workshop was organized the day after the exchange visits in the field. The facilitator alternated the dynamics between large-group plenary discussions and smaller workgroups to maintain the attention of the participants.

#### The participants formulated several general observations about the cases visited.

- The TOP Colombia project had contributed to gender equity in community development by insisting that to qualify, the groups seeking support needed to demonstrate the level of participation by women in the association. This fostered greater inclusion of women and challenged traditional gender roles in these rural communities.
- opportunities for women to take administrative and management positions, which further increased economic opportunity.
- their communities.
- their earlier domestic chores and care-giving responsibilities within the household.

Participants reported that the experience of meeting other women (and men) organizing around rural enterprises gave them more confidence to participate. Several mentioned that when they returned home, they would be more conscious of their positions as role models for others, particularly younger women who they would encourage to participate. In addition, in the final plenary, one suggestion was that future learning routes should include husbands and sons so that they understand how shifts in gender roles can benefit the entire household so that they are more supportive.



The associations visited had empowered women by providing income sources and by opening

The resulting shifts in gender roles had allowed women to more actively participate in decision making and even take on leadership positions in the enterprises. This also raised their profiles in

 Although these enterprises had opened new opportunities for women's economic empowerment, the new roles also increased the burden and time-demands on women as they generally retained

"Spaces like this training enhance our confidence and help affirm that we [women] have the knowledge and the know-how to mobilize more women to get involved in our communities' decisions and well-being. We are here to stay." Jenessis Godoy, representative of the Tierra Bomba Mar y Tierra 7 Association

Through this learning route, I am witnessing the strength of other women leading projects, overcoming challenges, and mobilizing change. It reinforces my belief that women taking leadership, participating in decision-making, and working for the wellbeing of one's family and community are achievable goals. Women can achieve remarkable things when given the opportunities." María Marlene Rizo

"I learned to call things by their names. We all experience similar things – like stereotypes – but we don't know what they are called out there. I am going to take this knowledge home, to my association and my community. Sandra Paola Sequeda

Gutierrez, Y. (2024, April 8). In Colombia, shifting stereotypes through learning exchange: In Colombia, rural entrepreneurs share insights on gender, business, and transformation. Forest News Photo Essay. https://forestsnews.cifor.org/86551/to-call-things-by-their-names?fnl=en

## **Concluding summary**

The Gender Transformative Learning Route (GT-Learning Route) is a tool for women and men to learn by exchanging lessons from their experience with others and by drawing on local knowledge around proven successful practices. The goal is the help participants understand the benefits of equitable gender inclusive practices in community-based organizations.

This tool builds on existing Learning Route methods that have proven successful for building capacities and forming network alliances. However, in this case, it refocuses the activities to emphasize gender dynamics and practices driving transformative change. As presented here, the GT-Learning Route consists of 4 steps that:

- 1. Assist members of community organizations to reflect on gender dynamics in the group challenges,
- 2. Prepare and orient participants so they understand key concepts related to gender and
- 3. Facilitate knowledge exchange meetings allowing participants share experiences and learn from each other, and finally
- 4. Lead debriefing meetings to assist participants to synthesize their understanding of observed cases, share opinions and identify lessons learnt.

While the method was piloted with rural enterprises where women actively participated as members and leaders, the method described is suitable for use in other types of local groups where gender transformative change is occurring and could provide lessons for others.



as well as their experience to distil lessons describing the groups success and continued

transformative change so that they can take advantage of the knowledge exchange visits,

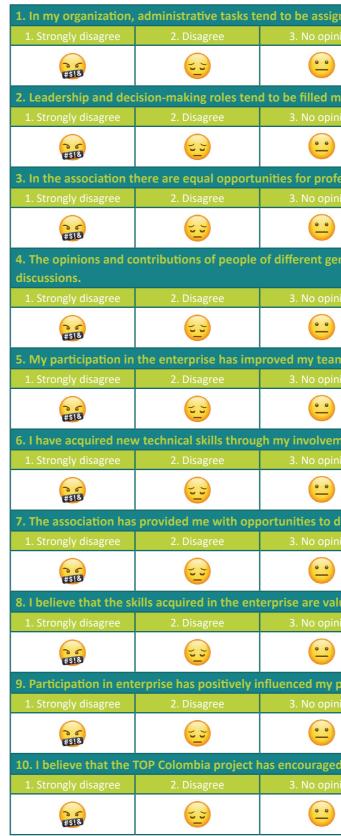


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#### **Annex 1. Example of Opinion Survey Worksheet**

#### GT-Learning Route: Opinion Survey Form



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## **INITIATIVE CONSORTIUM**



The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and World Agroforestry (ICRAF) envision a more equitable world where trees in all landscapes, from drylands to the humid tropics, enhance the environment and well-being for all. CIFOR and ICRAF are CGIAR Research Centers.



Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and malnutrition. These four interconnected global crises have put at stake the wellbeing of our planet for years. Fueled by COVID-19, their impact on agriculture, landscapes, biodiversity, and humans is now stronger than ever. Reversing this negative trend is a challenge, but also an opportunity for bold choices and integrated solutions. Established in 2019, the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) was created to address these four crises, maximizing impact for change at key points in the food system.



The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. Established in 1975, IFPRI currently has more than 600 employees working in over 50 countries. It is a research center of CGIAR, a worldwide partnership engaged in agricultural research for development.

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